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Frode Restad

PhD Thesis

Curriculum Making for Social Learning

Exploring Policy and Practice in Norwegian Lower
Secondary Education

PhD in Child and Youth Participation and Competence Development
2021



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- No. 21 Frode Restad:** Curriculum Making for Social Learning. Exploring Policy and Practice in Norwegian Lower Secondary Education

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PhD Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis explores the concept of social learning in international policy and research, and curriculum making for social learning in Norwegian policy and practice. The main purpose of the study is to investigate how students social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the national policy level and by curriculum making in subjects at the classroom level in Norwegian lower secondary education.

The study has a theoretical grounding in critical realism (Bhaskar, 2008a; Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2011) that emphasizes social phenomena as complex and emergent from the interactions of agents, structures and mechanisms at multiple layers of reality. Wenger's social theory of learning (Wenger, 1999) is used to analyse collective outcomes of students and teachers' social interactions. Curriculum theory (Deng, 2017; Englund, 2015; Reid, 2016) is used to analyse teachers practices of curriculum making in subjects as instructional events in the classroom, and to analyse curriculum making at the national policy level (Chan, 2012; Hopmann, 2003; Lundgren, 2012) as negotiated practices of educational governance and control.

The study has a qualitative design building on data from policy, research and classroom interaction. Policy and literature reviews have been conducted using critical research review methodology (Suri, 2013), and methods of contents and bibliometric analysis (Bowen, 2009; Weber, 1990) to generate data on curriculum making at the national and international levels. Qualitative interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) with students and teachers and participant observation (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver, & Ireland, 2009; Okely, 2013) of their interactions has been used to generate data on curriculum making at the classroom level.

The study identifies two main understandings of social learning as; the development of skills, and the development of community, in international policy and research. The study finds that Norwegian policymakers draw on both understandings in a compromised concept of social learning in the newly revised core curriculum. The study also identifies how students' social learning is influenced by mechanism of personalization, peering, grouping and identification in subject teaching. Overall, these findings indicate that students' social learning is influenced by a dual dialectic of curriculum making in policy and practice, and of social structures and students' and teachers' agency in the classroom.

Sammendrag

Denne avhandlingen utforsker begrepet sosial læring i internasjonal politikk og forskning, og i læreplaner og praksis for sosial læring i norsk skole. Hovedformålet med avhandlingen er å undersøke hvordan elevers sosiale læring påvirkes av utforming av læreplaner på politisk nivå og av utøving av læreplaner i fag på klasseromsnivå i den norske ungdomskolen.

Studien er teoretisk forankret i kritisk realisme (Bhaskar, 2008a; Danermark et al., 2011) og med en forståelse av sosiale fenomener som komplekse og fremvoksende fra samspillet mellom aktører, strukturer og mekanismer i ulike lag av virkeligheten. Wengers sosiale teori om læring (Wenger, 1999) benyttes for å analysere kollektive virkninger av elever og læreres sosiale interaksjon. Læreplanteori (Deng, 2017; Englund, 2015; Reid, 2016) benyttes for å analysere læreres undervisning i fag som forhandlede praksishendelser i klasserommet, og for å analysere nasjonale læreplaner (Chan, 2012; Hopmann, 2003; Lundgren, 2012) som forhandlet praksis for pedagogisk styring og kontroll.

Studien har et kvalitativt design som basert på metoder for analyse av policy, forskning og klasseromsinteraksjon. Policy- og litteraturanalyse er utført ved hjelp av kritisk litteraturanalyse (Suri, 2013), samt bibliometrisk- og innholdsanalyse (Bowen, 2009; Weber, 1990) for å generere data om utvikling av læreplaner på nasjonalt og internasjonalt nivå. Kvalitative intervjuer (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) med elever og lærere og deltakerobservasjon (Heath et al., 2009; Okely, 2013) har blitt brukt til å generere data om utøvelsen av læreplaner på klasseromsnivå.

Studien identifiserer to forståelser av sosial læring som; utvikling av ferdigheter, og utvikling av fellesskap, i internasjonal politikk og forskning. Studien finner at norske beslutningstakere trekker på begge forståelsene av sosial læring i den nylig reviderte læreplanen. Studien identifiserer også hvordan elevenes sosiale læring påvirkes av mekanismer for personifisering, felling, gruppering og identifisering i den faglige undervisningen. Samlet sett indikerer disse funnene at elevenes sosiale læring påvirkes av en dobbel dialektikk mellom læreplaner i politikk og praksis, og mellom sosiale strukturer og elever og læreres handlingsrom i klasserommet.

Preface

The attack on the U.S. Capital building following the 2020 United States presidential elections is a chilling reminder of the fragile nature of democracy. Twenty five years ago UNESCO (1996) outlined learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be as the four main pillars of education for the 21st century. These pillars emphasise schools as fundamental democratic institutions not just because they teach children what they need to know, but because they are democratic spaces where students can learn to respect others, negotiate common values and resolve conflicts in peaceful ways together. Now more than ever, in a world facing growing inequality and environmental collapse, we need schools to support our peoples' aspirations and agency for a sustainable future and feelings of belonging to their local, national and global communities. The topic of social learning addressed in this thesis is of great importance if we are to harness the power of education to develop democracy and tackle the challenges facing humanity in the 21st century.

There are a number of people without whom this project would not have been possible. I would especially like to thank my three supervisors Yvonne Fritze, Christina Mølsted and Ingunn Marie Eriksen for their support and guidance throughout the process. You have given me confidence to tread my own path, opened doors to new landscapes of knowledge, and urged me to keep climbing even though my body has yearned to stop. I would also like to thank colleagues Lene Nyhus, Kristin Helstad and Leigh Price at INN for their valuable comments on articles and early drafts of the thesis. To the good people at BUK, Mari Rysst, Rune Hausstätter and Ane-Gunhild Amirnejad, thank you for giving me the opportunity to learn, and the practical support I needed to complete the project. To all my fellows at BUK – thank you for making me feel welcome and for sharing the ups and downs of life as a PhD-student. Thank you also to good colleagues in research groups SPLP and TEPEE for comments and discussions and to my mentors Selma Therese Lyng and Ottar Ness for their inspiring presence and confidence in the project.

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of this research. A special thank you also to my friends and former classmates, Ingunn, Thor Erik and Thomas, for reminding me of our shared history and how precious life is.

Thank you to my mother Kari and father Ole for opening my eyes to the world, and to my sister Cathrine for her unwavering faith and encouragement. To Ingeborg, my wife, lover, partner, best friend, part-time editor and in-house therapist - WE did it! Gratitude beyond words! To my daughter Sunniva – thank you for the music and for always making me laugh. To my son Martinus - thank you for asking about my day and for the world's best hugs. I love you all!

For the past 10 months my home has been my office, 24-7. I long now for the days when home and work are again two separate spheres, and to find myself in the new beginning that follows an end.

*Home again
Home again
One day I know
I'll feel home again
Born again
Born again
One day I know
I'll feel strong again*

© Michael Kiwanuka, 2012

Vallset, January 2021

Frode Restad

Table of contents

Abstract	i
Sammendrag	ii
Preface	iii
Table of contents	v
List of articles, tables and figures.....	ix
1 Introduction	10
1.1 Purpose and Research Questions	12
1.2 Main Concepts	14
1.2.1 Social learning.....	14
1.2.2 Curriculum making	15
1.3 Context of the Study	17
1.3.1 The social and economic nature of learning.....	18
1.3.2 Social and emotional skills.....	18
1.3.3 Education 2030.....	19
1.3.4 Bullying prevention on the national agenda.....	19
1.3.5 School of the future: The need for curriculum reform	20
1.4 Thesis Outline.....	21
2 Previous Research and Thesis Contribution.....	23
2.1 Research on Curriculum Making.....	23
2.1.1 The international level.....	23
2.1.2 The national level	26
2.2 Research on Bullying and Social Learning	28
2.2.1 Bullying prevention.....	28
2.2.2 Bullying and social learning.....	30
2.2.3 Classroom practice	32

2.3	Features of Existing Research and Study Contribution.....	34
3	Theoretical Framework	36
3.1	Critical Realism: A Metatheoretical Framework.....	36
3.1.1	Ontological realism and causality	36
3.1.2	Epistemological relativism: Interdisciplinarity and underlabouring	39
3.1.3	Judgmental rationality and modes of inference.....	40
3.1.4	Previous critical realism education research	41
3.2	The Social Theory of Learning.....	44
3.2.1	Previous applications and critique.....	45
3.3	Limitations and Theoretical Contributions.....	46
3.3.1	Limitations in theoretical framework.....	46
3.3.2	Theoretical contributions.....	47
4	Methodology	49
4.1	Applied Critical Realism	49
4.1.1	Approaches to critical realism research and the position of the study	50
4.1.2	Context and laminated systems in policy and practice	52
4.2	Policy and Literature Review	55
4.2.1	Literature review	55
4.2.2	Policy analysis.....	57
4.3	Classroom Study.....	58
4.3.1	Mixed methods sampling and selection	58
4.3.2	Observation	61
4.3.3	Interviews	64
4.4	Reflexivity, Limitations and Contributions	66
4.4.1	The researcher	67
4.4.2	Limitations in methodology	68
4.4.3	Contributions to methodology.....	69

5	Summary of Articles	71
5.1	Article 1	71
5.2	Article 2	73
5.3	Article 3	75
5.4	Article 4	77
6	Discussion	81
6.1	Social Learning in International Policy and Research.....	81
6.1.1	Skills or community?	82
6.1.2	Towards a broader concept of social learning.....	84
6.2	Curriculum Making for Social Learning in National Policy	86
6.2.1	External rationalisation	86
6.2.2	Internal mystification	87
6.2.3	Inside out: A new strategy for social leaning?	89
6.3	Curriculum Making for Social Learning in Practice	90
6.3.1	Personalization	91
6.3.2	Peering.....	92
6.3.3	Grouping.....	93
6.3.4	Identification	94
6.3.5	Generative mechanisms of social learning.....	95
7	Conclusion.....	97
7.1	Contributions and Implications	98
7.1.1	Research implications	99
7.1.2	Policy implications.....	100
7.1.3	Practical implications	101
	References	103
	Appendices	114
	Appendix 1: Approval for research	115

Appendix 2: Information letters and consent forms.....	117
Appendix 3: Interview guides and timeline	123
Appendix 4: Observation guides	128
Appendix 5: Transcription agreement.....	130
Appendix 6: Co-author agreement	137
Appendix 7: Results of statistical analysis	139
Dissertation articles	140

List of articles, tables and figures

Articles

1. Restad (2019). Revisioning the Fifth Element. Can critical realism reconcile competence and Bildung for a more sustainable twenty-first-century education?. *Journal of Critical Realism*, 18(4), 402-419.
2. Restad (2020). Is There a Hole in the Whole-School Approach? A Critical Review of Curriculum Understanding in Bullying Research. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 40(4), 362-386.
3. Restad and Mølstad (2020). Social and emotional skills in curriculum reform: a red line for measurability?. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1-14.
4. Restad (Unpublished). Exploring problems and potential of curriculum making for social learning. Implications for policy and practice. Submitted to *The Curriculum Journal*.

Tables

Table 1: Article problems, methods and findings	13
Table 2: Articles, research questions and findings.....	80
Table 3: Generative mechanisms of social learning.....	95

Figures

Figure 1: CR ontology and concepts, based on Hoddy, 2019.....	38
Figure 2: Laminar learning environment, based on Brown 2009.....	54

1 Introduction

This thesis explores how social learning is understood in international policy and research, and how social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the policy and practice level in Norwegian lower secondary education. A generally recognized fact is that students' academic learning is influenced by social and contextual factors, such as teacher-peer relationships and supporting learning environments (Hattie, 2009; Thuen, Bru, & Ogden, 2007). However, the converse influence of academic learning on social learning has rarely been explored. In this study, I explore the relationship between curriculum making and social learning to develop new knowledge about how policy and practice can support students and teachers to thrive and learn together in more sustainable ways in the classroom.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of social and emotional learning for students' academic and long-term success in life (Kautz, Heckman, Diris, ter Weel, & Borghans, 2017; OECD, 2015). Few studies, however, have explored how concepts of social learning are understood in international policy and research or and how these concepts are negotiated in curriculum making in the Norwegian context. Studies have also shown how students' social learning can be influenced by teachers' practices in schools (Elias, Leverett, Duffell, Humphrey, Stepney et al., 2015; Plauborg, 2017; Wang & Goldberg, 2017). There is, however, also a lacuna of studies investigating how teachers' curriculum making in school subjects influences students social learning in the classroom. This study pertains to how the concept of social learning is constructed through policy negotiations at the national and international level, and how social learning is enacted by students and teachers following a subject curriculum in Norwegian lower secondary education.

Three main motivations form the basis of this study. The first motivation is related to the increasing emphasis on social learning spearheaded by the development of transnational instruments and recommendations by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2015, 2018, 2020b). These recommendations trigger policy negotiations and influence curriculum making at the national level. Investigating such policy negotiations can therefore provide important information to future policies and practice for social learning. The second motivation is related to the prevalence and devastating consequences of bullying in schools (Gini & Pozzoli, 2009). This study seeks to develop new knowledge to improve current strategies of bullying prevention in schools. The third

motivation is to expand new knowledge on aspects of teachers' curriculum making in subjects that can facilitate students' learning while also preventing bullying in schools.

This study has been conducted primarily using qualitative methods of data generation and analysis. To investigate the formation of concepts and recommendations on social learning espoused in international policy and research, I have conducted extensive literature reviews and analysed theories and reports from prominent actors in the Norwegian and international context (see Articles 1 & 2). These reviews have been informed by a critical research review methodology (Suri, 2013) and the concept of immanent critique (Bhaskar, 2016) to outline potential weaknesses in the strong arguments advocated by the dominant actors in each field. I have also analysed policy negotiations in the Norwegian context (see Article 3) by investigating key references and sources cited to inform decisions on how social learning is to be addressed in the newly revised national curriculum. This analysis draws on methods of content analysis and bibliometric studies (Bowen, 2009; Weber, 1990) to outline and describe the characteristics of a core knowledge base that underlines the reform. I have also used analytical models of systems dynamics (Shipway, 2011) to analyse how concepts of social learning are developed and sustained in an international policy discourse. In the final article of this thesis (see Article 4), I have explored teachers' enactment of subject curricula in two subjects and four classes of students in lower secondary education. Qualitative interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) and participant observation (Heath et al., 2009; Okely, 2013) were used to generate data from this classroom study. An informed grounded theory approach (Thornberg, 2012) building on deliberative curriculum theory (Deng, 2017) and Wenger's social theory of learning (Wenger, 1999) has been used to analyse this data.

In this introductory chapter, I outline the main problem and research questions addressed in this study. These research questions are related to four peer reviewed articles, including a brief summary of the main findings from each article, that form the basis for the ensuing discussions. I proceed to outline the main concepts of curriculum making and social learning that are discussed throughout the thesis and relate these concepts to the current national and international policy context. Finally, I outline the structure and contents of the chapters that constitute the rest of the thesis.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to investigate how students' social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the national (macro) and classroom (micro) levels of education. This study focuses on curriculum making in the Norwegian context, considering how policies and practices in Norway are shaped by research and policy recommendations at the international (supra) level.

This study makes two main contributions to existing research: First, in the field of curriculum research, by outlining how concepts of social learning are understood in international policy and research, and by exploring how such concepts are negotiated by teachers and policymakers in the Norwegian context. Second, in the field of social learning and bullying prevention, the study contributes new knowledge on how curriculum concepts have been understood and applied in previous research, and how teachers' curriculum making in the classroom can influence students' social learning.

The main problem is: *How does curriculum making in Norwegian policy and practice influence students' social learning?* This is addressed through four peer-reviewed articles that provide a basis for answering the subsequent research questions:

1. *How is social learning understood in international policy and research?*
2. *How is social learning influenced by curriculum making at the national policy level?*
3. *How is social learning influenced by curriculum making at the practice level?*

In the first article, I investigate contrasting theories of teaching and learning in the Nordic and international context and discuss whether a metatheoretical framework in critical realism (CR) can provide grounds for developing a more coherent theory of learning. In the second article, I investigate concepts and understanding of curriculum in contemporary bullying research and discuss how a broader application of curriculum knowledge can add to efforts towards bullying prevention in schools. Article three examines the process of curriculum making in Norwegian policy design and discusses how international research and policy recommendations are negotiated in the new national curriculum. In the fourth article, I explore subject teaching in lower secondary education and consider how the practices of teachers and students in the classroom influences students' social learning. Table 1 outlines

the problems addressed in each article, the empirical data and methods used to investigate the problem and the articles' main findings.

Table 1: Article problems, methods and findings

Article title	Article problems	Methods and data	Main findings
Article 1 <i>Revisioning the Fifth Element. Can critical realism reconcile competence and Bildung for a more sustainable twenty-first-century education?</i>	What are the main points of contention between the traditions of competence and Bildung? How can a CR contribute to reconciling the divisions between these traditions?	Theoretical analysis of research on learning theory, curriculum, Didaktik and CR. Content analysis of official reports and policy documents at the national and international level.	Learning, in the Norwegian context, should be understood as a negotiated concept influenced by both competence and Bildung. Three tension points are identified in: the role of the teacher, the purpose of the curriculum and the role of students in teaching and learning.
Article 2 <i>Is there a hole in the whole-school approach? A critical review of curriculum understanding in bullying research.</i>	How is curriculum understood in contemporary research on bullying? How can a curriculum perspective add new insights to bullying prevention in schools?	Critical review of peer-reviewed journal articles on bullying prevention from 2009–2019.	Bullying research includes a broad range of curriculum understandings, but curriculum knowledge is constricted within different categories of bullying research. Three gaps are identified in the constricted use of curriculum concepts, the narrow use of curriculum in the dominant program category and in the lack of broader concepts and approaches to teaching and learning in bullying research.
Article 3 <i>Negotiating social and emotional skills in curriculum reform: A thin red line for measurability?</i>	What is the knowledge base for framing social competence in the ongoing Norwegian curriculum reform? How are debates on measurability reflected in the reform?	Policy and content analysis of national reports, white paper and core curriculum. Content and bibliometric analysis of key sources cited in national reports and white papers.	The knowledge base, consisting primarily of reports from the OECD and psychometric research from the USA, recommends a systematic development and assessment of social and emotional skills in education. The Norwegian curriculum rejects standards and assessment of social and emotional skills and emphasizes social learning through subject teaching.
Article 4 <i>Exploring problems and potential of curriculum making for social learning. Implications for policy and practice.</i>	How is social learning supported through subject teaching? What are the challenges related to such practices?	Qualitative interviews with students and teachers. Participant observation of four classes in language (Norwegian) and science.	Teachers influence students' social learning by framing contents, methods, purpose and assessment in their subject teaching. Teachers can support students' development of social skills and sense of community through such teaching; but they can also exacerbate social problems such as marginalization and fragmentation in the classroom.

Notes: Critical realism (CR); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The main study findings are further elaborated in the article summary (see Chapter 5). In the summary, I also provide an overview of how the articles relate to the study's research

questions and discussion in this thesis. Underlying these discussions are the concepts of curriculum making and social learning that I will elaborate in the following section.

1.2 Main Concepts

1.2.1 Social learning

Here, I outline the main influence behind the broad concept of social learning employed in this study. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) explain social and emotional learning (SEL) as learning to ‘recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate the perspective of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions and handle interpersonal situations constructively’ (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 406). Similar descriptions have been provided by (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2017) emphasizing the five competency domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. These scholars describe social and emotional learning as the process of acquiring practical skills and attitudes through sequenced, active, focused and explicit interventions. In the classroom, this process can involve teaching and modelling social and emotional skills and providing opportunities for students to build and apply such skills.

Kautz et al. (2017) employ ‘character skills’ as an umbrella term for seemingly overlapping concepts of soft skills, non-cognitive skills and socio-emotional skills. These skills include openness, experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism, otherwise known as the ‘Big Five’ skills of personality psychology. The researchers argue that such skills are important predictors of educational attainment and economic success, and that they can be influenced systematically through education. In a recent study, Hukkelberg and Ogden (2020) also argue that there is no universally recognized definition or measure of social competence, but that most studies align in emphasizing interpersonal (social) and intrapersonal (cognitive) skills as determinants of social functioning. Although social competence is not universally defined, I will, in this study, draw on these previous studies to understand social learning as the development of individual social skills as important factors and outcomes of learning in schools.

I will also draw on Wenger’s understanding of learning (Farnsworth, Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016; Illeris, 2018; Wenger, 1999) as a fundamentally social phenomenon.

According to Wenger (1999), learning involves social participation and can be understood as

a collective process of developing a common practice, a sense of community and a shared meaning and identity. This process may facilitate the development of individual social skills, but its outcomes are also distinctly social and shared. Over time a community of practice may develop a shared repertoire of routines, symbols and styles to express themselves as a community. Such communities can also develop a joint enterprise that defines their purpose as a community and provides meaning to their practise (Wenger, 1999). A key function of a community is to negotiate the boundaries between its members and the outside world. These boundaries control who and what is recognized within the community and must be continuously manifested and renegotiated by its members. Wenger's concept of social learning is important in this study because it emphasizes the collective practice of the community as an outcome of learning. Such practices will be explored in the classroom as acts that create a shared meaning and a sense of belonging to the individual who engage with subject curriculum in the classroom.

A final influence on the concept of social learning is drawn from the concept of 'longing for belonging' (Osterman, 2000; Rabøl Hansen, 2011; Søndergaard & Rabøl Hansen, 2018). This concept describes the human desire to belong to social communities 'that makes sense as meaningful spaces of shared activity and belonging' (Søndergaard & Rabøl Hansen, 2018, p. 327). Such longing can however also trigger practises of exclusion and 'othering' to consolidate the group around a common external enemy. In this study, I recognize bullying behaviour as a social process of learning in an effort to become part of a community by harassing others who are perceived to threaten the integrity of the group.

In summary, I draw on three major influences of social skills, collective practice and longing for belonging to understand social learning as a process of developing individual social skills and a collective sense of community and belonging through education. This broad concept of social learning will be employed throughout this thesis and elaborated in the final discussion.

1.2.2 Curriculum making

Curriculum research (van den Akker, de Boer, Folmer, Kuiper, Letschert et al., 2009) has described different levels of curriculum making from the supra level of international discourses, to the macro level of state or national curriculum policy and the micro level of classroom interactions with the curriculum. The concept of curriculum making applied in this

study encompasses practices of curriculum design and implementation at the state level and curriculum planning and enactment at the classroom level.

At the policy level, curriculum making involves deciding the purpose, aims and contents through reform processes that legitimize state governance and control of education (Lundgren, 2012). In Norway, the main bodies responsible for curriculum development include the Ministry of Education and Research (NMER) and the Directorate for Education and Training. State-based curriculum making can involve different forms of curriculum control (Hopmann, 2003). Such control may include local autonomy to adapt and decide contents and methods of teaching, and state-based systems of testing and accountability to ensure that students learn what they are supposed to learn (the product) according to the aims and provisions of the curriculum. The outcome-oriented approach to curriculum control is often associated with Anglo-American curriculum models (Gundem & Hopmann, 1998). Process control, on the contrary, involves controlling educational input by providing prescribed plans and frameworks for teaching. This perspective emphasizes procedural control to ensure that teachers deliver the plans in accordance with the aims of the curriculum and allows for different results and student outcomes. This form of control is often associated with the Didaktik tradition, and previous Nordic models of curriculum design.

Further, state-based curriculum making can imply using different forms of governance to exert control over educational practices. Chan (2012) identifies soft governance as the use of non-regulatory tools such as guidelines and information to support practice. Hard governance, on the contrary, involves legal structures and enforced compliance. In the context of the current study, I recognize the process of curriculum making at the policy level to include the design of control and governance frameworks, including the regulator status of the curriculum, its legal provisions, and the guidelines and support provided by national authorities. The concept of curriculum making applied in this study thus encompasses both soft and hard forms of governance to design and implement national curriculum frameworks through processes of process and product control (Mølstad & Karseth, 2016). At the macro level, such curricula can be understood as analogous to ‘prescribed’ curricula (van den Akker et al., 2009), including core objectives attainment levels and examination programs.

At the classroom level, curriculum making can be understood as a process of developing plans, materials and modules for teaching and learning in schools (van den Akker et al., 2009). Building on a deliberative tradition of curriculum theory (Englund, 2015; Reid, 2016; Schwab, 1982), it can also be understood as a participatory process of curriculum decision-making that emphasizes the deliberate engagement of multiple local actors and the ownership of teachers. The concept of curriculum making employed in this study will, at the classroom level, encompass the practical and deliberative endeavour of socially enacting the curriculum. Such enactments involve teachers, students, contents and their environment in a mutual quest to realise a shared vision of what it means to be educated (Deng, 2017). At the micro level, this perspective can be seen as encompassing both the ‘described’, ‘enacted’ and, to some degree, also the ‘received’ curriculum (Priestley, 2019).

In this study, I envisage teachers as curriculum makers as they design learning experiences that invite students to negotiate meaning from their encounters with subject knowledge and help students to relate their knowledge to the problems and concerns in their own lives. This concept foregrounds teachers as curriculum makers while also recognising students as agents in the negotiation of the curriculum. I also draw on the concept of ‘community-building didactics’ (Plauborg, 2011, 2016; Rabøl Hansen, 2014; Schott & Søndergaard, 2014) to emphasize how teachers’ choice of goals, contents and working methods can prevent bullying and support students’ formation of social communities. This concept underscores the interconnected nature of social and academic outcomes of teachers’ curriculum making and emphasizes how academic teaching and learning can also produce distinctly social outcomes in the classroom.

In summary, the concept of curriculum making employed in this thesis includes state-based curriculum making as a practice of governance and control at the policy level, and a deliberative social practise involving students and teachers negotiating their curriculum in the classroom. The concept also encompasses subject teaching to promote a sense of community and belonging among students in the classroom.

1.3 Context of the Study

In the text that follows, I present some recent developments in the national and international context that relate to the study of curriculum making for social learning in Norway.

1.3.1 The social and economic nature of learning

At the turn of the century the OECD introduced several efforts to re-frame education and learning for the 21st century. Underpinning these efforts is an emphasis on the need for transition from an industrialized society to a new global economy where ‘knowledge is now a central driving force for economic activity, and the prosperity of individuals, companies and nations’ (OECD, 2010, p. 21). Following this assertion, the OECD emphasizes the development of adaptive competencies that can help students deal with the rapidly changing demands for new knowledge and skills in the workplace. Such competencies are framed as the ability of learners to actively construct their own knowledge and skills and use strategies to regulate their learning. Learning is also described as a contextual and socially situated practice that requires skills in communication and cooperation (OECD, 2010).

1.3.2 Social and emotional skills

The OECD suggests that social and emotional skills are underrated in policy debates, in part because such skills cannot be reliably measured as outcomes of education (OECD, 2015). While many countries provide general guidelines to help schools develop students’ social and emotional skills, the OECD asserts detailed guidance tends to be lacking and the assessment of such skills is less transparent and more informal. Further, the OECD recommends developing social and emotional skills from an early age and to assess such skills through the use of validated measures in education (OECD, 2015, p. 135).

In its Study on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) (OECD, 2020b), the OECD has developed a cross-cultural framework for assessment. The aim of SSES, according to the OECD, is to ‘provide policy-makers and educators with relevant information about the conditions and practices that foster or hinder the development of social and emotional skills in schools’ (Kankaraš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019, p. 3). Although the results from SSES are not yet public, initial reports indicate an intention to combine data on students social and emotional skills with other established instruments of international assessment, such as IELTS, PISA and TALIS.

1.3.3 Education 2030

The OECD recommendation to emphasize social and emotional skills is also recognizable in the OECD's recent framing of the Future of Education and Skills 2030 framework (OECD, 2018). This framework seeks to provide policymakers with recommendations on knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that students will need to thrive and succeed, as well as recommendations on the design of curricula and education systems to promote such outcomes effectively. The OECD's recommendations include the development of a broad range of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, and a more systematic approach to developing social and emotional skills such as empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration. The OECD also espouses the design principle for educational change, emphasizing aspects such as student agency to ensure that curricula are designed around students' needs and in recognition of their prior knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. The design principles advocated by the OECD also emphasize curriculum coherence by drawing more specifically on content knowledge from academic disciplines, and better alignment of teaching and assessment practices to support the desired outcomes.

These recent developments by the OECD provide strong incentives and arguments for policymakers to address issues of social learning in curricula and assessment frameworks in the national context. Previous research has highlighted how Norwegian educational policies are negotiated in complex ways, considering both international policy recommendations and national concerns (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010; Mølsted & Karseth, 2016). In the text that follows, I present some developments in the Norwegian context that relate to the study of curriculum making for social learning.

1.3.4 Bullying prevention on the national agenda

Despite numerous comprehensive efforts (Roland, 2011), bullying victimization rates in Norwegian schools remain high. In a recent survey, 6% of students report being bullied (Wendelborg, 2020). Most students are bullied by their peers, but some (1.6%) also report being bullied by their teachers. In 2014, the highly publicised bullying-related suicide of a 13-year old boy named Odin sparked public outrage at the authorities for not doing enough to tackle bullying in schools. At that time, the government had already commissioned an official committee of experts to assess all national measures and policies addressing bullying in schools.

In its report (ONR, 2015a), the official committee recommends strengthening legal frameworks, comprehensive capacity building and training for teachers to prevent bullying. The committee underlines how teachers must engage the social dynamics of their classes for development, including learning environments, and how ‘communities in schools are developed by organizing the goals and contents of teaching in such a way that it includes students as active participants in the academic contents of the school’ (ONR, 2015a, p. 124). The committee also suggests substantial revisions to the national curriculum, emphasizing issues such as democracy and human rights, norm critical assessment and the development of students’ digital, social and emotional competence. Following this report, the government enacted new legislation to strengthen student rights and took measures to enforce those rights in schools. A number of nationwide training programs were also initiated to provide teachers with better competence in dealing with issues of bullying in schools.

1.3.5 School of the future: The need for curriculum reform

Parallel to these events, the government also commissioned a separate official committee to assess the contents of the national curriculum (ONR, 2014). The committee’s mandate included assessing which competencies students would need in school, education and work life, and as responsible members of the society over the next 20-30 years. The committee was also charged with evaluating changes that needed to be implemented in subject curricula if students were to develop these competences, and what such changes would require of the various stakeholders in primary and secondary education.

The primary rationale for commissioning the committee can be found in the evaluation of the previous curriculum reform, known as Knowledge Promotion (NMER, 2013). The government was by and large pleased with the introduction of the previous curriculum but also expressed concerns regarding the rapid changes in Norwegian society, including higher demands for skilled labour, increasing digitalization and a more diverse population in Norway. The government further argues that subject contents should be frequently revised to ensure their relevance in supporting students with the knowledge and skills they need and encompass all aspects of the broad mandate of Norwegian education. The government also cites concerns from stakeholders that schools are not providing students with needed basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, and that more practical and aesthetic work should be

encouraged in schools. A prominent aspect of the government's rationale is also the OECD's work on 21st century skills, underscoring skills such as cooperation, creativity and flexibility as important factors for students' learning and success in dealing with the new demands of working life in a knowledge economy.

A detailed analysis of the committee's recommendations and the national policy negotiations regarding social learning are provided in Articles 2 and 4, and in the background and discussions of this thesis. On a more general note, it may be helpful to the reader to know that a new core curriculum emphasizing values and principles for compulsory education was passed by the parliament in 2017, and the new subject curricula for primary and secondary sections were enacted in the fall of 2020. Moreover, the curriculum reform in 2006 introduced a principle granting teachers autonomy in choice of contents and methods in their teaching. This principle is upheld with the introduction of the new curricula in 2020.

These policy developments, including the development of transnational frameworks of assessment and official recommendations on bullying and curriculum reform, are important contextual factors for understanding how social learning is influenced by curriculum making in Norway.

1.4 Thesis Outline

Following this brief introduction of the topic, main concepts and context of this study, I will now proceed to explore the research questions pertaining to social learning and curriculum making in Norway. In Chapter 2, I outline previous research in curriculum making and social learning, including studies on development of social and emotional skills and bullying prevention. I also outline studies on curriculum making in the national and international level and include previous research of curriculum making for social learning at the practice level. Chapter 3 outlines the main theoretical framework of the study with a metatheoretical grounding in CR and the deliberative curriculum theory and social theory of learning as analytical tools. Chapter 4 describes my methodological framework building on CR and discusses the primary methods of literature review, interview and observations used in generating data for the study. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the four peer reviewed journal articles underlining the study and outlines how the main findings from these articles relate to the topic and questions asked in the study. Chapter 6 provides an in-depth discussion of the

main research questions, including an analysis of how social learning is understood in international policy and research, and how social learning is influenced by curriculum making in policy and practice in Norway. Finally, Chapter 7 provides some concluding remarks regarding the overall problems posed for the study and discusses limitations and potential implications of the study's findings for future policy, practice and research.

2 Previous Research and Thesis Contribution

The main problem addressed in this study is how curriculum making in Norwegian policy and practice influences students' social learning. In this chapter, I review previous research to inform the discussion of how social learning is understood in international policy and research (see Research Question 1). I start by outlining research on curriculum making in the international context, followed by research on the Norwegian context. This distinction is made to inform discussions of how curriculum making at the international level also influences curriculum making for social learning at the national level (see Research Question 2). I proceed to present previous research on social learning, including research on classroom management and teachers' practices, to inform discussions of how social learning is influenced by practices at the classroom level (see Research Question 3). In the final section, I summarise these research findings and address how this study contributes new knowledge to the fields of curriculum making and social learning.

2.1 Research on Curriculum Making

2.1.1 The international level

The increasing prominence of concepts such as 21st-century competence has been investigated by Voogt and Roblin (2012), who argue that such competencies are generally associated with higher order skills necessary to cope with the complex problems and unpredictable situations of the modern knowledge society. Voogt and Roblin find most frameworks describing such skills converging around collaboration, communication, literacy, social or cultural competencies and citizenship. Implementing these competencies in curricula tends to offset established ideas of content and goals and redefine the purpose of schooling. Such elements can be added or integrated as cross-curricular competences in the curriculum. Voogt and Roblin also argue that the assessment of 21st-century competencies requires new assessment technologies and that current assessment models are inadequate for assessing such complex competencies.

A number of scholars have been critical of the growing emphasis on 21st century skills and learning outcomes in education. Biesta (2016) argues that a new language of learning has infiltrated educational discourse and foregrounded learning as an individualistic concept, making the learner responsible for how they construct knowledge and engage their

surroundings as lifelong learners. This emphasis, Biesta argues, conceals learning as a relationship between individuals and a process of mutual discovery. Priestley (2011) aligns with Biesta in criticizing the 21st-century skills agenda for shifting focus in educational discourse from teaching to learning, and proliferating a neo-liberal view approach where curricular frameworks set out not just what children should know, but also how they should be.

Hughson and Wood (2020) have investigated the OECD's recent development of the Learning Compass 2030 (LC30) framework that expands the ideas of 21st century education. The LC30 is an offspring of the Future of Education and Skills 2030 framework outlining a comprehensive 'roadmap' for curricular reform. In contrast to previous frameworks (see Knain, 2005), the researchers find the OECD emphasizing disciplinary knowledge as central to schooling. Hughson and Wood however also find that the LC30 continues to be governed by the instrumentalist logic of the knowledge economy and almost exclusively constructs knowledge in a narrow utilitarian way as market relevant. With the LC30, the researchers see the OECD reasserting itself as a leader in 21st-century education by attempting to shape the whole of the curricular design process and including ready-made concepts for skills, competence and knowledge as a roadmap for curriculum reform.

Previous research has demonstrated how the OECD is highly influential (Pettersson, 2014; Pettersson, Prøitz, & Forsberg, 2017) in providing narratives to underscore curriculum reform in many European countries. This research highlights how international educational reasoning is blended with discourses in the national context and provides parallel narratives for curriculum reform. Other scholars (Sivesind & Wahlström, 2016; Wahlström, 2016) have demonstrated how transnational concepts influence national curricula, but also that such influences are not linear; rather, complex impulses that move between transnational and national and formal and informal policy arenas.

Wahlström, Alvunger, and Wermke (2018) argue that curriculum research in recent years has moved beyond simplified discussions of national differences and is increasingly addressing how global discourses of neo-liberalism are rearticulated in local struggles over traditions, culture and politics. Scholars Priestley and Philippou (2018) similarly argue that curriculum making has been dominated by simplistic top-down metaphors which underplay the

complexity of curriculum design and enactment as unique social practices. These scholars argue for a more nuanced approach, emphasizing curriculum making as a multi-layered series of social practices that transcend institutional boundaries. Curriculum research, Priestley and Phillippou argue, can contribute by exploring processes, assumptions and influences that enable and constrain social actors from developing practices that are more sensitive to broader pedagogical purposes, and less likely to render education as an instrumental means to an end.

Alvunger (2018) identifies three spaces of teachers' agency, in the collective, individual and the interactive space of social science teachers' curriculum enactments. In the collective space, teachers construct a mutual pedagogical plan to align aims, content and assessment by borrowing and combining content from different curriculum tasks across subjects. This process liberates teachers, increasing their agency in the individual space, to construct assignments and lesson plans according to their preferences. Alvunger also finds that teachers rarely refer to student influence on matters of content in teaching, and that most teachers are careful not to let students gain too much influence in the interactive space of the classroom. Some teachers do however make use of students' experiences that are relevant to the presentation of central concepts in the curriculum and also let some students explain and teach new concepts to their peers.

Kirk, Lamb, Oliver, Ewing-Day, Fleming et al. (2018) identify how teachers emphasize student agency, involving students as co-creators of a curriculum to increase students' motivation and participation in physical education class. These researchers identify four spaces for teachers and students to manoeuvre: new forms of communication to authorise student voice; offering students choices and opening learning possibilities; co-construction of a safe class environment; and using opportunities to rethink the traditional structures of the curriculum. The researchers argue that the activist approach employed in the study can be combined with broadly framed curricular aims that allow students and teachers to navigate the identified spaces and increase their agency to meet the local needs and priorities of schools. Researchers have also found early indications that this approach can allow students, particularly girls, to identify and critique the barriers to their enjoyment of and participation in physical education.

In summary, this international research indicates that curriculum making on the national level is influenced in complex ways by transnational concepts and international policy actors such as the OECD. Studies also find that international research both supports and critiques the emphasis on competence and skills in curricula. Studies also show that teachers negotiate curriculum requirements in different ways and variably involve students as co-creators of the curriculum in the classroom.

2.1.2 The national level

The Norwegian school system has a long tradition of emphasizing social outcomes, in line with the ideal of the social democratic welfare state (Telhaug, Mediås, & Aasen, 2006). The Norwegian curriculum is described as historically engrained in the Northern European tradition of *Didaktik* and *Bildung* (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010), while also being open and responsive to influences from the Anglo-American tradition of competency and learning.

Previous research (Mølsted & Karseth, 2016) indicates how the national curriculum implemented in 2006, aptly named ‘The Knowledge Promotion’, makes a significant shift away from the tradition of *Didaktik* and a content-oriented curriculum design that has dominated curriculum making in the Nordic context. This outcomes-oriented curriculum underscores competence aims as the core category for what students should know, understand and be able to do as a result of their learning in schools. Adding to this, the Norwegian curriculum places more emphasis on short-term performance indicators that can be measured after a certain time, compared to similar curricula in Finland that emphasize a more long-term oriented understanding and familiarisation with social values and norms.

Karseth and Sivesind (2010) argue that the emphasis on competence and skills represent a transition towards a more individualized curriculum. This, the researchers argue, is evident in how students are obliged to self-regulate and manage their personal identities as an outcome of education. This shift transfers responsibility to the individual student and exonerates the education systems and curriculum for failing to provide conditions for individual success. Studies have also investigated how these changes influences teachers’ practices in the classroom. Mølsted, Prøitz, and Dieude (2020) find that teachers find ways of adjusting their practice to new curriculum demands and have developed their professional language, according to the policies. This is evident in the teachers’ use of self-made criteria and goal

sheets as tools to explain what students should learn. Such practices, the researchers argue, indicate that the curriculum's emphasis on goals and assessment has had a clear impact on teachers' practices in schools.

Some initial studies have also been conducted to analyse the newly revised national curriculum (implemented in 2020), dubbed 'The Subject Renewal'. Willbergh (2016) claims that the limited knowledge base underlying this reform risks devaluing content knowledge as an outcome of education. Willbergh finds the educational concept of 21st-century competence, that underlines the reform, to be theoretically inferior to the concept of *Bildung*, and fears that functional emphasis on practical skills and competencies will constrain students' acquisition of important content knowledge. Hilt, Riese, and Søreide (2019) have also criticized the reform, claiming that it indicates a shift towards promoting social and emotional skills to ensure the production of human capital for economic prosperity. This, the researchers argue, implies a narrowing of competencies that may legitimize the need for new assessment and end up excluding students who do not conform to the narrow ideals set forth by the curriculum.

An evaluation of the curriculum reform is currently underway. Initial reports of Karseth, Kvamme, and Ottesen (2020) suggest that stakeholders in the education sector have appreciated being actively involved in the process of designing the curriculum and that it provides a better internal coherence between contents and competencies in individual subjects, and a stronger emphasis on values throughout the curriculum. The report however also questions whether the participatory process of curriculum making, in effect, conceals the power exerted by national authorities through the aims and provisions of the reform.

Thus, previous studies on curriculum making in Norway indicate a clear orientation towards an outcomes-based curriculum in the Norwegian context, and how teachers adapt their teaching practices to accommodate the changes in the national curriculum. Studies also indicate how the newly revised curriculum has been criticised for emphasis on a narrow set of 21st-century skills, but also hailed for its improved coherence and emphasis on values.

2.2 Research on Bullying and Social Learning

In this section, I review previous research on bullying prevention, social learning and classroom practice. This informs my discussions using a broad concept of social learning (see Introduction) and outlines gaps in the existing literature that this study contributes to filling. I start by outlining research on bullying prevention and social learning and proceed to outline research on classroom practices that influence social learning in the classroom. Finally, I summarise some features of the existing research and outline contributions made by this study.

2.2.1 Bullying prevention

Bullying research has a long history in Norway, building on the prominent works of Olweus and colleagues (Olweus, 1974, 1992). This psychologically oriented tradition has focused on describing bullying as a consequence of individual aggression and anti-social dysfunction and identifying characteristics of bullies and victims that make them particularly prone to bullying. This perspective has however also been challenged in the Norwegian context, notably by Hareide (2004) who argues, building on the works of Pikas (2002) and Heinemann (1972), that bullying should be understood as a group process and resolved through processes of restorative justice. Other Norwegian scholars (Dammen, 2003; Hausstätter, 2006) argue that bullying can be understood as a result of symbolic violence inflicted by schools, with its formal structures, strict rules, tedious routines and conventional methods of discipline and teaching, causing children to act out in aggression and bullying behaviour.

Søndergaard (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Søndergaard & Rabøl Hansen, 2018) argues against understanding individual dysfunction as the primary cause of bullying behaviour and advocate an understanding of bullying behaviour as community-based practices of exclusion underpinned by students' existential need to belong and their social exclusion anxiety. Helgeland and Lund (2017); Lund, Helgeland, and Kovac (2017) also suggest a new definition emphasizing bullying as 'acts by children and/or adults that constrain an individual's sense of belonging and of being a person of significance in the community' (Lund et al., 2017, p. 6). This broad definition challenges the classical criteria of intent, repetition and imbalance as signposts of bullying in school, and has gained significant traction, particularly in early childhood education and care. This alternative definition, including acts by adults, pertaining to an individual's sense of belonging however seems to

encompass teachers' classroom management and subject teaching that constrains students' sense of belonging as acts of bullying. Although the Lund's definition has reinvigorated discussions about how teaching can promote inclusion and prevent bullying, its implications for teachers' practice and judicial standing have made the definition less widespread in compulsory education.

Roland (2014, 2017) has developed a systems-oriented framework to explain bullying as repeated individual and collective interactions of exclusion, systematically targeting a weaker individual. This research adds to the individually oriented perspective of Olweus (Olweus, 1974, 1992) by emphasizing bullying as collective antagonism. Roland and Galloway (2002) have also found that some aspects of classroom management have positive effects in counteracting bullying, including training students to work in groups as part of their academic work. This research emphasizes how teaching and classroom management are entangled, and how classroom management can contribute to social cohesion in a school class. Fandrem, Strohmeier, and Jonsdottir (2012) builds on Roland's framework and finds that young immigrants in Norway report higher rates of bullying victimisation than their native peers. In a later study, Nergaard, Fandrem, Jahnsen, and Tveitereid (2020) also find that, for immigrant students, the feeling of membership in a subgroup seems to be stronger than the feeling of membership in the class community. Although teachers generally accept diversity in their classrooms, diversity did not seem to be appreciated, encouraged or used in teacher practices aiming to increase feelings of inclusion.

Researchers Eriksen and Lyng (2015) have identify gaps in the current repertoire for bullying prevention in Norwegian schools. One such gap, the researchers argue, is the lack of strategies to enhance social cohesion and sense of belonging in the 'formal we' of the school class. Lyng (2018) has also demonstrated how social mechanisms of marginalisation are enacted through subtle distinctions within a group of 'normals' and how subject teaching can also support a social process of bullying and exclusion. Such processes are however not always apparent to students and teachers as bullying, as Eriksen (2018) demonstrates by outlining how the traditional definitions of bullying are highly engrained and monitored by both students and staff in Norwegian schools.

Norway has a long tradition of supporting systematic bullying prevention through the use of anti-bullying programs like the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and School-wide Positive Behaviour Support in schools. Recent studies using population-wide longitudinal register data for all Norwegian primary schools (Borgen, Kirkebøen, Ogden, Raaum, & Sørli, 2020) however find only small reductions in classroom noise and no significant effects of these programs on academic outcome, well-being or bullying prevalence. In sum, this previous research on bullying indicates that established understandings of bullying are increasingly being challenged by new theories and approaches to bullying prevention. A social perspective is evident in the emerging approaches emphasizing how bullying is influenced by social dynamics in peer groups and student-teacher interactions in the classroom. Longitudinal research (Borgen et al., 2020) also suggest that traditional anti-bullying programs may have a limited effect on bullying prevalence. Together, these findings underscore the need for new approaches and strategies to preventing bullying in schools.

2.2.2 Bullying and social learning

Previous research has also found students' social and emotional learning to be an important factor in reducing bullying and promoting students' self-esteem and self-regulation (Espelage, Low, Polanin, & Brown, 2013; Rigby & Slee, 2008; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). Vreeman and Carroll (2007) investigated the use of curriculum interventions to prevent bullying, including videotapes, lectures and written curriculum applied in the classroom. They found only four out of ten studies with documented reductions in bullying rates. Rigby and Slee (2008) also found that standalone curriculum interventions focusing on development of appropriate social skills were less successful than whole-school interventions. These findings are further supported by Farrington and Ttofi (2009) who found that programmes of longer duration and multiple components had a greater chance of reducing bullying, but also make it more demanding for teachers to participate in such programmes. The latter finding is supported in other studies (Tancred, Papparini, Melendez-Torres, Fletcher, Thomas et al., 2018) that argue that overcrowded curricula and overburdened teachers are significant obstacles to promoting social outcomes and preventing bullying in schools. These reviews not only indicate that standalone curriculum interventions are less effective in reducing bullying in schools, but also that more effective whole-school interventions are time consuming and challenging for teachers.

Policies and research have emphasized interventions targeting peer groups to prevent bullying. In her review, Salmivalli (2010) finds that there is less empirical evidence to suggest what at the group level should be changed and how. Salmivalli finds evidence supporting the claim that children belonging to bullying cliques increase their bullying behaviour and that such behaviours may be emulated by others over time. She also finds that some classroom contexts inhibit even highly empathic children from helping their vulnerable peers. Salmivalli, Kärnä, and Poskiparta (2010) argues that interventions targeted at reducing bullying should involve all students rather than just bullies and their victims. She suggests working through universal interventions involving teachers and students in the whole class, with targeted interventions towards the bullies and victims and to a select group of high-status peers. Such interventions should develop students' sense of responsibility for the whole group of peers and promote safe strategies to support peers who are victimized.

Students' active participation in efforts to prevent bullying have also been highlighted in research. Cross and Barnes (2014) have emphasized the need to rethink standardized interventions and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to bullying prevention. Cross, Lester, Barnes, Cardoso, and Hadwen (2015) have also argued that there is a lack of engagement with students, particularly in the design and delivery of educational resources to address cyberbullying in schools. Such engagement, Cross argues, enhances the likelihood of reaching a diverse student population and developing strategies that address the needs and concerns of those targeted. Patterson, Allan, and Cross (2017) find that young people do not involve adults and primarily seek support from peers to deal with issues of cyberbullying. These findings underline the importance of helping students support each other in online communities to deal with issues of bullying. Lester, Waters, and Cross (2013) also find that increasing students' feeling of connectedness in school can contribute to reducing the effects of bullying, such as depression and anxiety.

The relational climate in a school class has also been found to influence bullying prevalence. Thornberg and colleagues (Thornberg, 2011; Thornberg, Wänström, & Jungert, 2018; Thornberg, Wänström, & Pozzoli, 2017) have emphasized collective moral disengagement as a mechanism to describe how normal functions of self-regulation and sanctions are deactivated in peer groups to allow bullying behaviours to flourish. Thornberg et al. find that such bullying behaviour is less likely to occur in classes characterised by a positive relational

climate and lower levels of moral disengagement. Building on these findings, Thornberg et al. suggest strategies to support teachers in building positive relationships and moral engagement through their teaching. Such strategies could include discussing mechanisms of moral disengagement in historical examples (e.g. Holocaust) and engaging students to reflect on examples of morals in their own lives. Recently, Thornberg, Baraldsnes, and Saeverot (2018) called for more research to investigate the pedagogical practices of students and teachers to ‘address all the processes that go on in schools, and how these processes may produce but also counteract bullying’ (Thornberg, Baraldsnes, et al., 2018, p. 295).

In summary, these studies on bullying prevention and social learning emphasize how standalone curriculum interventions are less effective at preventing bullying than coordinated whole-school approaches that involve all levels and actors in the schools. Studies also show how peer-group dynamics and student-centred approaches for design and implementation are promoted in international bullying research. Some scholars have also called for more research to investigate and integrate teachers’ practices and pedagogies in strategies to prevent bullying in schools.

2.2.3 Classroom practice

Interventions to improve students’ SEL in schools typically involve programmes and instructional practices aimed at enhancing knowledge, skills and behaviours to promote positive affective, cognitive and social development (Weissberg et al., 2017). Previous studies have not only found positive effects of integrating SEL interventions in schools (Elias et al., 2015; Jones & Bouffard, 2012), but have also identified a lack of systematic implementation and support for such approaches in the classroom. Yoder (2014) also finds that research recommends supporting such learning through student-centred classroom management, collaborative learning and engaging students in self-assessment.

Teachers’ expectations of how students should behave in the classroom has been found to influence outcomes in the classroom. Gustavsen (2017) finds that teachers tend to assess girls as having better social skills than boys. Teachers’ expectations of social skills also explain some of the variance in grading, indicating that teachers may contribute to the generation of gender differences in academic achievement. Thuen et al. (2007) find that emotional support from teachers and students’ experience of meaning in their schoolwork influences how they

cope with problems in the class. The study indicates that teachers treat students with behaviour problems differently and thus contribute to variations in how the students perceive their learning environment. The studies also suggest that subject contents and academic support should be considered as influential factors in promoting social learning and reducing problem behaviour in the classroom.

Some studies have investigated how teaching practices influence students' social learning; notably, Plauborg (2011, 2017) finds that students' social and academic learning are intertwined with teachers' practices of classroom management and that teachers can prevent bullying by considering social aspects of students' learning in the class. Some scholars (Plauborg, 2011, 2016; Rabøl Hansen, 2014; Schott & Søndergaard, 2014) outline the concept of *community-building didactics* to emphasize how teachers' enactment of goal, contents and working methods can influence students' sense of belonging and prevent bullying in the class. Wang and Goldberg (2017) found positive outcomes from using children's literature to reduce bullying among elementary school students, and argue that bullying prevention can be integrated into daily language arts instruction. Similarly, Mack (2012) finds that language teachers can address the problem of bullying by teaching about emotions through the study of literature, writing, drama, media and language.

Uitto and Saloranta (2017) have found that teachers do not always feel confident in dealing with topics outside their curriculum. Dealing with issues such as values, attitudes and well-being can therefore be a challenge for teachers. Anker-Hansen and Andrée (2015) have also identified tensions in teachers' use of classroom debates in science education, as students' use of scientific knowledge is entwined with social motives, such as expressing social responsibility or winning the debate. These findings highlight how teachers' choice of working methods can have both social and academic consequences that are not always considered by the teachers. In line with these findings, White and Kern (2018) also emphasize how teaching for well-being and a sense of belonging can have positive outcomes, but that simplistic interventions in complex educational settings may do more harm than good.

A longitudinal ethnographic classroom study by Michelet (2011) finds that students' academic and social learning constitute different aspects of the same process rather than two different processes in the classroom. The study develops the concept of *student culture* to

encompass these intertwined processes and much of what is usually described as the learning environment. The study provides a detailed account of how students, through participation and counterplay with teachers, influence their academic learning. At the same time, they participate in social learning processes characterized by how relationships and positions are lived out in the classroom. The concept of student culture recognizes how students' social and academic learning are negotiated through both collaboration and dominance in the classroom. In relation to this study, this concept also underlines the collective cultural outcome of classroom practice.

Summing up, previous research on concepts and educational practices emphasizes a connection between students' academic and social learning, with a dominant perspective that individual social skills are outcomes of learning. Studies also show how teachers significantly influence students' behaviour and social learning by framing contents and working methods in their subject teaching. Studies also indicate that teachers can experience difficulties when trying to influence students' social learning through their teaching, and that some interventions may also have a negative impact on students. This research also demonstrates how student-teacher interaction also produces distinct social and cultural outcomes in a class.

2.3 Features of Existing Research and Study Contribution

This review of research on curriculum making, bullying prevention and social learning demonstrated how these fields overlap and emphasize different perspectives on social learning. Some notable features can be observed. First, research on curriculum making demonstrates a shift towards outcomes-based curriculum models and 21st century skills, a development that is both supported and criticized by the research. Second, previous curriculum research underscores how teachers and policymakers adapt and negotiate new concepts and influence, in complex ways, their practice of curriculum making. Third, in the field of bullying research, new theories and approaches to bullying prevention are emerging. One emerging strategy underscores the social dynamics of bullying and advocates interventions to address peer-group dynamics and teaching practices to prevent bullying. Fourth, studies on traditional anti-bullying programmes and standalone curriculum approaches have demonstrated a lack of effect on the prevalence of bullying in schools. These findings further underscore the need to develop new approaches to prevent bullying in schools. Fifth, research on social learning demonstrates a variety of concepts and

understandings converging around the development of individual social skills. Sixth, as in the field of bullying prevention, studies on social learning seem to align in emphasizing the role of teachers and peers in supporting social learning. However, studies also demonstrate that classroom practices can also have negative effects on students' social learning.

In sum, previous research demonstrates a growing confidence in the ability of schools to support students' social learning through practices of curriculum making at the policy and classroom levels. So far, however, little research has investigated how such influences are negotiated by teachers and policymakers, and how these negotiations affect students' social learning in the classroom. The studies also indicate a large body of knowledge on the development of individual social skills, but less knowledge about the collective outcomes of social learning. This study contributes to the existing research by further outlining how social learning is conceptualized in international policy and research and argues for the inclusion of both individual and collective outcomes in a broader concept of social learning. The study also contributes by discussing how social learning was negotiated by policymakers in the recent Norwegian curriculum reform and outlining potential mechanisms that can explain such negotiations in the national context. Finally, the current study contributes to new knowledge about how teachers' practices influence students' social learning by highlighting the collective enactment of subject curricula and the mechanisms that enable and constrain such learning in the classroom.

3 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will describe the theoretical framework of the thesis combining a metatheoretical grounding in CR and Wenger's (1999) social theory of learning. This framework, along with the main concepts outlined in the introduction (see Chapter 1.2), will be used to address the problem of how curriculum making in Norwegian policy and practice influences students' social learning. In the following, I outline key analytical concepts drawn from CR and the social theory of learning, and consider some limitations and potential contributions from this theoretical framing. These theories and concepts will be used as the basis for retrodiction in the discussion of the thesis.

3.1 Critical Realism: A Metatheoretical Framework

CR can be described as a theory of science characterised by its three main features of *ontological realism*, *epistemological relativism* and *judgemental rationality* (Bhaskar, Danermark, & Price, 2018; Danermark et al., 2011). In the following, I will outline these basic concepts and how the theory of CR has previously been applied in education research.

3.1.1 Ontological realism and causality

CR provides a general ontology of how the social and natural world works to guide scientific explorations and uncovers the structures and mechanisms that produce real events and experiences (Danermark et al., 2011). CR embraces the ideal of criticism to systematically question human knowledge and experience and seek out causal explanations for social phenomena beyond what is empirically given. For critical realists, 'the possible is more basic than the actual' (Bhaskar et al., 2018, p. 56), meaning that a social phenomenon holds more possible outcomes than what is actualized in any given situation. The object of social science, from the viewpoint of CR, is then not just to collect and analyse data on empirical outcomes, but to produce knowledge about the underlying structures and mechanisms that enable and constrain such events. This quest is supported by a stratified ontology containing three levels: the empirical, the actual and the real (Bhaskar et al., 2018).

At the *empirical level*, we experience the world and influence events directly and indirectly through our interactions and observations. Like much social science research, CR research focuses on collecting data on human interaction and making inferences (i.e. using theory) to

explain how these interactions are guided by underlying structures and mechanisms that create patterns of interactions and cause social events to occur in a structured way over time. Social events are in the CR-ontology, not same as the human experience of an event, but rather separate and ontologically real units located at the *actual level*. Such events are real in the sense that they can occur regardless of whether humans experience them or not. This is often the case when social norms are deeply ingrained in a group, causing its members to act on instinct and without question. Such events may be oblivious to the insiders in the group but, nonetheless, real and causative of other events and experiences in the social world.

Like mainstream social research, CR employs empirical data to make inferences about events and the mechanisms that cause such events (event causality). Event causality describes the necessary antecedents of an event—the *what* that caused the event to happen as it did (Mingers & Standing, 2017). Building on the stratified ontology, CR however also seeks to explain the underlying mechanisms that cause social events to occur in similar and recurring ways across time and space. This generative causality explains the *why* things happened; understood as mechanisms of causality that are enduring and generative regardless of whether they are actualized in an event or not (Mingers & Standing, 2017). Such generative mechanisms are located at the level of the *real* and can only be inferred through theory. The presence of generative mechanisms can be inferred by comparing data from multiple events to describe the ‘natural tendencies’ (Bhaskar, 2016, p. 36) displayed in these events. Such tendencies should not be confused with laws of nature as described in the covering law-model of natural science (Moses & Knutsen, 2012).

Contrary to governing mechanisms in the natural sciences, these generative mechanisms emphasized in CR create the conditions for social events to occur in particular ways, but do not determine their outcome. This is due to the presence of multiple generative mechanisms that may be in operation simultaneously, counteracting the influences of any single mechanism. Although a social mechanism may be in operation, its effects may therefore not always be actualized or observed in a specific event (Danermark et al., 2011). The natural tendencies of events may then not be actualized in a given situation, or they may be ‘*possessed without being exercised*’, or ‘*exercised without being actualized*’ (Bhaskar, 2008a, p. 404).

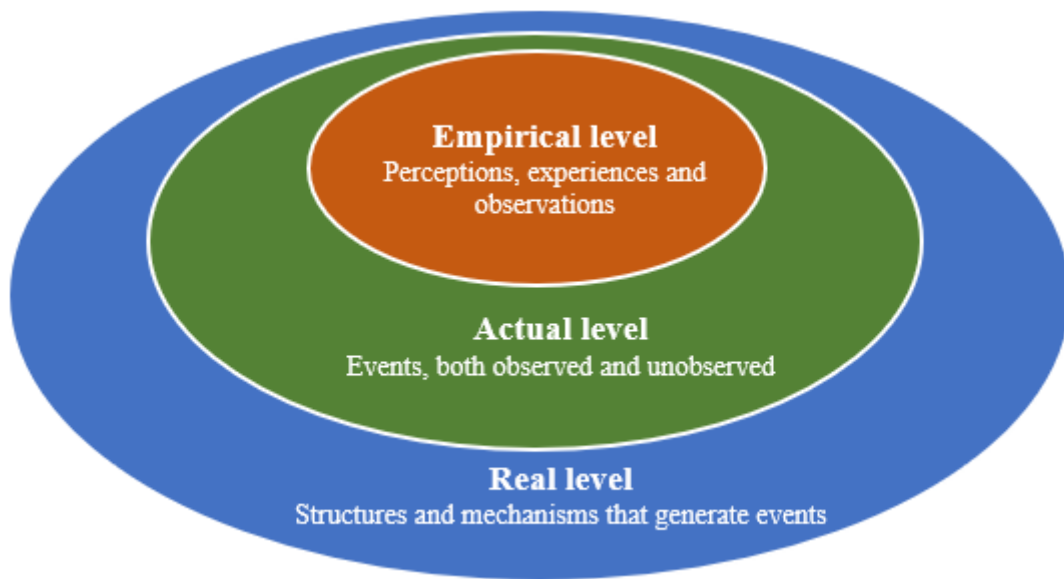


Figure 1: CR ontology and concepts, based on Hoddy, 2019.

Building in a stratified ontology of CR, the purpose of CR-social science is to ‘investigate and identify relationships and non-relationships, respectively, between what we experience, what actually happens, and the underlying mechanisms that produce events in the world’ (Danermark et al., 2011, p. 21).

Building on the principle of stratification, CR holds that the world is divided into layers that possess their own structures and mechanisms. To infer causal mechanisms in CR social research, it is necessary to construct a *laminated system* of irreducible ontological levels that are specific to the context of the research (Bhaskar et al., 2018). An example of a laminated system devised for the purpose of disability research incorporates mechanisms at the physical, biological, psychological, psycho-social/economic and cultural/normative levels (Danermark, 2019). Each of these layers contain structures and mechanisms that enable or constrain disability in different ways. CR further posits that structures and mechanisms operating at one level, that is, mental disabilities, cannot be reduced to or fully explained by structures and mechanisms at a lower level of reality, that is, cultural norms toward people with disabilities (Danermark, 2019). The purpose of the laminated system then, is to enable a case-specific inference of causal mechanisms that can explain the emergence of a social phenomenon (disability) and allow the researcher to resolve this complex social phenomenon into its constituent parts. Layered systems then provide a way of reducing the complexity of social phenomena intermittently, by focusing on causal mechanisms at any given layer, while also

maintaining the complexity of the phenomenon as a whole by insisting on the presence of independent and simultaneous structures and mechanisms at other layers. In CR, social structures, such as norms and enduring patterns of behaviour, precede human agency (Bhaskar, 2008a). These structures, however, do not determine how humans act, but rather emerge as a result of human agency that either transforms or reproduces the pre-existing social structure. Structure and agency then constitute a dialectic where the two are mutually dependant, but also distinguishable from each other. This understanding of layered ontology and laminated systems in CR provides powerful tools for dealing with complexity and a strong impulse against dualism and reductionism in social science research.

3.1.2 Epistemological relativism: Interdisciplinarity and underlabouring

Another important feature of CR is its emphasis on epistemological relativism (Bhaskar et al., 2018). This feature underscores all human knowledge as transitive and implies, in principle, that all forms of scientific knowledge about the world are equally fallible. This epistemological relativism however does not imply that human knowledge is insignificant or irrelevant to explain phenomena in the social and natural world. Rather, it underscores, as emphasized by ontological realism, that because the world is ordered by structures and mechanisms operating independently of our human knowledge, no single method or theory can be applied mechanically and produce invariable knowledge about the world. As the social world is complex and constantly changing, our knowledge about the world will always need to be updated and adapted to the new condition of the world. This can be exemplified by the accumulation of knowledge that sparked the industrial revolution, and the current need to develop new knowledge and practices to counter its devastating effects on our global climate. As such, CR insists that all human knowledge is culturally and historically engrained within the context of an epistemological framework. It provides a humbling impulse to social science research, while at the same time maintaining that objective transitive knowledge about the social world is valuable and attainable.

This foundational principle of epistemic relativism also implies that critical realists should have an ‘open-mindedness and tolerance for disciplines other than their own’ (Danermark, 2019, p. 374). CR, then, encompasses and encourages a large range of scientific approaches, including quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods approaches, and seeks to explain the world as a complex whole, and not just through its fragmented parts. A CR approach to

interdisciplinarity can be characterized as ‘inter-level’ research that requires the use of knowledge and methodology from different disciplines to explain ‘all relevant levels’ (Danermark, 2019, p. 370) of a phenomenon. Such endeavours usually require long-term cooperation and resources between researchers from different traditions, based on a mutually agreed laminated system. On a smaller scale, such as in this project, it can also involve the use of existing theory and methodology from different fields to infer structures and mechanisms operating at different levels of the laminated system.

Adjacent to this interdisciplinary approach, Price and Martin (2018) argue that CR can be usefully applied to underlabour for theory and practices in and between different disciplines. Using CR as an underlabourer involves using key features of CR, such as stratified ontology and epistemological relativism to provide a general scheme (i.e. a laminated system) for social science research that enables and encourages a multidisciplinary approach. CR provides an ontological grounding and a framework that strengthens the validity of social research and resolves many of the underlying epistemological issues that may otherwise constrain such approaches. Using this framework invites a creative and explorative research process to explain causal relationships in new ways, and provides thinking tools (Danermark et al., 2011) to support a pluralistic scientific research process.

3.1.3 Judgmental rationality and modes of inference

A third key feature of CR is its emphasis on judgemental rationality (Bhaskar et al., 2018). Although CR purports epistemological relativism, this does not imply judgmental relativism. that is, that all explanations of social phenomena are of equal merit. CR, rather, proposes using scientific theories and methods as tools to discriminate between rivalling explanations. The concept of judgemental rationality invoked in CR is similar to that of inference to the best explanation (Lipton, 2004) applied in other strands of social science research. Such inferences are always made within an epistemological framework, that is, in a historic and cultural context and that which supports the organisation and accumulation of knowledge in a specific field. This presupposes science as a developmental process that constantly generates new theories to rival the old, and as the supremacy of theories with superior explanatory powers within its field.

Judgemental rationality is supported in CR through a general model of CR research that involves two signature modes of inference in abduction and retroduction. Abduction (Hartwig, 2015) is often used as a synonym with inference to the best explanation, and requires ranking competing potential explanations by their explanatory powers, and choosing the explanation that best describes the phenomenon in question. Retroduction (Danermark et al., 2011) is a similar mode of inference that builds on abduction, but where the premises of the preferred explanation are scrutinized and the researcher asks: What are the basic conditions and requirements that allow this phenomenon to exist? This mode supports the inference of higher-level mechanisms that can explain the recurring tendencies of social phenomena across different contexts.

3.1.4 Previous critical realism education research

CR has been applied by a number of researchers to explain the social phenomenon of education and educational systems. The work of Archer (2013) has highlighted the social and historical origins of educational systems, and the constant transformation of such systems through morphogenic cycles, involving the elaboration (morphogenesis) and reinforcement (morphostasis) of the social structure that governs such systems. Bhaskar (Scott & Bhaskar, 2015) has made contributions to a general theory of education, including outlining philosophical premises for human beings, their environment and their acquisition of knowledge in education.

Other scholars (Shipway, 2011) have used CR theories and methodology to demonstrate the their usefulness in analysing and explaining educational practices. One such contribution is the elaboration of the *self-sustaining heteronomous social system* (see Methodology and Article 2 in this thesis) to explain how educational systems employ mechanisms of psychological rationalisation and ideological mystification to enable the misrepresentation and measurement of learning outcomes, thereby reinforcing its own existence. Shipway also provides an illustrative analysis of how compulsory science education in Australia can incorporate basic principles of CR in practice to support the democratic power and participation of students and enhance their emancipatory skills such as self-monitoring and self-evaluation.

Another illustration of CR research at the practice level is provided by Wilkinson (2013) who analyses how narrowly framed social science curriculum in the UK makes it difficult for Muslim boys to understand and interpret their faith in a contextually appropriate way. Such curricular inadequacies can drive Muslim boys to other, less responsible sources of religious reflection. This lack of curricula inclusion can further marginalize young Muslim boys and undermine their sense of belonging in society, potentially causing radicalization and violence. Building on its inclusive epistemology, Wilkinson demonstrated how CR can be applied to develop a more inclusive humanities education that promotes religious renewal rather than being perceived as a threat to religious survival.

CR has also been applied in studies on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), notably by Chikamori, Tanimura, and Ueno (2019) who have investigated national curriculum provisions and guidelines for ESD in Japan. Chikamori et al. find that unclear concepts and lack of support in implementation constrain teacher applications of the ESD curriculum, and use the transformational model of social agency (Bhaskar, 2016) to develop a broader metaconceptual framing for the ESD curriculum to aid in its implementation. Moreover, in environmental education, Olvitt (2017) applies the model of the four planar social being (Bhaskar et al., 2018) to argue for a radical re-orientation of education systems in the light of the global environmental and climate crisis. Olvitt points to the need to engage in transformative learning that generates critical thinking and collective agency to challenge the deep-rooted practices of colonialism, gender and race inequality and environmental injustice that sustain the status quo. Olvitt's work demonstrates the transformative potential of CR to emancipate students by developing their moral agency as embodied, sentient beings through education.

At the policy level, Priestley (2011) analyses trends in contemporary curriculum making using Archer's (1995) framework of morphogenic cycles to analyse curriculum change in a broader cultural and historical context. The analysis highlights common trends in different national curricula, including the emphasis on learning outcomes and supporting students to become responsible citizens and effective contributors. Using CR, these changes are seen as processes of cultural and structural elaborations and conditioning, based on underlying generative mechanisms that cause certain trends to reappear and acquire new language in modern

curricula. Priestley's work demonstrates how CR can be usefully applied to understand the mechanisms driving curriculum change at the policy level.

Another example of CR-driven policy analysis is the work of Ming-Lun (2017), who explores party politics in the Taiwanese school system as generative mechanisms for anti-bullying policies in Taiwanese schools. In the article, he elaborates how top-down governance of Taiwanese politics make social control possible in the school system by obstructing collective agency for social change. Ming-Lun not only elaborates how a generative mechanism of top-down governance emphasizes control in school bullying policies, but also how a counteracting mechanism of bottom-up experiences with bullying create demands for policies to enhance social agency in schools. Ming-Lun's research demonstrates the complex interworkings of generative mechanisms that act and counteract to produce social outcomes. Had the interplay of mechanisms been different, the outcomes of Taiwanese bullying policies would also have been different.

In summary, CR provides a theory of science characterised by its three main features of ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgemental rationality. These features support the multilevel explanation of social phenomena by drawing on the theory and methodology of different disciplines and making qualified inferences to explain such phenomena at the levels of the actual and the real. A number of studies have employed CR in education research. This research displays a wide range of approaches that draw on CR concepts to develop general theories of education and educational systems, critique and develop curricula practice and policy, and suggest new and transformative ways of supporting emancipatory learning and sustainable development. A notable absence in this research is the limited number of studies that draw on empirical investigations of classroom practice. To the author's knowledge, no studies have so far applied CR concepts of causality and generative mechanisms to analyse practices of curriculum making or social learning. Consequently, this study provides a notable contribution to the field of CR by demonstrating the usefulness of its basic features to explain the complex interactions of policy negotiations at the national level and of students and teachers engaged in subject learning in the classroom.

3.2 The Social Theory of Learning

In this study, I draw on Wenger's (1999) social theory of learning (see also Farnsworth et al., 2016; Illeris, 2018) to conceptualize social learning (see Chapter 1.2.1). I also draw on Wenger's theory in my analysis of how social learning is influenced by curriculum making in the classroom in Article 4, and in the final discussion of this thesis. In the text that follows, I explain how I have applied this theory and offer some comments on previous applications and critique the theory.

Social learning can be understood as a collective process of developing a common practice, community, meaning and identity through the collective enactment of a curriculum in the classroom. *Practice*, in Wenger's (1999) theory signifies the collective process of learning as doing. In this study, I will use the concept of practice to analyse what students and teachers do as active participants in the negotiations of meaning in their classroom. These practices include physical and verbal exchanges, reification of symbols and experiences and different ways of working together in the classroom. The concept also includes non-active participation, such as refusing to take part in learning activities or not expressing views in the classroom.

Wenger also outlines the concept of *community* to imply the collective process of learning to belong (Wenger, 1999). In this study, I will employ this concept to describe groups within the classroom who share a mutual sense of engagement and develop a sense of belonging through their pursuit of a joint enterprise. Over time, such communities develop a shared repertoire of routines, symbols and styles to express themselves as members of their community. These members continuously guard the boundaries of their community by assessing and reinforcing each other's behaviour and evaluating the behaviour of others in their classroom.

Wenger's (1999) concept of *meaning* signifies an accumulation of knowledge and experiences through a history of shared learning. To create meaning, according to Wenger, is to be actively engaged in a process of understanding and to affect and be affected by the perspectives of others as events transpire. In this study, I will understand meaning as the collective experience of a school class derived from the encounter with subject contents and teachers' curriculum making in the classroom. This collective experience is partial and subject to renegotiation as new content is enacted and new understandings emerge.

Wenger's (1999) concept of *identity* implies the collective process of learning, becoming a community. In this study, I will use the concept of identity to analyse how students and teachers negotiate the aims and purposes of education in their collective enactment of subject curriculum. Such negotiations, building on Wenger, can be understood as a process of becoming where students develop an understanding of who they are in the class and who they should aspire to be as adults and citizens outside of the school. Through these negotiations, students are also compelled to consider their identities in relation to their teachers and peers, and to the communities to which they belong in the classroom.

Wenger (1999, p. 118) posits that multiple communities can operate within a '*social landscape*'. In this study, I will be using the social landscape as a metaphor for the classroom, where multiple communities and meanings operate simultaneously. This concept is helpful to analyse competing practices as '*boundary encounters*' (Wenger, 1999, p. 112) between different communities and individual efforts to negotiate and influence their practices as acts of '*brokering*' (Wenger, 1999, p. 108) in the classroom.

3.2.1 Previous applications and critique

Wenger's (1999) theory has previously been applied in classroom research (Hinck & Tighe, 2020; Kapucu, 2012) in higher education. Some studies have also been conducted in compulsory education including a study by Evnitskaya and Morton (2011) who use Wenger in a linguistic analysis of secondary science education, and Anker-Hansen and Andrée (2015) who investigate classroom debates as communities of practice in lower secondary science education. Pless and Katznelson (2019) have also used Wenger's theory to explore young people's motivations for participation and non-participation in lower secondary education.

The social theory of learning has also been criticised (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, & Unwin, 2005) for being overly optimistic about the social transfer of knowledge from experienced participants to newcomers through peripheral participation. This critique emphasizes that newcomers are not always in a disadvantaged position and may also have leverage over and provide new knowledge to the communities they enter. Research, building on Wenger's theory, has also been criticized for being limited in scope and lacking in empirical support (Smith, Hayes, & Shea, 2017). Most studies have a qualitative design

focusing on data analysis to confirm theories, and fail to provide a substantial critique or guidance to developing new practice and research.

Despite its flaws, some distinctive features of Wenger's (1999) social theory of learning make it relevant in this study. First, the theory foregrounds social learning as a collective process. As outlined above, it provides useful concepts to analyse potential mechanisms at the socio-cultural level of the laminar learning environment. Second, the theory also provides a contrast to conventional theories of social learning (Bandura & McClelland, 1977; Engeström, 2018; Vygotsky, 2012) and, thus, supports the critical realist notion of immanent critique by providing alternative explanations of social learning to challenge conventional wisdom in the field.

3.3 Limitations and Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical framework of this thesis combines critical realist concepts of causality and laminated systems with concepts of community and practice from the social theory of learning. This provides a rich vocabulary and several useful concepts to analyse how social learning is influenced by curriculum making in policy and practice. Before moving on to describing how the study has been conducted, I will briefly consider some of the study's limitations and potential contributions to theory.

3.3.1 Limitations in theoretical framework

The study's use of a metatheoretical framework in CR provides a solid ontological founding and several useful concepts to support the research process. The study, however, only draws on a narrow piece of the vast theoretical landscape of CR. The early contributions of Bhaskar (1998, 2008b), and interpretations relating to education (Brown, 2009; Scott & Bhaskar, 2015; Shipway, 2011) constitute the main theoretical influences in the project. This means that later developments in dialectical CR and meta-reality have little bearing on the project and findings. Other notable theoretical strands, such as the social realism of Archer (1995), have also not been utilized in this research. This latter omission has, for example, meant that the historic and structural conditions and morphogenic cycles of the educational system have been given little prominence in this study.

In this research, I have drawn primarily on concepts derived from a deliberative tradition of curriculum theory. Concepts as such as curriculum making and instructional events have been used to highlight the negotiation curriculum in policy and practice, in line with the purpose of the study. This approach is clearly a limitation of the vast body of knowledge regarding teaching and learning in schools, and the political and social process of curriculum development. Using the concept of curriculum is itself an adaptation of the English language format of this thesis that underplays the historic and cultural influences of the Didaktik tradition and the innate Norwegian concepts of *læreplan* and *didaktik*. Influences from other prominent traditions, such as critical and reformist curriculum theory, have also not been considered in this research. Doing so would likely add new dimensions and corrections to the insights provided in this analysis.

Social theories of bullying and learning are used in this study to explore the conceptualization and practice of social learning. Reducing such theories to a singular social position may be analytically useful, but it also represents a serious underrepresentation of the complexity of these theories. The works of Søndergaard (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Søndergaard & Rabøl Hansen, 2018) and Wenger (Farnsworth et al., 2016; Wenger, 1999) provide contrasting concepts to the psychologically oriented theories of SEL and conventional bullying research. Other contrasting theories, such as evolutionary bullying theory (Koh & Wong, 2017; Kolbert & Crothers, 2003) or structural theories of bullying (Dammen, 2003; Hausstätter, 2006), could also have been applied with useful outcomes. Similarly, other socially oriented theories of learning, such as activity theory (Engeström, 2018; Vygotsky, 2012) or social learning theory (Bandura & McClelland, 1977), could also have been applied to critique the individualizing tendencies of cognitive theories of learning, although not with a similar emphasis on the collective outcome of learning as the chosen theories provide.

3.3.2 Theoretical contributions

In Article 1 and the discussions in this thesis, I contribute to the development of a critical realist theory of learning. Previous research (Nunez, 2013; Tikly, 2015; Zembylas, 2017) has criticised a narrow understanding of learning as an empirical outcome of education, and has highlighted the critical realist understanding of learning as a middle way between the empiricist and constructivist accounts. This previous research has expanded on the existing theories of learning and has delivered concepts such as the laminar learning environment to

emphasize learning as an emergent property from the interaction of structures and mechanisms in the classroom. This study builds on these insights, but also bemoans the inability of critical realist research to provide a more ontologically coherent theory of learning to thwart instrumentalist practices and cherry-picking policies in education. The current study contributes towards such theorizing by outlining critical realist accounts of learning and suggesting (Illeris' 2003) general theory of learning and the concepts of competence and Bildung as a starting point for further development.

In Articles 1–4 and the discussions in this thesis, I contribute to the development of a broader understanding of social learning. Previous SEL research (Durlak et al., 2011; Kautz et al., 2017) has developed concepts and measures that describe changes in the five key traits of personality (Big Five) as outcomes of students' social and emotional learning. Such traits are theorized to be malleable through education and causative of other outcomes such as cognitive learning and social functioning. Other research building on theories of social psychology and culture (Farnsworth et al., 2016; Søndergaard & Rabøl Hansen, 2018) has theorized social learning as a collective process of developing community and mutual practices. This research emphasizes the normative climate and establishment of practices in social units as outcomes of social learning, and underscores how these units create conditions for students' development in schools. Previous research (Illeris, 2018; Restad, 2019) highlights the absence of a unifying theory of social learning. The current study builds on empirical data from curriculum analysis and classroom observations to suggest a broader concept of social learning including both individual and collective social outcomes. In relation to SEL research, this study questions the narrow focus in social skills, and challenges SEL research to theorise concepts that also include collective outcomes of social and emotional learning. This study also contributes to the development of socio-cultural theories by emphasizing a layered ontology and the interaction of curricular and social mechanisms to explain the emergence of social learning in the classroom.

4 Methodology

In this chapter, I will present my methodological framework for design, data generation and analysis in the current study. The main problem addressed in the study is how curriculum making in Norwegian policy and practice influences students' social learning. Building on the theoretical framework of CR, this project employs a pluralistic epistemological approach (Bhaskar et al., 2018; Danermark, 2019), using multiple methods of data generation and analysis to explore the problem.

In my analysis, I will draw on the CR concept of causality to analyse how students' social learning is influenced by generative mechanisms at the socio-cultural and curricular levels of the laminar learning environment. This process builds findings from policy analysis and qualitative interviews and observations from the classroom. In this chapter, I first outline how I have applied CR as a methodological framework in the study. In the following sections, I describe the methods employed in selection and data generation, including methods of policy and literature review, mixed methods sampling and qualitative interviews and observations. In the final section of the chapter, I discuss some challenges, limitations and methodological contributions of the study.

4.1 Applied Critical Realism

Applied CR can be characterized by its emphasis on explaining causality in social phenomena. In the CR-ontology, social systems are open, complex and emergent entities governed by a multiplicity of interacting mechanisms at different levels (Edwards, O'Mahoney, & Vincent, 2014; Mingers & Standing, 2017). According to Mingers and Standing (2017), social mechanisms display a number of characteristics. First, they are only apparent in the context of the activities that they control, for example, as an enduring pattern of behaviour that reproduces or changes the cultural norms of interactions. Second, such mechanisms rely on the knowledge of social actors who engage deliberately in activities as part of a culture and at a particular time. Third, such mechanisms are, in principle, unpredictable and only considered ontologically real by their powers to cause events to happen in particular ways over time, independently of whether they can be empirically observed or not.

Social mechanisms have the power to cause social events. Such events can be understood as ‘changes to existing entities’ (Mingers & Standing, 2017, p. 177), meaning that events describe a change in the actors’ dispositions or the ongoing flux of activities in a group. Without this change, there would be no event. In this study, I analyse causality in an open system of education by carving out events, according to the purpose of the research, and by describing those events in a way that makes it possible to infer how they may have come to pass. I also analytically separate the mechanisms that cause the event (event causality) and the deeper underlying mechanisms that may generate event change across time and space (generative causality) (Mingers & Standing, 2017). CR has previously been applied in a variety of different way in social science research. In the text that follows, I outline some of these main strands, and position the study in the wider field of CR research.

4.1.1 Approaches to critical realism research and the position of the study

Two methodological schools of thought are discernible in the ‘flexible deductive’ (Fletcher, 2017) and the ‘abductive grounded theory’ approach (Hoddy, 2019) to applied CR research. Fletcher’s flexible deductive approach employs extensive (quantitative) and intensive (qualitative) methods of data collection (Fletcher, 2017). Tendencies in the data are explored in a ‘directed’ coding process, using existing theory and literature to resolve events into analytical categories. This process not only supports the inference of mechanisms beyond what is empirically given, but also provides an opportunity to supplement the initial deductive coding with new and more nuanced inductive coding to revise the applied theories. Fletcher further suggests raising the level of theoretical engagement with the data to redescribe identified tendencies using theoretical concepts. In this final stage of analysis, retrodiction is employed to infer the necessary contextual conditions for the observed empirical trends and identify generative mechanisms at a deeper level of reality. This approach, Fletcher argues, provides a flexible way of inferring causal mechanisms, while also allowing existing theories to be revised based on findings from the research.

Hoddy (2019) argues for an abducted grounded theory approach to CR research. Contrary to Fletcher (2017), Hoddy proposes using grounded-theory techniques and open coding to avoid being driven by theory and to consider all possible meanings in the initial stage of the research process. In the axial coding stage, Hoddy suggests drawing on existing theories to describe and make explicit connections between concepts and categories that allow the

inference of the underlying mechanisms. Hoddy argues that his abducted grounded theory approach is useful in exploratory research where existing theories have not provided a substantial explanation of the mechanisms involved in the phenomena. Hoddy also cites recent developments of an informed ground theory approach (Thornberg, 2012) that has brought grounded theory in alignment with CR. These developments allow the researcher to deal with theory-driven analytical categories as useful building blocks and points of departure in their research.

In this study, I draw on the informed grounded theory approach, ‘thoroughly grounded in data while being informed by existing research literature and theoretical frameworks’ (Thornberg, 2012, p. 249), to analyse findings from classroom research in Article 4. I also draw on Fletchers’s (2017) flexible abductive approach in my analysis of curriculum policy in Article 3, and in the final discussion of findings from both articles in this thesis. In both the outlined approaches, the object of the research is to infer causal mechanisms that can explain why things happen the way they do. Underlying these approaches is a general schema describing the process of CR research and the modes of inference used when existing theories are available to explain a phenomenon. In the following, I outline this general schema, also known as the resolution-redescription-retrodiction-elimination-identification-correction (RRREIC) model (Danermark et al., 2011).

The first step in the RRREIC model of applied CR research involves the *resolution* of a complex event into its multiple components and causes. In this study, this resolution is facilitated by the creation of a laminar system that separates potential layers of mechanisms in the event (see outline of laminar systems, below). The second step involves the abductive *redescription* or contextualization of causes in the event to interpret them in new ways by using existing theories to explain the event. In this study, I apply the social theory of learning and the CR theory of self-sustaining heteronomous systems to explain events in policy and practice. The third step is then to *retrodict* explanatory components from the descriptions given in the previous step to infer their underlying causes and explain how these mechanisms must operate to create the conditions for the event to appear the way it does in the research. In this study, I infer such mechanisms from policy and practice in the final discussion of the thesis. This discussion also encompasses the final steps of *elimination*, *identification* and

correction by critically interrogating the inferred mechanism and adjusting the proposed antecedent causes of the event.

In summary, I will draw on a flexible, abductive and informed grounded theory approach to CR research. I will resolve the phenomena explored in the articles by using laminated systems to identify causal relationships in policy and practice, and draw on theories of social learning and self-sustaining systems to redescribe article findings. I will draw on the CR understanding of causality to retrodict underlying mechanisms from these findings to explain how students' social learning is influenced by mechanisms at the socio-cultural and curricular level. In the text that follows, I describe the laminated systems used to direct my search for casual mechanisms in this study.

4.1.2 Context and laminated systems in policy and practice

CR underscores the importance of context in social science research (Danermark et al., 2011). In a review of applied CR research, however, Mingers and Standing (2017) find only a limited number of studies, and none in education research, describing causal mechanisms specifically related to their context. In this study, I will draw on the context-structure-mechanism-outcome (CSMO) model (Bhaskar, 2014; Mingers & Standing, 2017) to infer causal mechanisms embedded in the context of educational policy and practice in Norway. I will distinguish between mechanisms at the policy (macro) level that are addressed in Article 3, and mechanisms at the practice (micro) level that are the focus of Article 4. The laminar systems used to explore mechanisms at these levels are outlined below.

4.1.2.1 Policy mechanisms: *The self-sustaining heteronomous system*

At the policy level, I will be drawing on the model of the 'self-sustaining heteronomous system' (Shipway, 2011, p. 135) as a tool for outlining mechanisms that reproduce a social structure. This model is outlined as $S \rightarrow (s \rightarrow p \rightarrow a) \rightarrow S'$. (S) signifies the social structure, in this case education, and (s) signifies the source of that structure in the need-to-know about educational outcomes. This need leads to a 'misrepresentation' (p) of outcomes, which then leads to *actions* (a) by stakeholders that in turn *reinforce* the social structure (S').

The reinforcing cycle of need-misrepresentation-action is propagated by two distinct features. The first is a '*psychological rationalization*', in which the misrepresentation of outcomes

causes the need to know and reinforces the misrepresentation as a valid measure of those outcomes. The second feature is '*ideological mystification*', in which the relationship between the structure and the actual outcome (*O*) is obscured so that the structure is validated by the misrepresentation of outcomes and vice versa. Simply put, the model describes how measures of educational outcomes reinforce the structure of education and obscures students' actual outcomes. Consequently, what ends up as a desired outcome of education is what the system is able to measure.

In Article 3 of the study, this model is applied as a laminated system to analyse mechanisms driving the international push for measurement of students social and emotional skills in schools. This system outlines the mechanisms of rationalization and mystification that reinforce a narrative of uncertainty and make policymakers depend on the system to provide data to control the outcomes of education. The model is also applied in the discussion of this thesis, to analyse how curriculum making in Norwegian policy influences students social learning in school. In this discussion the model is used as a basis to infer mechanisms of curriculum making for social learning at the policy and practice levels.

4.1.2.2 Practice mechanisms: The laminar learning environment

As a laminar system, at the practice level I will be applying the model of the laminar learning environment (Brown, 2009). This model describes the learning environment as an open social structure defining and limiting possibilities for learning, while also enabling students and teachers to act in ways that may reproduce or transform their learning environment over time. In this study, I will be zooming in on generative mechanisms at the socio-cultural and curriculum level that are facilitated by social relations and language and influenced by curricular enactments in the classroom.

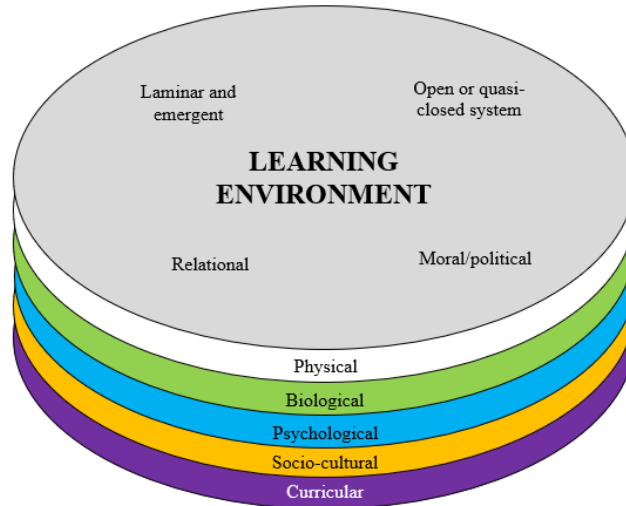


Figure 2: Laminar learning environment, based on Brown 2009.

The model describes five layers, focusing first on mechanism at the physical and biological levels. These mechanisms include factors such as school architecture, heat and lighting at the physical level, and children's dispositions such as whether they are healthy, have had a good night's sleep and eaten breakfast at the biological level. Mechanisms such as children's motivation and cognitive aptitude are addressed at the psychological level. At the sociocultural level, mechanisms such as teacher-student relations, normative climate and group dynamics and individual agency are outlined. At the curricular level, the model emphasizes both the prescribed curriculum and the enacted, hidden and absent curriculum. Brown (2009, p. 31) further argues that the learning environment is a moral and political entity that is continuously engaged in the 'creation, reproduction and sharing of meaning', influenced by education policies that describe what and how students should learn.

In this study, the laminar model is outlined and discussed in Article 1 as a contribution to developing new theories of learning. In Article 4, the model functions as an underlabouring heuristic in discussions of how subject teaching influences social learning in the classroom. In the final discussion of the thesis, I also use the model as a laminated system to facilitate the inference of generative mechanisms of curriculum making at the practice level.

Summing up this section, I will in this study draw on the outlined concepts of CR methodology to infer causal mechanisms that can explain how social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the policy and practice levels in Norway. In the text that follows, I describe how I have generated data to inform my analysis. I start by outlining the methods used in

literature and policy reviews and proceed to describe how I have conducted my classroom study using methods of participant observation and interviews. Ethical and practical challenges are discussed in relation to each of these methods. I also address researcher reflexivity and methodological limitations and contributions in the final sections of the chapter.

4.2 Policy and Literature Review

The first research question of the project focuses on how social learning is understood in international policy and research. To answer this question, I first discuss existing theories of teaching and learning in light of the projects' metatheoretical grounding in CR (see Article 1). I also conducted a literature review of recent research on bullying (see Article 2), and analysed policy documents from the recent Norwegian curriculum reform (see Article 3). The methods used in literature review and policy analysis are discussed below.

4.2.1 Literature review

Cohen, Lawrence, and Morrison (2018) describes a systematic review as following explicit protocols and criteria for searching, with clear criteria for inclusion, standards for methodological rigor, and strategies to reduce bias. The literature review conducted for this study was inspired by a critical synthesis approach (Suri, 2013) with the purpose of producing new knowledge by making explicit connections and tensions between individual study reports that were not previously visible. A critical synthesis involves investigating research reports critically, questioning the presence and absence of topics and established metanarratives in the research. Questions asked in the critical review may include; what are the gaps in the prevailing understanding, what are the methodologies employed by researchers, and whose questions have received little attention in the research. The approach taken to the review was also inspired by the critical realist concept of immanent critique (Bhaskar, 2016), which encourages the identification of weaknesses in the strong ideas of a field.

I employed an eclectic sampling strategy including qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods studies in the corpus. The main search was conducted in March 2019 using the Web of Science, Scopus and ORIA databases. These databases were selected to ensure a broad representation from natural and social sciences and the humanities in both Nordic and international contexts. Building on an initial reading of systematic reviews, a preliminary

search was conducted following six lines of inquiry: 1) ‘Standalone’, ‘curriculum’ and ‘bullying’; 2) ‘Bullying curriculum’ and ‘whole-school approach’; 3) ‘Bullying’ and ‘subject curriculum’; 4) ‘Bullying curriculum’, ‘media’ and ‘citizenship’; 5) ‘Bullying’ and ‘informal curriculum’ and 6) ‘Bullying’ and ‘integrated curriculum’. This search generated a comprehensive body of literature of varying relevance to the study. Search procedures were subsequently revised, limiting the scope to English language peer-reviewed articles from 2009 to 2019, containing the keyword/topic ‘bullying AND curriculum’.

English language journals and studies from the past decades were preferred to assess how present-day bullying researchers address curriculum issues in their published work, and in dialogue with colleagues from around the world. Studies related to preschool, higher/teacher education, disability/special education, workplace, nursing and nursing education were excluded. This significantly reduced the number of items for review, while still retaining a corpus fit for purpose. A total of 54 abstracts were identified and reviewed. Ten articles were excluded for lack of peer review, full text in English and relevance. Five additional articles from frequently cited anti-bullying programmes, including the Kiva anti-bullying program and the Olweus bullying prevention program were removed to prevent overrepresentation. The most recent and relevant studies from both programmes were included. A total of 35 articles were reviewed in full text. Six articles were excluded for lack of relevance, leaving a corpus of 29 studies that were added to NVIVO 12 for further analysis and coding. The findings and analysis of this review are outlined in Article 2.

The exclusion criteria used in the review may have omitted important insights on curriculum and social learning from adjacent fields. Although some studies from preschool and kindergarten (see Helgeland & Lund, 2017; Repo & Repo, 2016; Repo & Sajaniemi, 2015) address similar issues, these studies were considered less relevant for the purpose of the review. Similarly, although certain groups, such as students enrolled in special education (Juil, 1989; Rose, Espelage, & Monda-Amaya, 2009), have been shown to have a higher risk of bullying victimization, differentiation based on bullying prevalence and student groupings was deemed less relevant to the purpose of this study. The limited scope and critical approach chosen for the review may also have overshadowed broader understandings of curriculum and social learning in bullying research.

4.2.2 Policy analysis

To analyse national and international policies on social learning, I conducted a policy review using a combination of bibliometrics and content analysis. The analysis was inspired by Bowen (2009, p. 28) and included ‘finding, selecting, appraising and synthesizing data contained in documents’. The approach also included building an overview of documents in a systematic fashion (Weber, 1990) and identifying patterns across policy documents and levels (Pettersson, 2014; Stemler & Bebell, 1999). The concept of the knowledge base (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993) was used to identify distilled understandings of social learning in the policy documents and to assess the sources cited in the documents for coverage and relevance.

In the first step of analysis, I identify key policy documents in curriculum reform. These included the final governmental white paper (NMER, 2016) and two preceding official reports (ONR, 2014, 2015b), as well as the revised core curriculum (NMER, 2017). In the second step, I reviewed focusing on discussions on social learning. Two main themes emerged from this reading, including discussions on the nature and understanding of social learning and discussions on whether and how to assess such learning. The third step involved registering cited sources in the policy documents using criteria for coverage and relevance. The coverage criterion included a source being cited in at least one official report and the final white paper. The relevance criterion included the source addressing the understanding of social learning or the assessment or measurement of such learning. This process provided a list of 39 sources. The sources were catalogued according to type, context and number of citations across the included documents. Twenty-one sources were excluded for failing to meet the coverage criterion. The remaining 18 sources were reviewed for relevance by reading abstracts, summaries and introductory chapters of the publication. From this reading, nine sources were excluded for lack of correspondence with the relevance criterion, and the remaining nine sources were included as part of the knowledge base for curriculum reform. The fourth step of the analysis involved an in depth reading of the nine items included in the knowledge base for social learning of the Norwegian curriculum reform. All documents were analysed using the main themes of understanding and assessment identified in the policy documents. The findings of the analysis are discussed Article 3.

Reviewing policy documents involves the subjective reasoning and choice of researchers in framing issues from the data (Bowen, 2009). In this case, the selection of sources was guided by the researchers' interest in international influences and national negotiations of social learning. To strengthen the reliability of the analysis, efforts were made to make the process of analysis as rigorous and as transparent as possible, and by having two authors assess the coding and findings of the analysis. Regardless of these measures, the validity of interpretations and conclusions drawn are, however, still influenced by the researcher's subjective reasoning and analytical framing of the study.

4.3 Classroom Study

In the final phase of the project, I conducted a classroom study to generate data on how social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the practice level in the classroom. In the text that follows, I discuss the methods used in sampling and selection, and qualitative observations and participant interviews.

4.3.1 Mixed methods sampling and selection

4.3.1.1 Selecting schools

I used a mixed-methods sampling strategy (Cohen et al., 2018) with qualitative and quantitative data to identify best practice schools eligible for field work. This strategy was inspired by previous research (Eriksen & Lyng, 2015, 2018) to enable data generation based on high-quality educational practices that can inform future policy and practice. I limited my search to lower secondary education to increase likelihood of capturing students' critical reflections on teaching and learning, and to enable observation of teaching practices during a highly formational period of students' personal and social development. A quantitative analysis was conducted in the fall of 2018 using secondary data from the National Quality Assessment System (NQAS). The quantitative analysis was based on measures of social and academic outcomes in grade 8–10 over a three-year period (2015–2018). The initial sample was drawn from 209 lower secondary schools in 3 geographically connected counties comprising a total of 15,033 students. This approach can be described as a non-probabilistic combination of convenience and purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2018).

The first step in the analysis involved conducting an exploratory factor analysis (Cohen et al., 2018) using SPSS to test reliability and relationships between two constructed measures for

class culture (CC) and academic achievement (AA). The following hypotheses were tested: 1. CC is positively related to AA. 2. Schools with positive CC and high AA are well suited for field work.

The measure for CC included five items, such as 'are students engaged in suggesting how to work in school subjects' and 'have you been bullied by other students' (see Appendix 7). A Kayser-Meyer-Olkin measure of 0.699 indicated the suitability of CC for factor analysis. The Chronbach Alfa measure ($\alpha=0.696$), however, indicated the factor to be only marginally reliable. The measure for AA included the total average points from students' subject exams and overall achievement. Simple linear regression demonstrated a positive but minor statistical relationship ($r^2=0.169$) indicating that CC accounts for 1.69% of the variance in AA. The first hypothesis was then partially confirmed, but with only minor statistical support.

To test the second hypothesis, I first conduct a Oneway analysis to group schools according to strength of CC. Only schools with a moderate to strong effect (Cohens $d > 0,5$ at 95% confidence interval) were included in the sample. Fifteen schools with both primary and secondary education (year 1-10) were removed due to risk of contamination. Outlier schools were also removed. Given the weak relationship between CC and AA, measures for AA were only used as supplemental indicators in the final list of 19 eligible schools ranked according to the effect of CC (see Appendix 7).

The next step of the analysis involved discussing identified schools with selected municipalities and knowledgeable persons in regional governments and universities in consideration of additional criteria, such as capacity, current staff and pedagogic focus, eventually identifying four eligible schools. These discussions underscored the importance of students' socioeconomic background, school size and geographic location as additional criteria for selection. This led to the exclusion of small schools and schools in highly affluent areas, and prioritizing schools in locations that could facilitate extended field work.

Four schools were identified as well suited for the study. Following a formal research approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Appendix 1), a request to conduct the study was sent to one of the recommended schools. Following a brief dialogue, the principal of the school agreed to participate in the study. The selected school was located in a

rural area on the outskirts of a small Norwegian city, and had, at the time of the study, around 350 students in grades 8–10.

Cohen et al. (2018) argues that the use of secondary data can be a challenge to statistical validity as such data may be collected for a different purpose and may not always be neutral. The data used in the analysis were all from a public database used for quality assessment by the Norwegian education authorities. While the initial statistical analysis did not provide sufficient grounds for a final selection of schools, it did prove helpful in deselecting a large number of schools that, according to the analysis, were less likely to display the educational qualities sought in the study. The list of schools also provided a useful tool for dialogue with knowledgeable persons to select a final candidate. Although there are limitations this approach, the structured combination of qualitative and quantitative methods provides reasonable assurance of the quality of the sampled school.

4.3.1.2 Selecting participants

Following an initial dialogue with the schools, two 8th-grade classes and two 10th-grade classes were volunteered by the headmaster as participants in the study. Teachers and students in these classes were provided with information and consent forms (see Appendix 2) in line with Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences and Norwegian Research Ethics Committee (NRREC) guidelines. All teachers and most students in the four classes consented to participate in the study. Students who did not consent were excluded from the observations and were not invited to participate in the interviews.

The sample includes two classes at an early stage of lower-secondary schooling (8th-grade, 13–14-year-old students), and two classes at a later stage (10th-grade, 15–16-year-old students). This design was chosen to enable analysis of how different age, maturity and time together may influence students' social interactions in the class. The selected classes were followed during either language (Norwegian) or science (Natural science) lessons. Language was chosen because it is the most comprehensive subject in lower-secondary education, with almost 400 mandatory lessons over three-year period, and covers a wide range of topics, including basic skills (reading, writing and oral), art and literature, linguistics and cultural history. Science is a smaller subject, totalling just around 250 mandatory lessons over the three-year period, but it is also a subject that involves a lot of practical work in topics such as

technology, energy and matter, life on earth and physical and mental health. These subjects were selected to facilitate the analysis of how contrasting subjects and different academic contents influence curriculum making and social learning in the classroom.

Arrangements were made to follow the four classes over a period of five months from October 2019 through February 2020. The selected classes had 27–29 students of mainly native Norwegian background, with a minority of immigrant students from Asia, Africa, South America, the Balkans and the Middle East. The teachers all have several years of teaching experience at the school and come from Norwegian-ethnic backgrounds, and are all in their mid-thirties/early forties. Three of the teachers are female, and one (10th grade science) is male.

The classes and teachers sampled were initially volunteered by the headmaster. While the headmaster no doubt volunteered some of his most successful teachers, my prolonged presence at the schools allowed me to also become familiar with other teachers and students and to assess the variations among students and staff at the school. These experiences indicated that the initial sample of classes represented a broad spectrum of students and teachers with different personalities and styles of teaching that fit well with the purpose of the study.

4.3.2 Observation

Observations for the project were done as a participant observer (Christensen & James, 2017; Okely, 2013) in a total of 35 lessons in the four selected classes. A typical day of observations would entail meeting the teacher and students in the hallway and entering the classroom together a few minutes before the start of the lesson. A free seat at the back of the classroom would usually be available and would serve as a vantage point for observations of the classroom layout, talk and actions. Observations were written down in a notebook, and the teachers' handouts to the students were collected for each lesson. Fieldnotes were later transcribed to a computer and stored in a secure server for analysis.

My initial observations were focused on how teachers framed purpose, contents, methods and assessment, and involved using a pre-designed schema for observation (see Appendix 4). This approach was inspired by the relational model of didactics (Bjørndal & Lieberg, 1978; Imsen,

2009) to highlight key dimensions in teachers' curriculum making. Following this model, I tried to observe how teachers frame learning goals and explain why students need to learn what they are supposed to learn in the different subjects. Students' interaction during lessons were observed along with their expressions indicating how they understood themselves as a collective, and how they understood the purpose of their learning in school subjects. I also observed the teachers' selection of contents and how these contents influenced the interactions of students and teachers in the classroom. Similarly, the working methods selected by the teachers were observed to explore how different forms of practice allowed students to develop their social skills, and how teachers sought to develop their students' social learning through subject teaching. By observing student engagement with different working methods, it was also possible to analyse how students express meaning and a sense of identity in different ways in the selected classes. Over time, I also compared notes to understand the patterns and differences in practice between the selected classes.

Being present as a participant observer can have an impact on the events and practices in the classroom. Okely (2013, p. 77) claims that 'the detached observer may be more likely to transform contexts' and argues that, for some participants, lack of personal contact may elicit a sense of fear. In this study, I took an active role engaging students with friendly gestures and questions before and after lessons, while mostly remaining quiet during lessons. This was done to build rapport with the students and help them feel less apprehensive about having an observer in their class. I also spent time with the teachers to get a sense of what they were planning, and to get their immediate reactions after the lesson.

A long-term presence was sought to elicit knowledge about the 'mundane and repetitive daily practice' of the class (Okely, 2013, p. 81) and facilitate a distinction between the ordinary and the more 'offbeat' exchanges. The 10th grade boys enjoyed playing basketball and would sometimes invite me to join them for a game during recess. Other times, I would meet students in the nearby city and converse with them on the way to the school. These exchanges let me learn more about the students' interests and who they associated with outside of class. I also spent a considerable amount of time in the teachers' lounge talking to different teachers. This allowed me to acquire alternate perspectives and viewpoints on the activities at the school and allowed me to develop relationships with teachers and staff outside of the

observed classes. This was particularly useful for understanding the school ethos and the points of contentions within the faculty.

4.3.2.1 Challenges in observation

Heath et al. (2009) argue that it is questionable whether a researcher is ever able to genuinely secure fully informed consent. Although all students and parents were informed about the project, some students did not return the consent sheets. After numerous reminders and consultations with the teachers, I decided to register all students who had not replied as non-consenting. This however also presented a problem during observations. The non-consenting students were still present in the classroom, and in several instances involved in key incidents that were recorded in the field notes. Although the non-consenting students were excluded from the analysis, their presence in the classroom was sometimes hard to ignore. Other students who had consented were sometimes anxious about how they were portrayed in my notes and would make gestures during class to indicate that they did not want to be observed. For the most part, I accommodated their requests and provided general descriptions about what I had recorded in my notes. I also reminded them that they were welcome to withdraw their consent at any time. Through these exchanges, I believe the students gradually developed a better understanding of what their consent entailed, and how they could influence the research process if they so desired. This transparent and cautious approach may also have contributed to strengthening the reliability of the observations made of the students.

Previous observational studies (Eriksen, 2017) have shown how local narratives of insiders and outsiders are entangled with notions of ethnicity in peer groups, and often in opposition to a predominantly 'white' school system. In this study, all the observed classes were ethnically diverse, but with a majority of students and teachers from a Norwegian ethnic background. Students with an immigrant background follow a different and more basic language course (course name abbreviated GUN) than their peers, and were frequently referred to as 'GUN-students'. During recess, some of these students would also form groups and engage in activities that allowed them to relate to each other using languages other than Norwegian. Although my observations include a diverse group of students and classroom practices, the influences of ethnic background and practices have not been specifically addressed. In my observations, I have focused on students as a social unit (the class) during science and language lessons. This focus presupposes that all students belong to the same class, even

though they may also attend different courses and experience kinship with students and teachers outside this class. This presumption may have overshadowed important tensions and cultural practices that influence how students and teachers relate in the classroom. As a white person of Norwegian background, my appearance and limited language skills may also have limited my access to information about how immigrant students negotiate their sense of belonging in the class. Considering these reflections, a more focused investigation of ethnic communities and students' experiences with subject teaching may have provided additional insights and new dimensions to the study.

4.3.3 Interviews

Qualitative interviews were conducted in the winter of 2020 following an extended period of observations in each class. A total of 32 students (17 boys and 15 girls) and 4 teachers participated in the interviews. The interviews were conducted using an open-ended inductive (Brenner, 2006) or semi-structured approach (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Heath et al., 2009). A preliminary interview guide was devised (see Appendix 3) to not only address relevant themes in the study, but also to invite participants to explore relevant topics on their own terms.

4.3.3.1 *Student interviews*

Previous research has emphasized group interviews as a useful and less-intimidating method for talking with young people about their experiences (Heath et al., 2009). In this case, I conducted four groups interviews with 7–10 students from each class. The participants were selected based on consent and observations and dialogue with the teachers to represent a broad section of students in the class. A balance of gender, personality and academic ability was sought in each group while also considering who would be comfortable participating in a group setting.

The interviews were conducted during regular school hours in an adjacent building close to the school, and in a separate meeting room to ensure privacy and distance from other students. I first invited students to reflect on what they felt about their situation in the class. A piece of paper with a timeline was provided to help students recall transitional periods in their time at the school (see Appendix 3). Students were also invited to recall any incidents that they felt had impacted their life in the class. All students were given an opportunity to answer these

questions in turn, before moving on to more specific questions and individual answers. This ‘funnel-shaped’ interview process (Heath et al., 2009) provided students with an opportunity to get settled in the interview, and to flag topics that they consider important during the interview.

The interview further addressed topics such as students’ perceptions of their class and groups within the class, how they felt their lessons in subjects affected the learning environment in the class and what kind of topics and working methods they enjoyed. The interviews also investigated students’ perception and feelings on being able to influence the rules of the class. In each group, I provided a general description of two observed lessons that contained episodes of rich social and curricular interactions. The students were asked to recall and share their experiences from these lessons, and how they felt the lessons influenced their learning in the class.

4.3.3.2 Teacher interviews

Four teachers were interviewed individually using a similar approach as in the student interviews. However, the teachers were also provided with the interview guide (see Appendix 3) and preliminary transcripts from three lessons and asked to recall their experiences. This was done to help teachers reflect on their planning and enactment of these lessons and to elicit a more detailed account of the observed events. In the interviews, teachers were additionally asked to reflect on the characteristics of the classes they taught and how they felt that their teaching influenced the social learning of their students. The teachers were also asked to name examples of challenges they faced in their teaching, and how they collaborated with the faculty to deal with these challenges.

The interviews with both students and teachers lasted around 60 minutes each and were recorded using the encrypted Diktafon software. Interviews were stored in a secure server in line with NRREC guidelines and later transcribed manually by the researcher, and with the help of a professional transcription service (see Appendix 5). The transcribed interviews were added to NVIVO 12 for coding and analysis. Excerpts from the interviews were later translated into English by the author.

4.3.3.3 Challenges in interviewing

The interviews were designed using the metaphor ‘traveller’ for the interviewer (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), as someone who listens and records the stories shared by the participants. This approach was taken to ensure a child-sensitive approach to group interviews, while also allowing the interviewer to probe for deeper meanings and reflections with the teachers. This approach also implied positioning students and teachers as experts (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) on life in the class. At times, some of the students made derogatory comments about peers in their class. As a traveller interviewer, I allowed such comments to pass, recording their contents and how other students in the group reacted, but without intervening in the conversation. This hands-off approach may have inadvertently contributed to some of the students feeling less included to voice their opinion in the interviews, and to bolster negative perceptions of students who were not present in the group interview. At the same time, allowing students to express themselves freely provided a deeper knowledge about the informal structures in the class, and ensured a more diverse and reliable set of data to be collected from the students’ interviews.

Heath et al. (2009) also argue that group interviews may potentially be a vulnerable setting due to the influence of peer pressure to adjust personal opinions in line with a perceived consensus. Some students may also feel uncomfortable sharing experiences in large groups and may be unaccustomed to talking about personal issues in front of peers. In this case, several of the invited students, particularly from the 8th-grade classes, declined to participate in the interview. During the interviews, some of the dominant students in the class imposed their narrative on the conversation. To accommodate this, I made a point of asking the quieter students for their opinions. This did elicit more perspectives in the conversation, but the general tone and positions observed during lessons was also clearly reproduced in the group interviews. This also meant that I, in some cases, was unable to record the personal reflections of some of the prominently featured students in my observations. In hindsight, this could have been compensated by conducting interviews in smaller groups or with individual students but, given the timeframe of the project, this was not prioritized.

4.4 Reflexivity, Limitations and Contributions

In this section I address how my personal background and experiences have influenced the research and consider the study’s methodological limitations and contributions.

4.4.1 The researcher

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) argue that objectivity in qualitative research implies striving for objectivity by being explicit about subjectivity. This reflexive objectivity can strengthen the reliability of research by outlining how the researcher's background, judgments and prejudices have contributed to the production of knowledge.

As a researcher, my background and personal experiences have influenced the research in various ways. During the final years of primary education, my school class was marred by prolonged episodes of bullying. One of those most effected was my childhood friend and neighbour who would later be permanently incapacitated, as a result of bullying and related problems in school. These experiences have motivated me to explore how bullying can be prevented. They may also have provoked a bias against traditional teaching practices and teachers who do not engage the social dynamics of the class beyond conventional disciplinary strategies. As a father, my affinity for adolescent children may also have caused me to be less critical of students' practices in the classroom.

Since 2012, I have been employed as a senior advisor on issues of learning environment at the National Directorate for Education and Training. This professional background has given me a broad understanding of the Norwegian education system, and how different policies in recent years have attempted to influence teachers' practices and students' social and academic outcomes. This background may also have produced a bias against narrowly conceived policies that do not consider the complex and interrelated nature of educational practice.

As an academic with a background in pedagogy, I have sought to explore how teaching and learning are related to practices of bullying in the classroom. I have drawn from previous research that has emphasized this connection and have designed a project to develop new knowledge on how students' social learning is influenced by curriculum making in policy and practice. This academic background and perspective may have induced a confirmation bias, leading me to seek out and interpret teaching practices in a more favourable manner and overemphasize their social significance for students. My long-term presence in the school and regular dialogue with the teachers may also have influence my assessments, causing me to be less critical of their practices.

These potential biases, stemming from my personal, professional and academic background have undoubtedly influenced my design and findings, and should be considered when evaluating the merits of the study.

4.4.2 Limitations in methodology

Reports and policy papers from research articles at the national and international levels have been reviewed. Conducting document-based policy analysis can provide useful insights into arguments and positions that are negotiated in the policy process over time. The analysis conducted in Article 3 is limited to policy documents and sources considered most relevant for the purpose of this study. Adding more sources, policy documents from previous reforms and other low-level working papers and reports, would have broadened the picture and provided a better understanding of how other previous policies and parallel concerns influenced the negotiations of the curriculum. Interviews with policymakers before and after the reform could also have provided additional depth to the analysis. In the review conducted in Article 2, the corpus of studies was limited to peer reviewed English language articles from the last 10 years. This strategy provided a limited selection of articles that excluded native language perspectives from the otherwise influential Didaktik tradition. Including such studies in the corpus could have provided a broader view of bullying research, and how practices of teaching and learning have been leveraged to prevent bullying.

Data generation at the practice level has, in this study, been limited to qualitative methods of observation and interviews. Observations have been limited to lessons in one specific subject in each class. Some impromptu exchanges were also recorded but, clearly, a more systematic observation of each class outside the planned lessons could also have provided better insight into the social norms and communities of each class. Additional observations of each class in other subjects and with other teachers could also have provided insights on how the students are influenced by different forms of curriculum making. Students were interviewed in groups; this could have dissuaded some students from participation and prevented others from voicing their honest opinions about their teachers or peers. In hindsight, it could have been useful to conduct follow-up interviews with selected students who were active in the observed events but did not wish to participate in the group interviews. Another addition could have been to include a quantitative survey of students after each lesson, to provide a broader picture of how

students experienced these lessons, and how they reflected on their social learning in the class. A longitudinal follow-up study could also provide a glimpse of how social norms and practices change in each class over time.

The methods used in selecting data at the practice level included both quantitative and qualitative sampling. Using secondary data in the quantitative analysis meant that relevant measures had to be devised from the available items. The reliability of these measures could have been improved by using other instruments for the analysis. The qualitative assessment of schools could obviously have involved more people and different perspectives when comparing eligible candidates. A clear limitation of the selected design is the lack of contrasting data from other schools. Although the sampling strategy used for selecting the school provides some assurance that the observed practices represent high quality teaching in Norway, there is no way, per this study, to assess how representative these practices are, or how other factors such as school ethos, size and layout, or socio-economic backgrounds influence students' social learning.

Triangulation of methods can increase validity of research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018). In this study I have used qualitative methods to validate my quantitative sampling of schools, and interviews with students and teachers to validate my observations of events in the classroom. In addition, I have employed an informed grounded theory approach to analyse findings from the practice level, and related these to findings at the policy level. These provisions contribute to increasing the validity of the study. Adding more schools and classroom observations could enable comparisons between similar groups of students and subjects and provide insights to further validate the patterns of curriculum making identified in the study.

4.4.3 Contributions to methodology

The outlined methodological framework building on CR is designed to study how curriculum making in Norwegian policy and practice influences students' social learning. Despite its limitations, this framework also contributes to the development of methodology in several ways.

In Article 4 and the methodological discussions in this thesis, I have contributed to the development and ontological grounding of mixed-methods research. Previous research (Eriksen & Lyng, 2015, 2018) has identified the use of secondary data and best practice sampling as a useful strategy to collect data for qualitative social research. Research (Cohen et al., 2018) has also indicated that a sequential mixed-methods sampling strategy, including probability and non-probability samples, can be a practical way of triangulating data and strengthening reliability in research. I combine different sources of secondary data from the NQAS to develop quantitative measures and identify schools with a combination of high academic attainment and positive social outcomes. This quantitative approach was enhanced by adding a purposive qualitative assessment from knowledgeable persons to validate and narrow the initial findings to the most eligible schools. This combination of best practice and mixed-methods sampling is inspired by a critical realist ontology that supports interdisciplinary research and methodological pluralism (Bhaskar et al., 2018). As such, the sampling strategy selected in this study provides an example of a novel application of methods and ontological framing for mixed-methods research in education.

In Article 3 and the discussions in this thesis, I have contributed to the application of CR in education research. CR has previously been applied in various fields, including organisational studies (Edwards et al., 2014; Mingers & Standing, 2017) and educational research (Manyukhina & Wyse, 2019; Zembylas, 2017). A number of scholars (Archer, 2013; Scott & Bhaskar, 2015; Shipway, 2011) have also developed concepts and methods to explain change in educational systems. So far, however, CR has rarely been applied at the practice level of education. This study applies concepts such as self-sustaining autonomous systems (Shipway, 2011), and the laminar learning environment (Brown, 2009) and the CSMO model of causality (Bhaskar, 2014), in combination with methods of data generation through reviews, interviews and observations. This combination represents a new and innovative approach to CR-research, where empirical data is used to infer contextualized and specific underlying mechanism of educational policy and practice.

5 Summary of Articles

In this chapter, I present a summary of the four peer-reviewed articles in this study.

The main problem of the study is: How does curriculum making in Norwegian policy and practice influence students' social learning? The problem is addressed in three research questions, as follows:

1. *How is social learning understood in international policy and research?*
2. *How is social learning influenced by curriculum making at the national policy level?*
3. *How is social learning influenced by curriculum making at the practice level?*

In the text that follows, I summarize findings and discussions from four peer-reviewed articles and outline how these are relevant to answering the problems addressed in the study.

5.1 Article 1

Restad (2019). Revisioning the Fifth Element. Can critical realism reconcile competence and Bildung for a more sustainable twenty-first-century education? *Journal of Critical Realism*, 18(4), 402–419.

This article is related to the first research question of the study namely, *how is social learning understood in international policy and research?* In the article, I investigated theoretical understandings of learning by contrasting the concepts of competence and Bildung. These concepts represent differing traditions engrained in curricula and research in the Nordic and Anglo-American contexts. I also investigated how these concepts have influenced the understanding of learning in the Norwegian context and outline some main points of contention between the two. These points of contention are analysed in relation to the recent revision of the Norwegian core curriculum to highlight how such tensions create contradictions in the curriculum. Building on previous research from a critical realist perspective, I discuss weaknesses in the existing theories and how the absence of a unifying theory of learning has implications for policy and practice.

The article finds the Didaktik tradition to emphasize Bildung of students as a meaningful encounter with subject contents. Such learning is emergent from teaching, but is highly subjective and cannot be prescribed or measured as a linear outcome of teaching. The curriculum tradition, on the contrary, emphasizes students' acquisition of knowledge, skills

and attitudes as an outcome of learning. Competence is understood as the ability to apply knowledge in known and unknown situations that can be assessed and supported through effective methods of teaching. Three points of contention were identified: First, is the teacher's role that of a master of subject knowledge in the Didaktik-tradition or as a facilitator of effective methods of teaching and learning in the curriculum-tradition? Second, is the purpose of curriculum design to emphasize descriptions of subject contents that students should know in the Didaktik-tradition or descriptions of competencies and learning outcomes in the curriculum tradition? A third contentious point is the view of students as autonomous subjects and meaning-makers in the Didaktik-tradition, or as individuals who construct learning in line with formal requirements in the curriculum tradition.

In the new Norwegian core curriculum, both competence and Bildung are emphasized. This apparent unification creates contradictions in the curriculum. One such contradiction is a theory paradox where the national curriculum formally obliges teachers to provide students with competence while Bildung does not to provide a coherent theoretical explanation of how the two are related. A second contradiction is an assessment paradox where the national curriculum mandates formal assessments of competence, but not of students' overall formation and Bildung. A third contradiction is the accountability paradox, where policy mandates instruments of accountability to measure outcomes of competence but leaves teachers to realize the broader mandate of Bildung in practice. These contradictions leave the Norwegian curriculum with a blurred concept of learning that confuses rather than reconcile the concepts of competence and Bildung. Leaving such paradoxes unreconciled has implications for both policy and practice. In policy, unclear concepts are flexible and easily adapted in a common-sense rhetoric and manipulated by cherry-picking politicians to suit their ideological agenda. In practice, the complex work of supporting students' overall formation is easily undermined by the immediacy of administering tests and assessing knowledge and skills. Mainstreaming an opaque concept of learning can exacerbate instrumental practices that favour measurable learning, rather than learning that is valuable and formative for the learner. In the article, I explore how CR, through its stratified ontology and concepts like the laminar learning environment, can provide a more coherent theory of learning to reconcile the concepts of competence and Bildung. The article makes some contributions towards a critical realist theory of learning by discussing Illeris's (2003, 2018) general theory of learning and the laminar model of the learning environment as stepping

stones towards such a theory. The article concludes that more critical realist theorizing is needed to develop a more coherent theory of learning.

The findings and discussions in this article outline learning as a complex and contested concept in contemporary education. The tensions between competence and *Bildung* leave the Norwegian curriculum with a blurred concept of learning that underpins negotiations of social learning at the policy level, which is investigated further in Article 3. The discussions raised also provide a backdrop for understanding how social learning is understood at the practice level, as discussed in Article 4.

5.2 Article 2

Restad (2020). Is there a hole in the whole-school approach? A critical review of curriculum understanding in bullying research. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 40(4), 362–386.

The second article in this study also contributes to answering the study's first research question of *how social learning and sense of belonging is understood in contemporary research*. Previous research has indicated how increasing students' social and emotional skills may help reduce bullying. Scholars have also expanded beyond individual skills to include students' development of community and sense of belonging in school as important factors in bullying prevention. Some academics have called for more research to investigate how the pedagogic integration of social and academic learning can be leveraged to prevent bullying in schools. Answering this call, I explore how the concept of curriculum is understood in bullying research and investigate how curriculum knowledge has been leveraged in current strategies to prevent bullying.

Building on a critical review methodology, I analyse 29 recent qualitative and quantitative studies of bullying prevention to identify gaps in prevailing understandings of curriculum in the research. The analysis identifies three main categories of studies addressing bullying-curriculum: as a component in anti-bullying programs, as a topic in subject curricula and as norms and standards in national curricula. The findings are discussed using concepts from curriculum theory to uncover how curriculum dimensions and narratives are leveraged in bullying research. From this, three main findings emerge. The programme category is dominated by an understanding of curriculum as contents to be delivered and emphasizes

teacher fidelity and quality of delivery in lessons on bullying. Studies in this category also emphasize curriculum delivery as time consuming for teachers and call for more engagement with students to design new interventions. In the subject category, studies emphasize curriculum as frameworks for subject knowledge and how such frameworks can limit students' perceptions of identity but also, at the same time, encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and contribute to bullying prevention. Studies in this category also highlight how subjects such as math and science are not being leveraged for bullying prevention, and encourages teachers to integrate bullying prevention in their subject curricula. The standards category highlights curriculum as encompassing moral and professional standards administered through professional autonomy, adaptation and curricular alignment. These studies also understand curriculum as encompassing government policies and standards for addressing issues that can generate competing priorities and undermine efforts to prevent bullying in schools.

Building on these findings, I identify three gaps in curriculum understanding in contemporary bullying research. A first gap is identified as a constricted use of different curriculum dimensions in categories of bullying research. This limits the application of a broader curriculum understanding and may impair teachers from becoming more involved in efforts to prevent bullying. A second gap is the narrow use of curriculum narratives in the dominant program category favouring an essentialist evidence-based narrative of the curriculum. This underutilization of other and broader curriculum narratives may prevent the development of pluralistic policies and approaches to bullying prevention. Finally, a third gap is identified in the subject and standards categories favouring an open system ontology in contrast to the closed-control and reproduction ontology favoured in the program category. Such dichotomous positioning may constrict the applications of mixed methods in research and prevent bullying in more collaborative ways.

The study finds that bullying research, as a whole, represents a broad understanding of curriculum and curriculum knowledge; however, it is constricted within different categories of bullying research. This compartmentalization may obstruct the development and application of new and innovative approaches and limit the application of teachers' pedagogical knowledge in bullying prevention. A particular absence of interest in this study is that of the Nordic tradition of Didaktik as an approach to curriculum making. Although recent

studies in the Nordics have demonstrated the potential of preventing bullying by integrating social and academic learning, highlighting the concept of community building didactics as a strategy to prevent bullying, such perspectives are not evident in current international research on bullying prevention. The study, however, also illustrates how social learning is considered an important topic of research on bullying prevention, and how integrated approaches to teaching and prevention are increasingly being addressed in international research on bullying. These discussions provide a context for understanding how curriculum making in Norway is also influenced by theoretical developments in the field of bullying research that emphasize students' need to belong and a pedagogical approach to bullying prevention. This perspective is further explored in Article 4, which investigates curriculum making at the classroom level.

5.3 Article 3

Restad and Mølsted (2020). Social and emotional skills in curriculum reform: a red line for measurability?. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1–14.

This article is related to the second research question of *how social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the policy level*. In this article, we outline how the quest for educational excellence has brought an increasing emphasis on social and emotional learning. How such outcomes should be developed and measured is, however, highly debated. To explore these debates in the Norwegian context, we investigate how social and emotional learning is framed in the recent curriculum reform by analysing key discussions and the knowledge base cited in the policy process. We analyse policy documents and their sources to investigate how the understanding of and recommendations for assessments of social learning align with the provisions described in the revised core curriculum. Key policy documents, such as official reports and white papers, and the contents of the sources most cited in these documents are reviewed, and the findings are discussed using a critical realist model of heteronomous systems to outline assumptions and mechanisms of the policy negotiations.

Our analysis describes two main findings. The first is that the understanding of social learning in the Norwegian curriculum does not align with the cited knowledge base. While the official reports argue that social and emotional competence should be integrated and systematically developed as a part of students' subject competence, this view is not supported in the white

paper and core curriculum. The white paper emphasizes academic learning as the core purpose of education and distinguishes clearly between academic competence and skills and other general skills necessary for academic learning. The earlier knowledge base displays a wide range of concepts and definitions of social and emotional skills and distinguishes between US-based and OECD-based frameworks of social learning. The later knowledge base asserts a greater clarity in understanding social and emotional skills, and asserts their importance for long-term success in education, work and life. A second finding is that the Norwegian curriculum does not align with the recommendation for assessment of social learning as described in the cited knowledge base.

The official reports support a more systematic assessment of social and emotional competences, but do not support a comprehensive assessment framework. The white paper argues that assessment of students' personality and preferences is not a part of schools' mandate and reasserts teacher dialogue as the main approach. The policy documents align in strengthening the emphasis on social and emotional learning and in maintaining a systems-level approach to assessment in schools. The cited knowledge base, at first, demonstrates a cautious optimism concerning the measurability of social and emotional skills. Later, sources assert more strongly that such skills can be reliably measured within cultural and linguistic boundaries and that the barriers against such assessment are mainly cultural and political.

Contrary to the broad concept of competence employed by the OECD, the revised Norwegian curriculum employs a narrow understanding clearly distinguishing social and academic learning. This separation reduces the complex and entangled process of learning for the acquisition of subject knowledge and skills and downplays the influences of structure and agency in an open educational system. Although measurement is not supported, these negotiations contribute to a reduction of the broader concept of social learning to a narrower concept of social skills that can be measured as empirical outcomes. Building on the critical realist model of the self-sustaining heteronomous system, these findings are discussed as a process generated by a mechanism of psychological rationalization where the need to develop social skills give rise to the creation of analytical misrepresentation to account for social skills as empirical outcomes in education. This fuels a cycle of data collection using misrepresentations to feed a growing need to know how such outcomes can be supported. The process is further propagated by the ideological mystification of the relationship between the

actual outcome, that is, social skills, and the methods used to test those outcomes. This conceals how the system, rather than supporting students' development of social skills, supports itself by creating a narrative of uncertainty where policymakers need to know what the system knows, to not be considered ignorant or negligent in their mission.

The findings and discussion in this article underscore the complex and contested nature of social learning in curriculum making at the policy level. In the Norwegian context, social learning is clearly separated from the core concept of competence which is used to describe and assess students' academic learning. Schools are nonetheless charged with supporting students' social learning through their subject work, but restricted from assessing such learning in schools. The strategy devised by Norwegian policymakers is then an integrated approach to supporting students' social learning through subject teaching, but without setting formal standards or recommending the use of predefined programs or curricula to support social skills. How this strategy is negotiated in curriculum making at the practice level is discussed in Article 4.

5.4 Article 4

Restad, (Unpublished). Exploring problems and potential of curriculum making for social learning. Implications for policy and practice. Under reviews in *The Curriculum Journal*.

The fourth and final article of the study addresses the third research question of *how social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the practice level*. Previous research indicates that SEL can be integrated in teaching, but that including non-academic aspects of learning can be challenging for teachers. As described in Article 3, Norway rejects formal standards and assessment of students' social and emotional skills and emphasizes social learning through subject teaching in its new core curriculum. Underscoring this stance is a concern that a narrow framing and assessment of skills in the curriculum can contribute to a marginalizing of children who do not meet the required standards. The strategy to support social learning through subject teaching, however, has received little attention in research.

In this article, I investigate how social learning is supported through subject teaching in Norwegian language and Natural Science and explore challenges related to such practices. Building on data from ethnographic field work, including interviews and observations of

students and teachers in lower-secondary education, I analyse 35 observations of lessons to identify instructional events that combine social learning and subject teaching. Data analysis is inspired by an informed grounded theory approach using grounded axial coding to compare interviews and observations between informants and the selected subjects, and concepts from deliberative curriculum theory and Wengers's (1999) social theory of learning, to analyse how social learning is supported through subject teaching.

I have identified four main ways that teachers employ to influence social learning through their subject teaching in language and science: First, teachers frame personal experiences as contents to help students connect subject knowledge in meaningful ways, but this could also make it more difficult for some students to learn. Second, teachers include peer assessment to help students express themselves as members of the community, but also risk excluding students who have not yet established themselves as members. Third, teachers employ group work as a method of learning to help students develop skills and shared practices, but also make it difficult to establish a common practice in the class. Finally, teachers extend the purpose of their subject teaching to help students understand themselves and develop a sense of identity as citizens, but also make it challenging to reach a varied group of students in their curriculum making. These findings support the proposition that students' social learning can be influenced positively through subject teaching. The findings however also highlight a number of problems related to these practices. For students, problems include having to negotiate their personal and public lives and expressing their sense of belonging to different groups in the classroom. For teachers, challenges include having to broker influences between multiple communities and balancing how they shape the identities of their students through their subject teaching.

At the practice level, including personal content and peer assessment can do more harm than good. Not all teachers are comfortable with flexible curricular frameworks and, while most students appreciate dynamic forms of teaching, some students may also be alienated by such practices. Teachers need to consider the needs and identities of their students and not become overly dependent on a predefined purpose or prescribed methods of teaching. At the policy level, the Norwegian curriculum provides an impetus for teachers to support social learning through subject teaching. Such framing can lead to better planning and consideration of problems, and over time contribute to a more systematic practice and more enduring social

outcomes. Teachers in the study demonstrate a remarkable ingenuity and illustrate the potential of engaging teachers as curriculum makers to move beyond standardized interventions for social and emotional learning. Such potential should be supported by incentives at the policy level to exchange experiences and practices in local professional communities.

I conclude with the assertion that the strategy devised in the Norwegian curriculum has the potential to support students' social learning in a more sustainable and meaningful way. The research provides impetus to reassessing the current strategies and demonstrates a potential to support social learning in more sustainable ways, without overburdening teachers or overcrowding curricula. Realizing this potential, however, will require a more systematic approach to addressing adverse consequences, and a commitment to long-term capacity building at the policy level. The strategy should be explored further in research to find more systematic ways of supporting social learning without marginalizing students and teachers. In Table 2, I recap the main findings from these articles and the research questions they address.

Table 2: Articles, research questions and findings.

Article number and title	Research questions	Article main findings
<p>Article 1 <i>Revisioning the Fifth Element. Can critical realism reconcile competence and Bildung for a more sustainable twenty-first-century education?</i></p>	<p>1: How is social learning understood in international policy and research?</p>	<p>Learning, in the Norwegian context, should be understood as a negotiated concept influenced by both competence and Bildung. Three tension points are identified in: the role of the teacher, the purpose of the curriculum and the role of students in teaching and learning.</p>
<p>Article 2 <i>Is there a hole in the whole-school approach? A critical review of curriculum understanding in bullying research.</i></p>		<p>Bullying research includes a broad range of curriculum understandings, but curriculum knowledge is constricted within different categories of bullying research. Three gaps are identified in: the constricted use of curriculum concepts, the narrow use of curriculum in the dominant program category and the lack of broader concepts and approaches to teaching and learning in bullying research.</p>
<p>Article 3 <i>Negotiating social and emotional skills in curriculum reform: A thin red line for measurability?</i></p>	<p>2: How is social learning influenced by curriculum making at the national policy level?</p>	<p>The knowledge base, consisting primarily of reports from the OECD and psychometric research from the USA, recommends systematic development and assessment of social and emotional skills in education. The Norwegian curriculum rejects standards and assessment of social and emotional skills and emphasizes social learning through subject teaching.</p>
<p>Article 4 <i>Exploring problems and potential of curriculum making for social learning. Implications for policy and practice.</i></p>	<p>3. How is social learning influenced by curriculum making at the practice level?</p>	<p>Teachers influence students' social learning by framing contents, methods, purpose and assessment in their subject teaching. Teachers can support students' development of social skills and sense of community through such teaching, but this can also exacerbate social problems such as marginalization and fragmentation in the classroom.</p>

Notes: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

6 Discussion

In the previous chapters, I have placed the study in an existing body of research and outlined the theoretical and methodological framework for the project. I have also presented the main findings from four peer-reviewed articles that form the basis for the ensuing discussion.

Social learning is, in this study, understood as a process of developing individual social skills and a collective sense of community and belonging through education (see Introduction). The main problem addressed in this study is how curriculum making in Norwegian policy and practice influences students' social learning. This formulation implies a causal relationship between social learning and curriculum making. To answer this problem, I will draw on the theoretical framework of CR, and its concepts of mechanisms, causality and laminar learning environment. These concepts will be used to discuss the findings from Articles 3 and 4 which are related to the project's second and third research questions of how social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the national and practice levels. The discussions building on Article 3 will focus on mechanisms of curriculum making at the national level that influence how social learning is conceptualized in the policy process and core curriculum. In the discussion building on Article 4, I will focus on influences at the curricular and socio-cultural level of the learning environment and the generative mechanisms that enable and constrain students' social learning at the practice level.

6.1 Social Learning in International Policy and Research

In this section, I discuss the project's first research question of *how social learning is understood in international policy and research*. Building on the findings from Articles 1 and 2, two seemingly contrasting understandings of social learning can be identified. The first, building on the curriculum tradition and the individual bullying theory identifies social skills as an outcome of social learning. The second, building on Didaktik and the social bullying theory, identifies community and sense of belonging as an outcome of social learning. I will draw on findings from Articles 1 and 2 to elaborate how these understandings manifest in international policy and research and discuss a unifying concept of social learning to cover both positions in research.

6.1.1 Skills or community?

Scholars in curriculum research (Deng, 2015; Westbury, 1998) have long argued for a reconciliation of curriculum and Didaktik and that both understandings add valuable insights that should be considered in curriculum making. Such views also seem to be supported in policies in the Nordic countries (Mølsted & Karseth, 2016; Wahlström, 2016), including in the Norwegian curriculum, that draws on both traditions. As outlined in the first article, the superficial reconciliation of these traditions at the policy level creates tensions in the curriculum, including differing views on the role of teachers, the purpose of the curriculum and the nature of students' learning. In the case of Norway, these tensions create a theory paradox where teachers must provide students with competence and Bildung without a coherent educational theory to explain how the two are related. A second assessment paradox requires teachers to assess students' competence, but forbids the assessment of Bildung, while a third accountability paradox holds students accountable for both competence and Bildung, with little guidance on Bildung from the policy level. This leaves the Norwegian curriculum with a blurred concept of learning that emphasizes individual and cognitive aspects of learning while still maintaining students' overall development (Bildung) as the main purpose of education.

Education research, building on the curriculum tradition, emphasizes individual competence and skills as an outcome of learning in schools (Hodge, 2007; OECD, 2010; Voogt & Roblin, 2012). This tradition views curriculum as an instrument of policymaking to produce changes in student behaviour. This understanding underlies the OECD's (2015) emphasis on social and emotional skills as outcomes of learning in schools. This position is legitimized by SEL research (Durlak et al., 2011; Kautz et al., 2017; Weissberg et al., 2017) that encourages the development of standards and the assessment of students' social and emotional skills in education. The OECD, however, does not simply adopt established frameworks from research, but rather adopts these frameworks in line with its policy agenda (Kankaraš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019). The OECD framework, much like the ones devised by SEL research, highlights five dimensions of social and emotional skills: agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, emotional stability and openness to experience. In SSES, the (OECD, 2020b) however also expands on these dimensions to design an instrument that can measure 15 core social and emotional skills such as persistence, self-control, empathy, creativity and sociability. This instrument is currently being tested on a population of 60,000 students from

9 different countries, including Finland, Canada, USA, Russia and China. These developments indicate the prominence of a skills-oriented approach to social learning in international policy and research.

This skills-orientation is also identified in the second article investigating curriculum approaches in bullying research. I find that the dominant programme category of bullying research emphasizes teacher fidelity and delivery of bullying curriculum, while the subject category encourages teachers to reflect on how their teaching practices can contribute to bullying prevention. The standards category highlights professional standards and curriculum making at the policy level to reduce competing priorities and align efforts to prevent bullying in schools. Building on these findings, I identify three gaps in the constricted use of curriculum understanding, the narrow application of curriculum understanding in the dominant program category and the dichotomous positioning of different epistemological approaches in qualitative and quantitative bullying research. I identify how a skill-oriented approach is supported by bullying research in the dominant program category (Bonell, Allen, Warren, McGowan, Bevilacqua et al., 2018; Domino, 2013; Espelage et al., 2013; Fekkes, van de Sande, Gravesteyn, Pannebakker, Buijs et al., 2016) which favours the design and implementation of a prescribed bullying and SEL curriculum to enhance students' social and emotional skills. These programs tend to understand bullying as repeated aggressive behaviour, intentionally perpetrated by a stronger individual or group with the intention to harm to those who are weaker (Limber, Olweus, Wang, Masiello, & Breivik, 2018; Olweus, 1992). Similar understandings are employed by the OECD in its framework to measure bullying as a part of its efforts to promote individual well-being and social progress (OECD, 2015, 2018). Developing resilience through social and emotional learning, it is argued, may help reduce bullying involvement and the associated long-term health and social costs.

In contrast to skills-orientation, education research building on the Didaktik tradition, explored in Article 1, emphasizes teaching for subject knowledge and the all-round development (*Bildung*) of students. Scholars (Hopmann, 2007; Klafki, 2001; Westbury, Hopmann, & Riquarts, 2012) describe the aim of Didaktik is to generate personal and relevant meaning from the encounter with subject knowledge. Subject knowledge and categorical insights such as concepts, language and tools provide a gateway towards emancipation and self-determination for the individual, but also towards the establishment of meaningful

relationships and co-determination as socially and culturally engrained beings with a strong sense of solidarity towards others in their community. Social learning from the perspective of Didaktik (although this concept is not specifically used) can be understood as a students' process of overall development (Bildung) in a historic and socio-cultural context. The Didaktik tradition insists that students must reinterpret disciplinary knowledge according to their specific circumstances in a way that can help students experience their learning in the classroom as meaningful in their world (Willbergh, 2016). Influence from the Didaktik tradition is evident in bullying research, perhaps most clearly formulated in the concept of 'community-building didactics' (Plauborg, 2011, 2016; Rabøl Hansen, 2014; Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Søndergaard & Rabøl Hansen, 2018). This concept draws on the Didaktik tradition to emphasize how teachers' choice of learning goals, curricular content and working methods influence students' meaning-making and establishment of social relationships in teaching and, by extension, how bullying behaviours are allowed to manifest in the classroom. The concept builds on a socio-psychological understanding of students as existentially dependent on their relationships and meaningful communities at school, expressed as a 'longing for belonging' or 'social exclusion anxiety' (Osterman, 2000; Rabøl Hansen, 2011; Søndergaard & Rabøl Hansen, 2018).

This research foregrounds bullying as a social process by which the need to belong can trigger exclusionary mechanisms that are either constrained or reinforced by teaching in the classroom. Other Nordic scholars (Horton, 2018; Thornberg, 2011; Thornberg, Baraldsnes, et al., 2018; Thornberg, Wänström, et al., 2018) have similarly emphasized how an overly individualistic approach can undermine pedagogical approaches to bullying prevention, and how scholastic competition may drive teachers to emphasize delivery of the curriculum over dealing with issues of bullying in their classrooms. The perspectives underscore the need for a community-oriented approach to social learning, and an emphasis on teachers and pedagogy to promote positive social outcomes in the classroom.

6.1.2 Towards a broader concept of social learning

Building on the findings in Articles 1 and 2, I have outlined two contrasting positions in the skill-oriented and the community-oriented positions on social learning. Underscoring these findings is a tension between two global ideas. The first is the idea of 21st-century education that highlights individual competencies and skills to promote individual well-being and

economic growth. The second is the idea of education as a culturally engrained institution that provides students with insights and experiences, helping them transform subject knowledge into meaningful relationships and lives as responsible citizens in their local communities.

These contrasting ideas can also be understood considering the increasing interest in internationally policy and research in issues of well-being and social equality. The OECD's contribution to such aims is to 'define the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that learners need to fulfil their potential and contribute to the well-being of their communities and the planet' (OECD, 2018, 2020a). Scholars (Pettersson, 2014; Pettersson et al., 2017) have shown how state-based curriculum making is influenced by OECD recommendations that work in parallel with national discourses to influence policy. Other scholars (Sivesind & Wahlström, 2016; Wahlström, 2016) have also demonstrated how such influences are not linear, but rather 'complex movements between transnational and national and formal and informal policy arenas' (Wahlström, 2016, p. 310). This indicates that ideas about education at the international level are influential in curriculum making at the national level, but are also counteracted by ideas and concerns at the national level. Answering the question of how social learning is understood in international policy and research is then a question of outlining potential positions and the tensions between them, to facilitate analysis of how these positions are negotiated in the national context.

In this discussion, I have outlined how the fields of bullying and educational research converge in two contrasting positions that emphasize individual skills or social communities as desirable outcomes of education. The global push for social skills is supported by educational research building on the curriculum tradition and the individual bullying theory and purports social skills as malleable and measurable outcomes of education. The Nordic push for social community, supported by the Didaktik tradition and the social bullying theory, highlights the importance of meaning and sense of belonging as outcomes of education. Building on these discussions, and the critical realist impulse to overcome constricting dualisms (Bhaskar, 2008a; Bhaskar et al., 2018), I propose a broader concept of social learning to include both positions as a process of developing individual social skills and a collective sense of community and belonging through education. Such a concept can counter the unproductive dichotomy of skills versus community, and potentially bring together researchers from different traditions to explore policies and practices that can support both

individual and collective outcomes in a more sustainable way. In this study, I have taken some steps in this direction by demonstrating how a broader concept of social learning can be applied in research. Developing the concepts further will require new steps and more research, including the validation of measures to account for collective outcomes of social learning. Such discussions are beyond the scope of this study. In the text that follows, I will however investigate how social learning, in the broad sense, is influenced by curriculum negotiations at the national level, and by teachers' curriculum making in the classroom.

6.2 Curriculum Making for Social Learning in National Policy

In this section, I discuss how social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the policy level in Norway. In Article 3, I find that the Norwegian curriculum does not align with the understanding of social learning emphasized in the international knowledge base, nor its recommendations for assessment of social learning. Similar contradictions have been identified in other contexts (Chikamori et al., 2019) and resolved using CR. In the text that follows, I discuss causal mechanisms at the national level to explain how the concept of social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the state level through the mechanisms of external rationalization and internal mystification.

6.2.1 External rationalisation

Previous research (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010) has indicated that the Norwegian curriculum is historically engrained in the Northern European tradition of Didaktik and Bildung while also being open to influence from the Anglo-American tradition of competence and learning. Although the Didaktik tradition is scarcely cited in the international knowledge base, the provisions of the final curriculum underscore how this tradition is deeply engrained in the Norwegian educational ethos. This is evident in the core curriculum outlining eight principles for education and all-round development (Bildung) that describe how schools must 'support and contribute to the social learning and development of the pupils' and how 'learning subject matter cannot be isolated from social learning' (NMER, 2017, p. 12). The curriculum also emphasizes how learning subject content is a key part of students' all-round development, and that 'teachers must consider carefully what, how and why pupils learn' (NMER, 2017, p. 22) and adapt their teaching to accommodate the all-round development of all students.

At the international level, policy and research combine to create a need to know and support social and emotional skills to promote social and economic development (Durlak et al., 2011; OECD, 2015). This process is discussed in Article 3 through the mechanism of psychological rationalization that generates misrepresentations of social learning and reinforces the system that measures such outcomes. In the national policy process, the need to support social learning is rationalised with reference to international policy and research. This is evident in the cited knowledge base (see Article 3, Table 1), dominated by sources from the OECD and the Anglo-American context. Also evident in official reports underscoring a need to include social competencies is the fact that they ‘can be developed and learned, and are significant for academic learning’ (ONR, 2015b, p. 20) to be competitive in a globalized knowledge economy.

This rationalization provides a national narrative of curriculum making as research based and future oriented. A problem, however, is that the cited knowledge provides a selective, or at best partial, narrative that drowns out criticism that does not correspond with the overall rationale of the reform. An example of this is the report from the Swedish National Agency for Education (2013), whose critical comments on the potential of promoting social learning is given little prominence in the reform. Other prominent voices critical of the 21st-century skills agenda (Biesta, 2013) are not cited in the reform. Such omissions can be understood in light of the political mandate of the reform to consider the ‘competences and basic skills that students will need in the future society and working life’ (ONR, 2015b, p. 15).

One mechanism that influences the framing of social learning in the Norwegian reform is the outside rationalization to underscore the need to include social skills in 21st-century education. This mechanism provides legitimacy for the reform based on international research and policy recommendations, but also favours sources that correspond to the political mandate of the reform and suppresses criticism of the policy agenda.

6.2.2 Internal mystification

A second mechanism, discussed in Article 3, is the ideological mystification of the relationship between education and the desired outcome of social learning. At the international level, assessment frameworks, such as the one set up by the OECD (2020b), validates misrepresentations of social skills and obscures what it is that students actually learn

in school. Consequently, what ends up as recommendation for policy is what the system is able to measure (Shipway, 2011).

A similar process of internal mystification can be identified in curriculum making at the national level in Norway. On the one hand, policymakers have given a mandate for the reform in line with international recommendations to emphasize competence and skills. On the other hand, the recommendations to include social skills in the core concept of competence does not sit well with a cultural ethos and other policy concerns to provide teachers with greater flexibility and fewer demands in the curriculum. A compromise is needed, but without abandoning the main rationale of a competency-based reform. In their effort to craft a compromise, policymakers adapt and redefine the key concepts of the reform. One example is the narrowing of the concept of competence as ‘first and foremost about subject learning’ (NMER, 2016, p. 21). The white paper also cites concerns from national stakeholders that including social and emotional skills in a broader concept of competence will lead to instrumental practices and ‘undermine the importance of students’ academic knowledge’ (NMER, 2016, p. 28). The white paper does cite recommendations from the OECD to support social and emotional skills through education but argues that such skills are unfit for assessment and there are ethical dilemmas involved in doing so.

The compromise devised in the curriculum obliges teachers to support students’ development of social skills, such as cooperation, empathy and resilience, but without including such skills in the core concept of competence. The white paper further states that ‘social and emotional skills are developed by working with subject aims’ (NMER, 2016, p. 29), and that the core and subject curricula shall provide guidance on how such skills can be developed through subject teaching. As a continuation of this compromise, the core curriculum introduces the concept of social learning to further underscore that such learning is a part of students’ overall development (*Bildung*), and not a part of competence and basic skills that are assessed in schools.

Another mechanism identified in the national policy process is the internal mystification of social learning as an outcome of education. This mechanism causes policymakers to adapt key concepts and recommendations to their national context and policy agenda. In Norway, policymakers mystify the relationship between competence and social skills by relating social

skills to students' overall development (*Bildung*), and introducing a new concept of social learning to distance such learning from high-stakes learning assessed by teachers.

6.2.3 Inside out: A new strategy for social leaning?

Previous research has indicated that theories of competence 'integrate the biological with the social context but exclude the cultural context, which implies a de-contextualised understanding of the concept and its acquisition' (Wahlström, 2016, p. 301). These findings indicate that educational ideas travel from the international context but are also negotiated in the national context. In the case of Norway, curriculum making for social learning is influenced by the mechanisms of external rationalization and internal mystification. On the one hand, policymakers rationalize the need to develop students' social learning by referencing international policy and research. On the other hand, policymakers also mystify the relationship between social skills and competence and devise a new concept of social learning to further confuse their relationship. This cycle of rationalization and mystification can be understood in light of previous research describing theories of competence as an amalgam of different components that fit the purpose of the system (Hodge, 2007). The national policy process then, mirrors the self-sustaining system described at the international level (Shipway, 2011), with the Norwegian education system being reinforced by its seeming adherence to international policy and research, while also seemingly adapting the reform to the cultural context and concerns of local stakeholders.

I suggest that these iterative cycles at the national policy level can be explained by the mechanism of external rationalization and internal mystification that enable a distinctly 'Norwegian' compromise that recognizes the importance of social skills but also rejects their inclusion in the core concept of competence. This compromise also involves supporting the development of social skills as a part of students' overall development (*Bildung*), while rejecting standardized assessments and interventions to support social learning. These mechanisms influence how social learning is understood by policymakers at the national level. A downside to the compromise strategy, however, is that the newly devised concept of social learning has weak grounding in research, and is difficult to relate clearly to teaching. In the final section, building on findings from classroom observations in Article 4, I discuss how social learning is influenced by mechanisms at the curricular and socio-cultural levels of the learning environment.

6.3 Curriculum Making for Social Learning in Practice

In this section, I discuss how social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the practice level in the classroom. In Article 4, I have identified four main ways that teachers influence social learning by framing personal content, including peer, employing group work and teaching for identity. Previous research (Mølsted et al., 2020) has indicated that teachers in Norway adapt their practice in line with changes in the national curriculum. Research (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015; Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller, 2012) has however also indicated that teachers' agency is enabled and constrained by personal, contextual and structural factors, and that enacting changes often involves a non-linear and unpredictable process.

In the observed events described in Article 4, teachers draw on the curriculum to frame contents, methods, assessment and purpose to influence how students socially interact in the classroom. In line with the critical realist grounding of the study, I will understand such practices as affected by underlying curricular mechanisms that create conditions for these practices to emerge as they do, in these specific situations (event causality). Teachers' choices are causative in the sense that other choices, for example to work on individual assignments or with other contents, would have caused the events to turn out differently. How the events would have turned out is however unpredictable, as they are also governed by structural factors and the exercise of student and teacher agency. When patterns emerge across multiple events, as described in Article 4, this suggests the presence of underlying generative mechanisms that cause social phenomena to emerge in similar ways across time and space (generative causality). Such generative mechanisms describe a latent power engrained in the context and structural conditions of the events that can explain why events occur the way they do regardless of whether their latent effects are observed in the events or not (Bhaskar, 2008a, 2014; Danermark et al., 2011; Mingers & Standing, 2017). In applied critical realist research, existing theories are used to make claims about generative mechanisms from observed events. Building on the laminar model of the learning environment (Brown, 2009), and the theory and findings from Article 4, I will discuss generative mechanisms that may explain how social learning is influenced by curriculum making in the classroom. I will understand such mechanisms as embedded in the context of lower-secondary education following a common

curriculum plan, and in a preceding social structure of class and teacher practices that influence how these mechanisms are actualized in the events.

As contextual factors, I will include the events being situated in four lower-secondary classes, based on a common national core and subject curriculum in language and science. As structural conditions, I will include the preceding social norms and practices established in the class and the teachers' curriculum making and exercise of autonomy in choice of content, learning methods and formative assessment for subject teaching. I understand these mechanisms in relation to the international developments in policy and research, as outlined in the previous section, but will limit my analysis to influences from the curricular and socio-cultural level of the laminar learning environment in the classroom.

6.3.1 Personalization

The teacher's framing of personalized contents in the 'Book of me' language class event enables students to share their personal stories to get acquainted with each other and practice their language skills. Such practices are supported by provisions in the national curriculum (NMER, 2017) that emphasize an inclusive learning environment and preparing students for active participation in society. Teachers are also encouraged to develop students' oral and writing skills as important tools for establishing identity and social relationships. However, students' social learning is also constrained at the curricular level by an unclear description of the relationship between subject content and students' social learning and overall development (*Bildung*). Although the curriculum emphasizes this relationship, the teacher's autonomy of content, mandated by the curriculum leaves the teacher to resolve this relationship in practice. In the 'Book of me' event, the teacher's choice of graded assessment and public presentation format is observed to constrain some student participation and social learning.

At the socio-cultural level, social learning is facilitated by students' enthusiastic engagement with each other as they write and present personal stories in class. It is also enabled by students' use of humour and other social gestures to facilitate informal exchanges and build relationships through their presentations. Some students, however, also respond negatively to other students' presentations and sharing of their personal stories in public. The students also actively compare their writing and grades from the assignment, causing some to feel insecure

about their stories and academic performance. These socio-cultural factors can constrain students' social learning in the class.

Together these factors at the curricular and socio-cultural level combine to enable and constrain students' social learning in the classroom. Building on the critical-realist understanding of causality, I propose a generative mechanism of *personalization* to explain how students' social learning is influenced by curriculum making that encourages them to share personal stories in the class. This mechanism enables bonding and the development of social skills but also constrains students' social learning by emphasizing the public negotiation of meaning from these stories in the classroom.

6.3.2 Peering

Another common form of teacher curriculum making that enables social learning, as observed in the 'Exam prep' event, is the use of peer assessment. The teacher organizes students in groups to assess written texts and help students to learn from each other and evaluate their writing together. Such practices are encouraged in the national curriculum by requiring teachers to involve students and help them to assess their own development. The recent reform (NMER, 2017) also emphasizes students' metacognition and deep learning, including students' ability to reflect on their own learning process in interaction with others. Students' social learning is however also constrained at the curricular level by unclear descriptions of how social learning should be assessed, and how peered assessment practices can support students' social learning. In the described event, the teacher's curriculum making also constrains students' social learning by not providing appropriate guidance to support their social process of working together to assess the texts.

At the socio-cultural level, students' social learning is enabled by a mutual practice and engagement in assessing texts together. The students in the 'Exam prep' event benefit from prior experiences of working together and build on their intimate knowledge of each other to solve their tasks expediently. These attributes can however also constrain students' social learning as they use their knowledge to make fun of each other or work together in innate ways that exclude some students from participating in their collective process.

These factors at the curricular and socio-cultural level combine to enable and constrain students' social learning through the enactment of peer assessment in subject teaching. Building on the described findings, I suggest an underlying generative mechanism of *peering* to explain how students' social learning is influenced by curriculum making that encourages them to learn together as peers in the class. This mechanism enables expressions of belonging and shared practices but can also constrain students' social learning by inviting practices that exclude students from established communities in the class.

6.3.3 Grouping

In the 'Cars and loops' event, the teacher enabled social learning by facilitating group work and reflection while also requiring students to remain committed to their task in spite of challenges. These practices are supported by provisions in the national curriculum (NMER, 2017) which requires students to learn how to cooperate, participate and take responsibility together. The students shall also engage in creative and practical learning and be encouraged to do their best even when success is not guaranteed. The national curriculum however also constrains social learning by failing to provide clear guidance on how different methods of learning can influence students' social learning. One effect of this absence is evident in the teacher's emphasis on competition between groups, focusing the students' attention on the results of the competition rather than their social learning in the group process.

Factors at the socio-cultural level also play a part in enabling social learning in the described event, as students are motivated by working with other students in their class. The students are encouraged by the freedom to develop social practices and relationships in and across different groups in the classroom. Competitive practices can however, as displayed in the event, also discourage some students from participating, and constrain social learning by encouraging students to seek out like-minded individuals who are easy to work with in the groups.

In combination, these factors create conditions at the curricular and socio-cultural level that enable and constrain students' social learning from group work. I propose a generative mechanism of *grouping* to explain how students' social learning is enabled and also constrained by curriculum making that encourages students to work together in groups. This mechanism enables the exercise and development of shared practices in the class and also

constrains students' social learning by amplifying the practices of dominating communities in the classroom.

6.3.4 Identification

Teachers enable social learning through their curriculum making by inviting students to question and discuss important issues of identity, as displayed in the 'Question box' event. These practices help students relate subject contents to knowledge and experiences in their own lives, supported by a curriculum that describes students' development of cultural insight and a sense of identity as the main purpose of education (NMER, 2017). The curriculum further emphasizes developing students' sense of belonging and solidarity with others in their community, and encourages both critical reflection and creative thinking. Social learning is however also constrained by a national curriculum that provides little guidance on how teachers should support students' social learning and identity development in practice. In the 'Question box' event, the teacher's curriculum making also constrains students' social learning by limiting the identities presented to the teacher's experiences and the questions and opinions of verbally active students in the classroom.

Students in the event enable social learning at the socio-cultural level by asking bold questions about their own sexuality and discussing these questions candidly in the class. The questions are critiqued and discussed in a mutual process, enabling students to reflect on their sexual identity and become part of the shared identity of the class. Some students are, however, also discouraged from participating in the open process of plenary discussions, and their social learning may be diminished by a narrow framing of identities in the curriculum and a small number of students who dominate the classroom dialogue.

I propose a combined generative mechanism of *identification* to explain how students' social learning is enabled and also constrained by curriculum making that encourages students to discuss issues of identity in the class. This mechanism enables students' social learning by emphasizing identity issues through subject teaching, while also constraining students' social learning by limiting identity resources to those provided by the class and subject curricula.

6.3.5 Generative mechanisms of social learning

In this section, I have outlined four potential generative mechanisms that influence students' social learning in the classroom. These mechanisms are described as practices of personalization, peering, grouping and identifying in subject teaching. The mechanisms comprise influences from the curricular and socio-cultural level of the learning environment and create conditions for students' social learning in the classroom. Table 3 provides an overview of the proposed mechanisms and their context and social structures.

Table 3: Generative mechanisms of social learning.

Context	Social structure	Mechanism	Outcome
Language curriculum 8 th grade language class	Language-class practice Curriculum making: Content	Personalization	Book of me
Language curriculum 10 th grade language class	Language-class practice Curriculum making: Assessment	Peering	Exam prep
Science curriculum 10 th grade science class	Science-class practice Curriculum making: Purpose	Identification	Cars and loops
Science curriculum 8 th grade science class	Science-class practice Curriculum making: Method	Grouping	Question box

How these generative mechanisms are actualized in practice is contingent on the influence exerted by the pre-existing social structure and students' and teachers' exercise of agency within their context. Over time, students and teachers can reproduce or change the social structures in the classroom (Bhaskar, 2014). Although this analysis does not provide sufficient data to make generalized claims beyond the described contexts, there are similarities that can indicate the presence of a more universal mechanism. One similarity is the tendency of teachers to relate subject content to the experiences and reflections of the individual learner. This is outlined in the mechanisms of personalization and identification that seem to heighten students' awareness of who they are in relation to subject content and their peers. Another similarity is the tendency of teachers to emphasize collaborative learning, highlighted in the mechanisms of peering and grouping, that seem to enhance students' ability to learn and work with others in their class. These similarities suggest a continuous dialectic between individual and collective practices in teachers' curriculum making. This dialectic can be indicative of a universal human need to relate learning to an internal psycho-emotional process, and an

external socio-cultural process. The mechanism that I have outlined provides plausible explanations of how teachers' curriculum making influences students' social learning in the classroom. Building on the critical-realist ontology, social learning can also be understood as a universal social structure that emerges through the curricular interactions of students and teachers in the classroom. The mechanisms described here also influence how this structure operates in the classroom and creates conditions for students' learning. As such, the phenomenon of social learning is not merely a process of developing skills and community in schools. More fundamentally, it is also a naturally emergent structure providing guidance to our human enterprise and the glue with which we maintain and transform our societies, to which we are existentially bound.

7 Conclusion

In this study, I have investigated how curriculum making in Norwegian policy and practice influences students' social learning. This problem has been illuminated through the discussion of three underlying questions. First, the study has emphasized two main understandings of social learning in international policy and research. One, as individual social skills that can be developed and assessed in education, and two, as a process of developing social communities and a sense of belonging through education. The skill position emphasizes systematic development through program interventions and assessment of social skills in schools. The community position emphasizes students' process of overall development (*Bildung*) and establishment of inclusive learning environments through subject teaching. Second, the discussion has explored how social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the national policy level. I have argued that Norwegian policymakers draw on both skills and community positions in a process of external rationalization and internal mystification. This process produces a new compromised concept of social learning, but also separates this concept from the main concept of subject competence that is emphasized in the reform. Third, the study has also addressed how social learning is influenced by curriculum making at the practice level. I have argued that students' social learning is influenced by the national compromise that guides teachers' curriculum making in the classroom. Teachers influence their students' social learning through four generative mechanisms of personalization, peering, grouping and identification. These mechanisms enable and constrain students' social learning depending on the structural conditions and agency of students and teachers in the classroom.

Together, these discussions form a basis for answering the overall question of the study of how curriculum making in Norwegian policy and practice influences students' social learning. A comprehensive conclusion from this research is that students' social learning is influenced by a dual dialectic of curriculum making in policy and practice and of structure and agency in the classroom. The dialectic of curriculum policies at the national level, and curriculum practice in the classroom create the structural conditions that enable and constrain students' social learning. In the classroom, these structural conditions are influenced by teachers' enactment of subject curriculum and how students engage with subject contents and their peers. Curriculum making for social learning can then be described as a complex and multi-layered phenomenon that creates variable outcomes depending on how structures,

mechanisms and agency are activated in the educational setting. Following these concluding remarks, I round off the thesis by considering the study's contributions to research, and implications for policy and practice.

7.1 Contributions and Implications

In Articles 1, 2 and 3 and the discussions in this thesis, I have contributed to research on curriculum making at the policy level. A number of studies (Pettersson, 2014; Pettersson et al., 2017; Wahlström, 2016) have shown how national discourses are influenced by policy recommendations at the international and national levels, and create tensions in negotiations in national curriculum making. Such tensions have been highlighted in this research through different positions on understanding and assessment of social learning in the policy process. This research confirms previous findings of complex motions and negotiations in curriculum making at the policy level, but also contributes by explaining potential mechanisms that can influence policy negotiations at the international and national levels.

A number of studies (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010; Mølsted & Karseth, 2016) have investigated changes in the Norwegian curriculum in recent years. These studies demonstrate an increasing emphasis by policymakers on competence and skills as measurable outcomes of learning in the curricula. This study offers an in-depth analysis of how the concept of social competence and skills are negotiated in the revised national curricula. In contrast to previous findings, this study shows how some competencies and skills are deemphasized and not considered suitable for assessment in education. These findings underscore how educational concepts such as competence and skills as social and political constructions are transformed in line with the national policy agenda.

In Article 4 and the discussions in this thesis, I have contributed to research on curriculum making at the practice level. Some studies (Elias et al., 2015; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Yoder, 2014) have investigated practices for developing students' SEL in schools. These studies demonstrate a growing body of knowledge about and positive outcomes of integrated program interventions and SEL curricula in teaching. This study adds to this body of research by investigating the potential for social learning through subject teaching, without the use of program interventions. By demonstrating how regular teaching practices influence students' social learning, the study challenges the interventionist approach of SEL research and argues

for a more organic and curriculum-driven approach to social and emotional learning in schools.

Some studies (Mack, 2012; Plauborg, 2017; Uitto & Saloranta, 2017) have explored how teachers support social outcomes, such as social awareness, well-being and sense of belonging in their classroom practice. Previous research demonstrates the potential of such practices and how teachers are important agents in students' social learning. This study adds to previous research by demonstrating how teachers, through their curriculum making in subjects, enable and constrain students' social learning. The study also emphasizes the importance of subject curricula and curriculum making to support such learning and challenges the notion that social outcomes such as well-being and sense of belonging can be separated from subject teaching.

7.1.1 Research implications

The findings in Article 2–4 and the discussions in this thesis, indicate a shortage of research on how curriculum making at the policy and practice levels influence social learning. One clear implication of this study is that other contexts and dimensions of curriculum making can be investigated to verify the validity of these findings in other countries, and in different levels of education. Future research can also expand the investigation into different subject curricula and systematically investigate the influence of other curriculum resources such as of time, space and materials used in curriculum making at the classroom level.

In Article 3 and the discussion in this thesis, I identify assessment as a key topic in the research on social and emotional learning. The findings from this research indicates a strong emphasis on the assessment of social and emotional skills in SEL research, and a tendency to reject the assessment of social learning in socio-cultural research. Building on a critical realist ontology, one implication of this research is to encourage the development of a broader repertoire of assessment technologies that can inform a more systematic practice to support collective outcomes of social learning. Such assessments could be developed based on the needs and collaboration of teachers and students with the aim of helping them thrive and learn in more sustainable ways in the classroom.

Finally, this study has drawn on bullying research, curriculum research and research on social learning. All these fields provide important insights and seek to influence students' social

learning in different ways. All too often, however, these insights are compartmentalized and not brought to play in an interdisciplinary research dialogue. The social aspects of learning are increasingly being addressed in policy and research throughout the world. This calls for more research across the aisle to address the challenges and opportunities of educational practice.

7.1.2 Policy implications

The findings in Articles 3 and 4 and the discussions in this thesis, indicate a weak link between policy and practice, and between social learning and teaching in the context of social learning. This is indicated by statements in the core curriculum demanding teachers to develop students' social learning through subject teaching. Such demands could be supported in policies by clarifying why and how subject teaching supports students' social learning, and by developing best practice examples of what teachers can do to support such learning in an equitable and sustainable way. This is particularly relevant with regard to assessments of students' academic learning that tend to drive teachers' practice, but as this study has demonstrated, it can also have adverse consequences for students' social learning. Policies can be clarified to strengthen the link between social learning and teaching and provide teachers with the flexibility and resources they need to adapt their teaching to a diverse group of students in the classroom.

Although the findings in Article 4 indicate a great capacity and ingenuity among teachers to support students' social learning through subject teaching, the findings also indicate substantial variations in teachers' personal and pedagogic capacities. Such variations can also be welcomed as a potential for genuine and meaningful human encounters in the classroom. Utilizing this potential in a professional way, however, also requires policies to support teacher capacity-building with broader aims than improving cognitive learning outcomes. Policies can be devised to enable collective capacity building among teachers and include devises to develop their personal and social capacity in concert with more specific skills and subject knowledge teaching. Teaching and learning are complex human interactions that require establishing meaning and relationships over time. This research provided an argument against quick-fix and single-track solutions and for investing in the capacity of students and teachers to create meaningful encounters in their classrooms.

7.1.3 Practical implications

The findings in Article 1 and 4 indicate a strong influence from the Didaktik tradition on teachers' practice in Norway. This influence is negotiated by teachers with the demands of the national curriculum, their professional identities and the sway of their students and peers. This study indicates a considerable potential for supporting social learning through subject teaching. Teachers may find this study's descriptions of classroom practices meaningful and inspiring in light of increasing individualization, polarization and the challenges of a hypercomplex and media-driven society. Subject knowledge is increasingly important for students' ability to lead meaningful lives, but learning and applying such knowledge also requires that students learn to belong and establish safe and nurturing communities with their peers in the classroom. A key message to teachers from this research is that subject teaching can support, but also constrain students' social learning. Every lesson planned is a lesson in both social and subject learning. Considering both aspects equally is therefore vital for creating meaningful learning experiences in the classroom.

In Articles 2 and 4, I have demonstrated a tension between a skills-based approach and a community approach to social learning. This study can then provide useful insights to teachers and school administrators when considering strategies to support their students' social learning in schools. Evidence-based programs to promote social and emotional learning provide an alluring narrative and clear manual descriptions of practices, but they rarely consider the complex social interactions involved in teaching. On the contrary, simply stating that students' social learning is supported a priori, through subject teaching, is a euphemism that undermines teacher professionalism and disregards the potential damages of negligent social practices. As this research clearly shows, curriculum making can both support and constrain students' social learning. The broader concept of social learning devised here can be useful to teachers and school administrators when considering how they can develop their professional capacity to support their students' development of both skills and sense of community in the classroom.

In light of recent global events and increasing polarization in many western societies, this study contributes new knowledge to understanding and developing strategies to enhance schools as sustainable democratic institutions and meaningful communities for students and teachers. Considering the OECD's recent initiative to develop instruments to measure

student's social skills on a global scale, this study also highlights important knowledge about how assessment of social learning is negotiated in the Norwegian context and informs future discussions on assessment at the policy level. First and foremost, this study has contributed by investigating strategies to influence students' social learning through curriculum making at the policy and practice levels. It is the hope of the author that this study will inspire more research and better policy and practice to promote individual and collective well-being and social and economic sustainability through subject teaching in schools.

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Appendices

The following seven appendices include the approval for research, information and consent letters to students and teachers, interview and observation guides and transcript- and co-author agreements.

Appendix 1: Approval for research	115
Appendix 2: Information letters and consent forms	117
Appendix 3: Interview guides and timeline	123
Appendix 4: Observation guides	128
Appendix 5: Transcription agreement	130
Appendix 6: Co-author agreement	137
Appendix 7: Results of statistical analysis	139

Appendix 1: Approval for research



NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

Kan fag skape fellesskap?

Referansenummer

995921

Registrert

29.04.2019 av Frode Restad - frode.restad@inn.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Høgskolen i Innlandet / Fakultet for lærerutdanning og pedagogikk / Institutt for pedagogikk - Lillehammer

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Frode Restad, frode.restad@inn.no, tlf: 91752727

Type prosjekt

Forskerprosjekt

Prosjektperiode

01.02.2018 - 01.02.2021

Status

14.05.2019 - Vurdert

Vurdering (1)

14.05.2019 - Vurdert

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 14.05.2019. Behandlingen kan starte.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde:

https://nsd.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html

Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 01.02.2021.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

Nettskjema/TSD er databehandler i prosjektet. NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29.

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Karin Lillevold
Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

Appendix 2: Information letters and consent forms



Do you want to participate in the research project "Can content create community"?

Information for students (English translation)

This is an invitation for you to participate in a research project to investigate how teaching in subjects affects students' social learning and experience of belonging. In this letter, you will find information about the project and what your participation entails should you take part in the study.

Purpose

The project aims to investigate how teaching in subjects affects students' social learning and experience of belonging in the class. The research will focus on teaching in Norwegian and Science and investigate how students and teachers experience teaching through observation and group interviews. The research will be carried out in four selected classes over a 4-month period from autumn 2019 to spring 2020. The project is part of a doctoral study entitled "Can contents create community?". The project's main problem is «How does teaching in subjects affect students' social learning and belonging to the class?». The problem will be explored through relevant theory, analysis of curricula, and observation in the classroom. Information from the project will be used for research and publication of findings in connection with the doctoral project.

Who is responsible for the research project?

Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (INN) is responsible for the project.

Why are you asked to participate?

Your school has excelled with good academic results and a good learning environment. In dialogue with the municipality and the school's principal, permission has been given for your school to participate in the research project. The principal has recommended that the project be carried out in four selected classes. The teachers in these classes have agreed that a researcher can observe the teaching. You receive this invitation because you are a student, or a parent of a student in one of these classes, and because I want to ask for your consent to participate in the project.

What does it mean for you to participate?

For you as a student, the project will mean that you give your permission for a researcher to observe the teaching in your Norwegian or Science lessons during the specified period. The observation will focus on how the teaching, including how goals, content and working methods in Norwegian and Science affect the students' social learning and belonging in the class. The researcher will be present and make written notes of his observations in the classroom.

Some students will, after consultation with the teacher and principal, be invited to participate in a group interview with other students from the class. The group interview will last approx. 30-60 minutes and take place during school hours. In the interview, you will be asked if there is something in the teaching of Norwegian or Science that makes you better acquainted with the others in the class, and what could have been done differently to make you feel even better in class. The interviews will be recorded and stored electronically. A list of questions for the interviews is available if you want to know more.

It is voluntary to participate

It is voluntary to participate in the project. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving any reason. All information about you will be anonymized. Neither you nor the school will be recognizable by name in what is published from the project. No negative consequences will befall you should you decline to participate or choose to withdraw.

Your privacy - how we store and use your information

We will only use the information about you for the purposes we have described in this letter. We will treat all information given confidentially and in accordance with the privacy regulations. The information provided during the interview and observation will be read by the responsible researcher at INN and supervisors for the project. The information will be stored on a dedicated server at the Service for Sensitive Data (TSD) at the University of Oslo. Information is secured through encryption and two-factor login with MinID. Pupils and teachers, as well as the municipality and school will be anonymised in resulting publications of the study.

What happens to your information when we end the research project?

The project is scheduled to end on 1.2.2021. After this date, recordings from interviews will be deleted. Anonymised notes from observation and transcribed interviews will be retained for further research and publication.

Your rights

As long as you can be identified in the data material, you have the right to:

- to access the personal information registered about you
- to have personal information about you corrected
- to have personal information about you deleted
- to receive a copy of your personal information (data portability)
- to send a complaint to the Privacy Ombudsman or the Data Inspectorate about the processing of your personal data.

What entitles us to process personal information about you?

We process information about you based on your consent. On behalf of INN, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with the privacy regulations.

Where can I find more information?

If you have questions about the study, or want to exercise an of your rights, please contact:

- INN: Frode Restad, frode.restad@inn.no, Tel: 9175 2727.
- Our privacy representative: Hans Petter Nyberg, hans.nyberg@inn.no, Tel: 6243 0023
- NSD: personverntjenester@nsd.no, Tel: 5558 2117.

With best regards



Project manager
Frode Restad



Inland Norway
University of
Applied Sciences

Declaration of consent

Student name:

Student class:

I have received and understood information about the project "Can contents create community?" and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I agree to:

- let a researcher observe teaching while the student is present
- let the student participate in a group interview, if requested
- let information about the student be processed until the end of the project 1.2.2021

Signature student, date

Signature parent, date

Do you want to participate in the research project "Can content create community"?

Information for teachers (English translation)

This is an invitation for you to participate in a research project to investigate how teaching in subjects affects students' social learning and experience of belonging. In this letter, you will find information about the project and what your participation entails should you take part in the study.

Purpose

The project aims to investigate how teaching in subjects affects students' social learning and experience of belonging in the class. The research will focus on teaching in Norwegian and Science and investigate how students and teachers experience teaching through observation and group interviews. The research will be carried out in four selected classes over a 4-month period from autumn 2019 to spring 2020. The project is part of a doctoral study entitled "Can contents create community?". The project's main problem is «How does teaching in subjects affect students' social learning and belonging to the class?». The problem will be explored through relevant theory, analysis of curricula, and observation in the classroom. Information from the project will be used for research and publication of findings in connection with the doctoral project.

Who is responsible for the research project?

Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (INN) is responsible for the project.

Why are you asked to participate?

Your school has excelled with good academic results and a good learning environment. In dialogue with the municipality and the school's principal, permission has been given for your school to participate in the research project. The principal has recommended that the project be carried out in four selected classes. The teachers in these classes have agreed that a researcher can observe the teaching. You receive this invitation because you are a student, or a parent of a student in one of these classes, and because I want to ask for your consent to participate in the project.

What does it mean for you to participate?

For you as a teacher, participation in the project will mean that you give your permission for a researcher to participate as an observer during lessons in Norwegian or Science in one of the selected classes. The observation will focus on whether there is something in the teaching, including the choice of goals, content and working methods that affect the students' social learning and belonging in the class. It is important to emphasize that the researcher wants to observe "ordinary" teaching, as it is planned and implemented over time, and which can shed light on the project's problem. The researcher will make written notes of his observations in the classroom. It may also be relevant for the researcher to attend selected meetings during the research period, pending further agreement with the school management.

Some teachers will, after consultation with the principal/management, also be invited to participate in a group interview with other subject teachers in Norwegian or Science. The group interviews will last approx. 30-60 minutes and take place during school hours. In the interview, you as a teacher can be asked, among other things, how you plan the teaching, and how you experience that the subject it is taught affects the students' social learning and belonging in the class. The interviews will be recorded and stored electronically.

A list of questions for the interviews is available if you want to know more. All teachers will be offered to attend an information meeting in advance, and a presentation of findings after the study is completed.

It is voluntary to participate

It is voluntary to participate in the project. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving any reason. All information about you will be anonymized. Neither you nor the school will be recognizable by name in what is published from the project. No negative consequences will befall you should you decline to participate or choose to withdraw.

Your privacy - how we store and use your information

We will only use the information about you for the purposes we have described in this letter. We will treat all information given confidentially and in accordance with the privacy regulations. The information provided during the interview and observation will be read by the responsible researcher at INN and supervisors for the project. The information will be stored on a dedicated server at the Service for Sensitive Data (TSD) at the University of Oslo. Information is secured through encryption and two-factor login with MinID. Pupils and teachers, as well as the municipality and school will be anonymised in resulting publications of the study.

What happens to your information when we end the research project?

The project is scheduled to end on 1.2.2021. After this date, recordings from interviews will be deleted. Anonymised notes from observation and transcribed interviews will be retained for further research and publication.

Your rights

As long as you can be identified in the data material, you have the right to:

- to access the personal information registered about you
- to have personal information about you corrected
- to have personal information about you deleted
- to receive a copy of your personal information (data portability)
- to send a complaint to the Privacy Ombudsman or the Data Inspectorate about the processing of your personal data.

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We process information about you based on your consent. On behalf of INN, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with the privacy regulations.

Where can I find more information?

If you have questions about the study, or want to exercise an of your rights, please contact:

- INN: Frode Restad, frode.restad@inn.no, Tel: 9175 2727.
- Our privacy representative: Hans Petter Nyberg, hans.nyberg@inn.no, Tel: 6243 0023
- NSD: personvertjenester@nsd.no, Tel: 5558 2117.

With best regards



Project manager
Frode Restad



Declaration of consent

Teacher name:

Teacher class:

I have received and understood information about the project "Can contents create community?" and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I agree to:

- let a researcher observe my teaching
- participate in group interviews, if requested
- let information about me be processed until the end of the project 1.2.2021

Signature teacher, date

Appendix 3: Interview guides and timeline



The research project *"Can content create community"?*

Interview guide – student groups (English translation)

The purpose of the interview is to investigate how student in 8th and 10th grade Norwegian and Science feel about the teaching and learning environment in their class.

Questions

1. Class history

Students are asked to draw a timeline and describe how they have felt at different times since starting in the class, and if there are any events that have had an influence on them.

2. Events and stories

- How do you think it is to go in this class?
- Are there any episodes you remember that you think have affected the classroom environment?

3. Learning environment and groups

- How would you describe this class in relation to other classes at the school?
- How do you think other students at the school will describe this class?
- How would the teachers describe the class?
- Are there any groups that are particularly much together in this class?
- What groups are there at school?

3. The subject (Norwegian/Science)

- What do you think about the teaching of Norwegian/Science?
- How do you think the teaching of Norwegian/Science affects the class learning environment?
- Is there any difference in how you feel in class when you have Norwegian/Science as compared to other subjects (Social Studies or Physical Education)?
- Are there any things you particularly like to do in Norwegian/Science?
- Are there any things there that do not like to do?

4. Working methods and organization

- What do you think about group work in Norwegian/Science? What do you learn from working in groups that you do not learn from working alone?
- When you have group work, do you work with the same people that you spend a lot of time with otherwise? Does the teacher consider who you would like to be with when you work in groups?
- What do you think about the way you are seated in the classroom? Does the teacher consider who you would like to sit with when you change positions?

5. Rules and values

- What rules / values do you have in class?
- Have you been involved in designing these?
- How do you practice these? Do the rules apply to both students and teachers?

6. Reflections on teaching (two lessons from each class)

- Lesson 1 (experiences, reflections, learning)
- Lesson 2 (experiences, reflections, learning)

The research project *"Can content create community"?*

Interview guide - subject teachers (English translation)

The purpose of the interview is to investigate what subject teachers in 8th and 10th grade Norwegian and Science think about their work with students' social learning and learning environment.

Questions

1. Class history

Teachers are asked to draw a timeline and describe how they have felt about the class at different times since starting to teach in the class, and if there are any events in the class that have had an influence on their teaching.

2. The class

- How would you describe this class? What events have affected the learning environment in the class?
- Is there anything special about this class compared to other classes you have had in Norwegian/Science?

3. Relationships

- Does your teaching of Norwegian/Science affect your relationship with the students in the class? Can you give an example?
- Are there any differences in Norwegian/Science as compared to other subjects you teach?

4. Subject teaching

- Does your teaching of Norwegian/Science have any impact on students' social learning? Can you give an example?
- Are there any differences in Norwegian/Science as compared to other subjects you teach?

5. Learning environment

- Does your teaching of Norwegian/Science have any impact on the learning environment in the class? Can you give an example?
- Are there any differences in Norwegian/Science as compared to other subjects you teach?

6. Challenges

- What do you do as a subject teacher if a student challenges you in Norwegian/Science teaching? Do you have any examples?
- How do such challenges affect your teaching? How do you cooperate with the contact teacher or other employees in such situations?

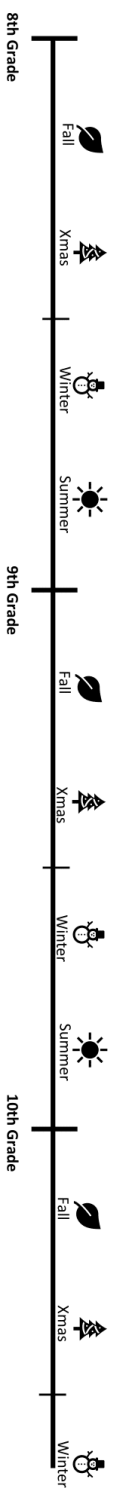
7. Reflections on teaching (three lessons from each class)

- Lesson 1 (purpose, contents, working methods, assessment)
- Lesson 2 (purpose, contents, working methods, assessment)
- Lesson 3 (purpose, contents, working methods, assessment)

Class History

Name: _____

Class: _____



Appendix 4: Observation guides



The research project ***"Can content create community"?***

Observation schema – students (English translation)

- Students' interaction with goals, content and working methods in the teaching
- Students' own stories and stories used in the teaching
- Statements that say something about the student's experience of him-/herself
- Statements that say something about the student's experience of others
- Statements and personal questions about the teacher
- Statements and gestures that indicate a desire for specific working methods and organization of teaching
- Statements that indicate personal feelings, thoughts and experiences with the content of the teaching

The research project
"Can content create community"?

Observation schema – teachers (English translation)

- Teacher's choice of learning goals (why?)
- Teachers' choice of content (what?)
- Teacher's choice of working methods (how?)
- The teacher's stories and stories used in the teaching
- Statements that indicate a desire for the student to learn something about each other
- Statements that indicate a desire for students to learn something about the teacher

Appendix 5: Transcription agreement



AVTALE OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER (DATABEHANDLERAVTALE)

I henhold til gjeldende norsk personopplysningslovgivning og forordning (EU) 2016/679 av 27. april 2016, Artikkel 28 og 29, jf. Artikkel 32-36, inngås følgende avtale

i prosjektet

«Kan fag skape fellesskap?»

mellom

Høgskolen Innlandet

Frode Restad

(behandlingsansvarlig)

og

Navn på tjenesteleverandøren

Silje Mathiesen

(databehandler)

1. Avtalens hensikt

Avtalens hensikt er å regulere rettigheter og plikter etter Lov av 15. juni 2018 nr. 38 om behandling av personopplysninger og EUs personvernforordning (GDPR). Norsk lov og EUs forordning omtales heretter som personvernregelverket.

Avtalen skal sikre at personopplysninger ikke brukes ulovlig, urettmessig eller at opplysningene behandles på måter som fører til uautorisert tilgang, endring, sletting, skade, tap eller utilgjengelighet.

Avtalen regulerer databehandlers forvaltning av personopplysninger på vegne av den behandlingsansvarlige, herunder innsamling, registrering, sammenstilling, lagring, utlevering eller kombinasjoner av disse, i forbindelse med transkripsjon i prosjektet «Kan fag skape fellesskap?».

Ved motstrid skal vilkårene i denne avtalen gå foran databehandlers personvernerklæring eller vilkår i andre avtaler inngått mellom behandlingsansvarlig og databehandler i forbindelse med bruk av transkripsjon i prosjektet «Kan fag skape fellesskap?».

Det skal fremgå klart av denne avtalen dersom databehandleren kan overlate personopplysninger til andre for oppbevaring, bearbeiding eller annen behandling, og underleverandør skal angis i avtalens punkt 10.

Behandlingens formål kan ikke endres av noen av partene uten at ny avtale er signert.

2. Formålsbegrensning

Formålet med databehandlers forvaltning av personopplysninger på vegne av behandlingsansvarlig, er å levere skriftlig transkripsjon av intervjuer fra prosjektet «Kan fag skape fellesskap?».

Prosjektet behandler personopplysninger basert samtykke, og i tråd med NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata sine retningslinjer for forskning. Prosjektet har som mål å undersøke hvordan undervisning i fag påvirker elevenes sosiale læring og opplevelse av tilhørighet i klassen. Forskningen vil ha særlig fokus på undervisning i Norsk og Naturfag, og undersøke hvordan elever og lærere opplever undervisningen gjennom observasjon og gruppeintervjuer. Prosjektet er en del av et doktorgradsstudium med tittelen «Kan fag skape fellesskap?». Opplysninger fra prosjektet vil bli benyttet til forskning og publisering i forbindelse med doktorgradsprosjektet.

Personopplysninger som databehandler forvalter på vegne av behandlingsansvarlig kan ikke brukes til andre formål enn skriftlig transkripsjon av intervjuer til prosjektet «Kan fag skape fellesskap?».

Databehandler kan ikke overføre personopplysninger som omfattes av denne avtalen til samarbeidspartnere eller andre tredjeparter uten at dette på forhånd er godkjent av behandlingsansvarlig, jf. punkt 10 i denne avtalen.

3. Instruksjer

Databehandler skal følge de skriftlige og dokumenterte instruksjer for forvaltning av personopplysninger som behandlingsansvarlig har bestemt skal gjelde.

Databehandler forplikter seg til å overholde alle plikter i henhold til gjeldende personvernregelverk som gjelder ved behandling av personopplysninger.

Databehandler forplikter seg til å varsle behandlingsansvarlig dersom databehandler mottar instruksjoner som er i strid med personvernregelverket.

Databehandler skal ikke:

- *Behandle personopplysninger til andre formål enn det som er regulert i avtalen.*
- *Behandle personopplysninger utover det som er nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet med avtalen.*
- *Samle inn eller overføre personopplysninger utover det som er regulert i avtalen.*
- *Behandle personopplysninger på noen annen måte enn det som er angitt i avtalen.*

Databehandler skal:

- *Ha oversikt på alle behandlingsaktiviteter utført på vegne av behandlingsansvarlig.*
- *Treffe alle rimelige tiltak for å sikre at personopplysninger er korrekte og oppdaterte.*
- *Slette informasjon fra prosjektet når denne ikke lenger er nødvendig for behandling av personopplysninger.*
- *Underrette behandlingsansvarlig dersom det skulle oppstå avvik ved behandling av personopplysninger som følge av denne avtalen.*

4. Opplysningstyper og registrerte

Databehandleren forvalter følgende personopplysninger på vegne av behandlingsansvarlig i forbindelse med transkribering av intervju til «Kan fag skape felleskap?»:

- Navn på personer
- Rolle/tilhørighet ved skolen
- Vurderinger av sosiale og faglige forhold ved skolen

Intervjuer inneholder informasjon om elever, lærere og andre ansattes tilhørighet og kan identifiseres direkte i lydopptak. Datamateriale inneholder elever, lærere og andre ansattes vurderinger av faglige og sosiale forhold ved skolen og anses ikke som sensitive personopplysninger.

5. De registrertes rettigheter

Databehandler plikter å bistå behandlingsansvarlig ved ivaretagelse av den registrertes rettigheter i henhold til personvernregelverket.

Den registrertes rettigheter inkluderer retten til informasjon om hvordan hans eller hennes personopplysninger behandles, retten til å kreve innsyn i egne personopplysninger, retten til å kreve retting eller sletting av egne personopplysninger og retten til å kreve at behandlingen av egne personopplysninger begrenses.

I den grad det er relevant, skal databehandler bistå behandlingsansvarlig med å ivareta de registrertes rett til dataportabilitet og retten til å motsette seg automatiske avgjørelser, inkludert profilering.

3

Databehandler er erstatningsansvarlig overfor de registrerte dersom feil eller forsømmelser hos databehandler påfører de registrerte økonomiske eller ikke-økonomiske tap som følge av at deres rettigheter eller personvern er krenket.

6. Tilfredsstillende informasjonssikkerhet

Databehandler skal iverksette tilfredsstillende tekniske, fysiske og organisatoriske sikringstiltak for å beskytte personopplysninger som omfattes av denne avtalen mot uautorisert eller ulovlig tilgang, endring, sletting, skade, tap eller utilgjengelighet.

Databehandler skal dokumentere egen sikkerhetsorganisering, retningslinjer og rutiner for sikkerhetsarbeidet, risikovurderinger og etablerte tekniske, fysiske eller organisatoriske sikringstiltak. Dokumentasjonen skal være tilgjengelig for behandlingsansvarlig.

Databehandler skal etablere kontinuitets- og beredskapsplaner for effektiv håndtering av alvorlige sikkerhetshendelser. Dokumentasjonen skal være tilgjengelig for behandlingsansvarlig.

Databehandler skal gi egne ansatte tilstrekkelig informasjon om og opplæring i informasjonssikkerhet slik at sikkerheten til personopplysninger som behandles på vegne av behandlingsansvarlig blir ivarettatt.

Databehandler skal dokumentere opplæringen av egne ansatte i informasjonssikkerhet. Dokumentasjonen skal være tilgjengelig for behandlingsansvarlig.

7. Taushetsplikt

Kun ansatte hos databehandler som har tjenstlige behov for tilgang til personopplysninger som forvaltes på vegne av behandlingsansvarlig, kan gis slik tilgang. Databehandler plikter å dokumentere retningslinjer og rutiner for tilgangsstyring. Dokumentasjonen skal være tilgjengelig for behandlingsansvarlig.

Ansatte hos databehandler har taushetsplikt om dokumentasjon og personopplysninger som vedkommende får tilgang til i henhold til denne avtalen. Denne bestemmelsen gjelder også etter avtalens opphør. Taushetsplikten omfatter ansatte hos tredjeparter som utfører vedlikehold (eller liknende oppgaver) av systemer, utstyr, nettverk eller bygninger som databehandler anvender for å levere transkripsjon av intervju

Norsk lov vil kunne begrense omfanget av taushetsplikten for ansatte hos databehandler og tredjeparter.

8. Tilgang til sikkerhetsdokumentasjon

Databehandler plikter å gi behandlingsansvarlig tilgang til all sikkerhetsdokumentasjon som er nødvendig for at behandlingsansvarlig skal kunne ivareta sine forpliktelser i henhold til personvernregelverket..

Databehandler plikter å gi behandlingsansvarlig tilgang til annen relevant dokumentasjon som gjør det mulig for behandlingsansvarlig å vurdere om databehandler overholder vilkårene i denne avtalen.

Ansatte hos behandlingsansvarlig har taushetsplikt for konfidensiell sikkerhetsdokumentasjon som databehandler gjør tilgjengelig for behandlingsansvarlig.

9. Varslingsplikt ved sikkerhetsbrudd

Databehandler skal uten ubegrunnet opphold varsle behandlingsansvarlig dersom personopplysninger som forvaltes på vegne av behandlingsansvarlig utsettes for sikkerhetsbrudd som innebærer risiko for krenkelser av de registrertes personvern.

Varslet til behandlingsansvarlig skal som minimum inneholde informasjon som beskriver sikkerhetsbruddet, hvilke registrerte som er berørt av sikkerhetsbruddet, hvilke personopplysninger som er berørt av sikkerhetsbruddet, hvilke strakstiltak som er iverksatt for å håndtere sikkerhetsbruddet og hvilke forebyggende tiltak som eventuelt er etablert for å unngå liknende hendelser i fremtiden.

Behandlingsansvarlig er ansvarlig for at varsler om sikkerhetsbrudd fra databehandler blir videreformidlet til Datatilsynet.

10. Underleverandører

Dersom databehandler ønsker å benytte underleverandører til transkripsjon av intervju plikter databehandler å inngå egne avtaler med som regulerer underleverandørenes forvaltning av personopplysninger i forbindelse med levering til prosjektet «Kan fag skape fellesskap?».

I avtaler mellom databehandler og underleverandører skal underleverandørene pålegges å ivareta alle plikter som databehandleren selv er underlagt i henhold til denne avtalen. Databehandler plikter å forelegge avtalene for behandlingsansvarlig etter forespørsel.

Databehandler skal kontrollere at underleverandører overholder sine avtalemessige plikter, spesielt at informasjonssikkerheten er tilfredsstillende og at ansatte hos underleverandører er kjent med sine forpliktelser og oppfyller disse.

Behandlingsansvarlig godkjenner at databehandler engasjerer følgende underleverandører i forbindelse med levering av transkripsjon til prosjektet «Kan fag skape fellesskap?»:

..... (navn på underleverandører).

Databehandler kan ikke engasjere andre underleverandører enn de som er nevnt ovenfor uten at dette på forhånd er godkjent av behandlingsansvarlig.

Databehandler er erstatningsansvarlig overfor behandlingsansvarlig for økonomiske tap som påføres behandlingsansvarlig og som skyldes ulovlig eller urettmessig behandling av personopplysninger eller mangelfull informasjonssikkerhet hos underleverandører.

11. Sikkerhetsrevisjoner og konsekvensutredninger

Databehandler skal jevnlig gjennomføre sikkerhetsrevisjoner av eget arbeid med sikring av personopplysninger mot uautorisert eller ulovlig tilgang, endring, sletting, skade, tap eller utilgjengelighet.

Databehandler skal gjennomføre revisjoner av informasjonssikkerheten i forbindelse med gjennomføring av avtalen. Sikkerhetsrevisjoner skal omfatte databehandlers sikkerhetsmål og sikkerhetsstrategi, sikkerhetsorganisering, retningslinjer og rutiner for sikkerhetsarbeidet, etablerte tekniske, fysiske og organisatoriske sikringstiltak og arbeidet med informasjonssikkerhet hos underleverandører. Det skal i tillegg omfatte rutiner for varsling av behandlingsansvarlig ved sikkerhetsbrudd og rutiner for testing av beredskaps- og kontinuitetsplaner.

Databehandler skal dokumentere sikkerhetsrevisjonene. Behandlingsansvarlig skal gis tilgang til revisjonsrapportene.

Dersom en uavhengig tredjepart gjennomfører sikkerhetsrevisjoner hos databehandler, skal behandlingsansvarlig informeres om hvilken revisor som benyttes og få tilgang til oppsummeringer av revisjonsrapportene.

12. Tilbakelevering og sletting

Ved opphør av denne avtalen plikter databehandler å slette og tilbakelevere alle personopplysninger som forvaltes på vegne av behandlingsansvarlig i forbindelse med transkripsjon til prosjektet «Kan fag skape felleskap?». Behandlingsansvarlig bestemmer hvordan tilbakelevering av personopplysningene skal skje, herunder hvilket format som skal benyttes.

Databehandler skal slette personopplysninger fra alle lagringsmedier som inneholder personopplysninger som databehandler forvalter på vegne av behandlingsansvarlig. Sletting skal skje ved at databehandler skriver over personopplysninger innen 14 dager etter avtalens opphør. Dette gjelder også for sikkerhetskopier av personopplysningene.

Databehandler skal dokumentere at sletting av personopplysninger er foretatt i henhold til denne avtalen. Dokumentasjonen skal gjøres tilgjengelig for behandlingsansvarlig.

Databehandler dekker alle kostnader i forbindelse med tilbakelevering og sletting av de personopplysninger som omfattes av denne avtalen.

13. Mislighold

Ved mislighold av vilkårene i denne avtalen som skyldes feil eller forsømmelser fra databehandlers side, kan behandlingsansvarlig si opp avtalen med øyeblikkelig virkning. Databehandler vil fortsatt være pliktig til å tilbakelevere og slette personopplysninger som forvaltes på vegne av behandlingsansvarlig i henhold til bestemmelsene i punkt 12 ovenfor.

Behandlingsansvarlig kan kreve erstatning for økonomiske tap som feil eller forsømmelser fra databehandlers side, inkludert mislighold av vilkårene i denne avtalen, har påført behandlingsansvarlig, jf. også punkt 5 og 10 ovenfor.

14. Avtalens varighet

Denne avtalen gjelder til 1.4.2020.

15. Kontaktpersoner

Kontaktperson hos databehandler for spørsmål knyttet til denne avtalen er: Silje Mathiesen

Personlig næringsdrivende. Epost: siljemathiesen88@gmail.com. Telefon: 41605426

Kontaktperson hos behandlingsansvarlig for spørsmål knyttet til denne avtalen er: Frode Restad.

Fakultet for lærerutdanning og pedagogikk. Epost: frode.restad@inn.no. Telefon: 91752727


16. Lovvalg og verneting

Avtalen er underlagt norsk rett og partene vedtar Hedmarken tingrett som verneting. Dette gjelder også etter opphør av avtalen.

Denne avtale er i 2 – to eksemplarer, hvorav partene har hvert sitt.

Hamar/Trondheim 24.2.2020

På vegne av behandlingsansvarlig



Frode Restad

På vegne av databehandler



Silje Mathiesen

Appendix 6: Co-author agreement

Co-author Statement

In this statement, the PhD candidate and all article co-authors must provide information about their individual contributions to the article indicated below. Co-author statements must be provided for every article with multiple authors included in the thesis. The authors hereby confirm that they understand that this article has been submitted as part of a doctoral thesis. They also confirm that the article has not previously been submitted as part of a doctoral thesis, or in another way been used to qualify for a PhD degree, in Norway or abroad. This statement must follow the recommendations of The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, the so-called Vancouver Recommendations. Co-authorship should be based on the following criteria:

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
3. Final approval of the version to be published; AND
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Both the PhD candidate and the co-author(s) are required to report on their contributions in each article, in addition to signing for each of the respective articles. All authors must sign on the last page to confirm that they have read the entire statement and that the information provided is correct. More than one form may be used per article if necessary.

The form must be signed and attached to the Application for the Assessment of the Thesis for the degree philosophiae doctor at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences.

Article Number:	3
Title	Negotiating social and emotional skills in curriculum reform: A thin red line for measurability?
PhD Candidate's Name	Frode Restad
Authors (in the same order as they appear on the article)	Frode Restad and Christina Elde Mølsted

Candidate's Contribution:	
Contribution 1.	Idea and design: Initial conceptualization and design of study, including preliminary reading and review.

Contribution 2.	Data collection and analysis: In depth review of policy documents and sources, including content and bibliometric analysis.
Contribution 3.	Writing and revision: Writing of initial draft, submitted manuscript and revised manuscript.

Co-author's name:	Christina Elde Mølstad
Contribution 1.	Design: Contributions to conceptualization and design of study, including framework for analysis.
Contribution 2.	Interpretations: Contributions to analysis of findings and conclusions drawn from the study.
Contribution 3.	Writing and revision: Contributions to writing and revision of submitted manuscripts.

I have read the authors' statements and confirm that all of the information is correct.

Hamar 26.1.2021



Candidate's signature



Co-author's signature

For more information about authorship see:

<http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>

Appendix 7: Results of statistical analysis

Items chosen for CC (Faklærkultur) translated by author:

1. There is a good working environment during lessons (Lærkul1)
2. In my class we feel it is important to work well in school (Lærkul2)
3. Are students engaged in suggesting how to work in school subjects? (Elevdemo1)
4. Are students engaged in making rules for how it should be in class? (Elevdemo2)
5. Have you been bullied by other students during the last months? (Snuddmobbet)

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Lærkul1	13,6415	,449	,607	,578
Lærkul2	13,5517	,465	,654	,568
elevdemo1	14,2826	,524	,417	,661
elevdemo2	13,8327	,397	,387	,732
Snuddmobbet	13,4953	,631	,410	,689

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,699
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	493,930
	df	10
	Sig.	,000

Model		95,0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations		
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	27,322	40,787			
	Faklærkultur	,330	4,231	,130	,130	,130

a. Dependent Variable: Grskolepoeng

Effect of Class Culture and Academic Achivement

Rank	School info			CC	AA
	Id	Students	County	Cd	15-18
1	974552337	336	Akershus	1,92	43,7
2	998469635	394	Oslo	1,76	43,7
3	975906892	509	Akershus	1,46	44,3
4	979120087	623	Oslo	1,00	46,3
5	875273922	189	Oppland	0,98	41,5
6	974578387	433	Akershus	0,89	44,7
7	984577311	308	Akershus	0,86	44,1
8	875294792	119	Oppland	0,86	41,1
9	979797699	458	Akershus	0,85	42,9
10	974552310	320	Akershus	0,85	45,1
11	975292762	354	Oppland	0,85	41,9
12	874590592	595	Oslo	0,84	43,8
13	974590824	555	Oslo	0,78	45,5
14	975272842	197	Akershus	0,76	44,1
15	974552302	450	Akershus	0,56	44,5
16	975297500	188	Akershus	0,56	42,0
17	974552361	541	Akershus	0,53	44,4
18	974595761	168	Oppland	0,52	43,6
19	912493881	144	Akershus	0,52	42,9
	Means	362		0,91	41,4

Dissertation articles

1. Restad (2019). Revisioning the Fifth Element. Can critical realism reconcile competence and Bildung for a more sustainable twenty-first-century education?. *Journal of Critical Realism*, 18(4), 402-419.
2. Restad (2020). Is There a Hole in the Whole-School Approach? A Critical Review of Curriculum Understanding in Bullying Research. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 40(4), 362-386.
3. Restad and Mølsted (2020). Social and emotional skills in curriculum reform: a red line for measurability?. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1-14.
4. Restad (Unpublished). Exploring problems and potential of curriculum making for social learning. Implications for policy and practice. Submitted to *The Curriculum Journal*.

1

Revisoning the Fifth Element. Can critical realism reconcile competence and *Bildung* for a more sustainable twenty-first-century education?

Frode Restad

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Revising the Fifth Element. Can critical realism reconcile competence and *Bildung* for a more sustainable twenty-first-century education?

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the concepts of competence and *Bildung* in contemporary education and how critical realism may contribute to reconciling these positions in a more sustainable theory of learning for the twenty-first century. Using the recent curriculum reform in Norway as a backdrop, the article discusses how unresolved disputes between competence and *Bildung* can provide fertile grounds for dichotomous theoretical positioning in research, short-sighted cherry-picking in policy and instrumental practice in schools. The author argues that it is possible, building on a critical realist ontology and learning environment, to resolve such disputes. Efforts to do so are needed to develop a better explanatory theory of learning and to mobilize research efforts to revision education as a protective force against unsustainable development.

KEYWORDS

Critical realism; curriculum; learning theory; competence; *Bildung*

Introduction

The current article is inspired by discussions during the 21st annual conference of the International Association for Critical Realism in 2018. Building on the conference topic of the crisis system¹ (Bhaskar 2016), concerning the four Es (ecological, ethical, economic and existential), the notion of a fifth E, education, was put forth by keynote speaker Heila Lotz-Sisitka. The proposition was made in reference to educational systems across the world increasingly becoming vessels for economic growth, exacerbating the global ecological and ethical crises and leaving behind those who lack access to education or have problems meeting the demands of formal schooling in the twenty-first century. The paper aims to add to these discussions by demonstrating how critical realism may contribute to reconciling some of the longstanding theoretical divisions that obstruct the path towards more sustainable educational policies and practices.

The article first provides an outline of the divisions between the educational concepts of competence and *Bildung* as a backdrop for discussing how an absence of a more coherent explanatory theory of learning impacts curriculum reform in Norway.

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The article uses a theoretical framework in critical realism, focusing on the critical realist model of the laminar learning environment as a steppingstone towards a new and more ontologically coherent understanding of learning. The article discusses how the absence of a coherent explanatory theory of learning provides fertile grounds for dichotomous theoretical positioning in research, short-sighted cherry picking in policy and instrumentalist approaches in schools. Such absence drains energy from urgently needed efforts to build a more sustainable education system that can emancipate humanity from, rather than incarcerate it within, Bhaskar's notion of the global crisis system.

As an entry point for discussing the effects of the absence of an explanatory theory of learning in curriculum reform, I will provide some background on the concepts of competence and *Bildung*, both highly influential in framing the understanding of learning in the Norwegian context.

Understanding *Didaktik* and *Bildung*

Didaktik

Hopmann (2007) describes the German *Didaktik* tradition as characterized by a commitment to *Bildung*, the educative difference between matter and meaning, and the autonomy of teaching and learning (Hopmann 2007, 109). This tradition has a long history that spans from mediaeval mysticism and Romantic *Weltanschauung* to present-day curriculum and teaching research. As a movement, it has been highly influential across many European countries during the twentieth century. The word *Didaktik* is difficult to translate into English, as it combines 'elements of education, erudition, formation, experience, and whatever else is used in English to denote the process of unfolding individuality by learning' (Hopmann 2007, 115).

From the perspective of *Didaktik*, the purpose of education is neither to transport knowledge from society to a learner through a certain curriculum nor to transport knowledge from scientific disciplines into the classroom. The purpose is, rather, the 'use of knowledge as a transformative tool of unfolding the learner's individuality and sociability, in short: the *Bildung* of the learners by teaching' (Hopmann 2007, 115).

In *Didaktik*'s context of the school, matter (*Inhalt*) relates to the content of education, as in curricula or subjects of knowledge, while meaning (*Gehalt*) is the individually attributed meaning – the learning of the student: 'Any given matter can represent many different meanings, and any given meaning can be opened up by many different matters. But there is no matter without meaning, and no meaning without matter' (Hopmann 2007, 116). Learning understood within the *Didaktik* tradition, then, is an emergent meaning that is generated when the content of education is enacted in the classroom. From this perspective, the individual attribution of meaning cannot be prescribed, objectified or measured. It also means that the question of educational content is given primacy over other educational hot topics such as classroom management, social-emotional learning and individual learning styles.

For this paper, I am principally concerned with the commitment of the *Didaktik* tradition to the concept of *Bildung*. *Bildung* can be understood as the goal and purpose of education; however, as Hopmann (2007) emphasizes, '*Bildung* is more than mastery of contents or development of competencies and abilities, more than "knowing something" or "being

able to do it” (Hopmann 2007, 115). The distinctive ‘more’ of Bildung is the autonomous meaning making of the student. It is the individual’s ability to generate his or her own meaning from the encounter with the educational content that constitutes Bildung – not the mastery or prescribed knowledge or skills. As such, Bildung is a concept attuned to individual and cultural differences in the construction of knowledge. It offers a non-linear understanding that does not require specific combinations of matter and meaning as validations of learning, and it sees tests of individual competence as providing information on ‘important aspects of education[,] however[,] as being far from giving a complete picture of the impacts of teaching, let alone of Bildung’ (Hopmann 2007, 121).

Bildung

Hopmann (2007) describes Klafki’s brand of Bildung as ‘categorical’, meaning that it provides students with categories in the form of exemplary concepts, languages and tools to ‘open up the world and to open up themselves’ (Hopmann 2007, 115). Klafki’s ideas can be seen as a critique of two other strands of Bildung – the material and the formal. Material Bildung is typically understood as the acquisition of scientific knowledge and knowledge of classical works of art and literature in a prescribed cultural canon. Formal Bildung is understood as the development of desirable traits and abilities or a mastery of methods that help the individual to navigate through life. Klafki (2001) considers both directions theoretically deficient, as neither is ‘able to decide on a theoretical framework to describe the nature of the phenomenon and process of Bildung’ (Klafki 2001, 186). Bildung, according to Klafki, is always a whole and not a joining of the parts of Bildung, as a dialectic where conditions ‘reveal their true nature [only] as part of a whole, and in concert with other conditions inside the whole’ (Klafki 2001, 187). Bildung is then categorical in a dual sense, since the reality is of the world if opened to the human by understanding of these intransitive categories, and because the individual can apply these categorical insights to better understand herself.

The formal theories of Bildung, and in particular the functional emphasis on development of abilities, such as creativity, problem solving, communication and flexibility that permeate current understandings of competence, may, to Klafki, be worrisome indications that the qualifications that are disconnected from their historic and societal context and the content to which they are related. Such understanding, Klafki (2001) laments, makes the ‘content of curricula relatively insignificant’, and merely a ‘means to describe qualifications’ (Klafki 2001, 199). Although education students are provided with categories that enable Bildung, educational endeavours can never fully prescribe or assess the Bildung of individual students, as such processes are entangled in multiple factors beyond the teacher’s control.

Critique of Bildung

Scholars have criticized the concept of Bildung for being unclear and lacking in relevance for school and policy adaptation. Klette (2007) argues that the Didaktik tradition, with its emphasis on teaching, has contributed to a limited understanding of what goes on in schools and classrooms and how differences in teachers’ activities affect students’ learning. She also notes that ‘while studies of teaching for a long period tended to depict learning and knowledge acquisition as a rather unproblematic and linear process of knowledge

transmission, these assumptions have been contested during the last three decades, yet never properly disentangled' (Klette 2007, 147).

Adding to this, Priestley (2011) criticizes the Didactic tradition for what he sees as an insufficient understanding of educational change that has underpinned much of the research stemming from the perspective of Bildung. Recently Deng (2015) has called for new theories to bridge the continental ideas of Bildung with the concept of twenty-first-century competencies, recognizing that elements from both are highly relevant to academic debates on education and learning. Deng (2015) argues that it is necessary to build a new theory and vision of education centred on general competencies, while also including aspects of Bildung (Deng 2015, 782). For this to happen, the teaching of school subjects needs to shift from transmission of knowledge to the cultivation of desirable capabilities and dispositions. This requires a new theory of knowledge and content that is coherent within the context of the knowledge economy and globalization.

Illeris (2003) sees the ongoing debates on educational knowledge and learning as a result of global competition and the inadequacy of existing theories. He claims that learning can no longer be understood as simply acquiring knowledge from the material referenced on a syllabus or in a curriculum. Instead, he defines 'what-should-be-learned' – in both education and society – as a 'complex totality of traditional up-to-date knowledge, orientation and overview, combined with professional and everyday life skills and a broad range of personal qualities such as flexibility, openness, independence, responsibility, creativity etc.' (Illeris 2003, 397).

Such criticisms seem to juxtapose the tradition of Bildung with competence and learning. In the following, I will explore some historical and current concepts of competence and learning, starting with the idea of competency-based training.

Understanding competence and learning

Competency-based training

Hodge (2007) sees competency-based training not as a single clear-cut theory but as an 'amalgam of separate theoretical components alloyed in the crucible of powerful political forces' with 'responsiveness to social and cultural pressures' (Hodge 2007, 180). Hodge links competency-based training to the US-Soviet arms race of the cold war, with the Soviet launch of Sputnik sparking concerns in the United States about the quality of the American education system. Due to these concerns, reducing high drop-out rates, personalized teaching methods and greater accountability became the order of the day in schools (Hodge 2007, 184–5). The authorities found inspiration in the behavioural psychology of Pavlov and Skinner and in the systems theory of Bertalanffy and Crawford (Hodge 2007, 188). Despite theoretical shortcomings and a lack of empirical support, these theories provided policy makers with a new and seemingly scientific approach that suited the policy agenda. Support also came from curriculum research, notably Ralph Tyler who criticized contemporary curricula for overemphasizing teachers' actions, arguing that 'curriculum design should be determined by explicit curriculum objectives expressed purely in terms of the changes the learning was supposed to produce in the behaviour of students' (Hodge 2007, 197) (see also Nordkvelle and Nyhus 2017). Humanistic theories, such as Bloom and Carrol's advocacy of the mastery learning, also played a part in

developing minimum competency testing to counter the adverse effects of a grading system that seemed to reinforce differences between students. Systems theory thus helped to provide a flexible framing of competence, glued together by various components that fit the purpose of the system. The amalgam that Hodge refers to makes competence 'constitutionally responsive to a wide range of inputs' (Hodge 2007, 196).

The concept of competence is closely related to the idea of learning as an educational outcome. In the following, I will explore a contemporary understanding and a general model of learning as a basis for discussing competency and Bildung in the latter parts of the article.

Learning in curriculum reform

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) emphasizes the need to address the new and demanding kinds of learning summarized as twenty-first-century competences to attain the desired outcomes of education sought by many countries (OECD 2010, 23). In its 2010 report "The Nature of Learning", the organization's views on learning are outlined in some detail. The report states that the transmission model of learning, as advocated in behaviourist and cognitivist traditions, has been abandoned in favour of a more a constructivist view on learning. Building on the work of scholars such as Piaget and Bruner, learners are seen as sense makers actively constructing their own knowledge and skills, and following Vygotsky, learning is situated as the 'product of the activity, context and culture in which it is developed and used' (OECD 2010, 40). The OECD describes learning aimed at promoting twenty-first-century adaptive competence as 'CSSC learning: "constructive" as learners actively construct their knowledge and skills; "self-regulated" with people actively using strategies to learn; "situated" and best understood in context rather than abstracted from environment and "collaborative" not a solo activity' (OECD 2010, 35). Despite the references to existing theories on learning, the OECD makes no attempt to unite these references in a coherent theoretical framework. Such efforts have, however, been undertaken by Illeris who, from a wide selection of available theories, has devised a general model of learning that I will explore in the following.

A general model of learning

Illeris (2018) describes a great variety of theoretical and epistemological approaches which are 'more-or-less compatible' and 'more-or-less competitive' in the global field of learning (Illeris 2018, 1). In his general model of learning, which he claims provides an overall understanding and a general and up-to date overview of the field (Illeris 2003, 2018), Illeris (2003) argues that 'the modern concept of competence comprises not only relevant knowledge and skills, but also a range of personal qualities and the ability to perform adequately and flexibly in well-known and unknown situations' (Illeris 2003, 396). He contends that the concept of learning should be understood in the same broad sense, to allow its application in both analysing and planning learning processes in education.

Illeris (2018) broadly defines learning as 'any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is solely due to biological maturation or aging' (Illeris 2018, 1). His general theory of learning is basically a constructivist meaning that assumes the learner actively builds her learning as mental structures through a process of psychological functions interacting with the environment within society. This is done

at four levels, according to Illeris (drawing in Piaget), by adding something new (cumulative), by adding to existing structures (assimilative), by adapting existing structures to new contexts (accommodative) or by completely remaking existing schemes, as in times of crisis (transformative).

For Illeris, learning implies the integration of both: (a) an external interaction process (social constructivist) between the learner and her social, cultural and material environment; and (b) an internal psychological (cognitive/behaviourist) process of acquisition and elaboration. It is an interplay between both: the fundamental psychological function of cognition, dealing with the learning content; and the function of emotion, dealing with mental balance and energy. Both cognitive and emotional functions and their interplay are dependent on the interaction of the learner with the environment (Illeris 2003, 401), while society provides the conditions for learning to take place. Therefore, 'the endeavour of the learner is to construct meaning and ability to deal with the challenges of practical life and thereby develop an overall personal functionality' (Illeris 2003, 399).

Critique of competence and learning

Biesta disapproves of the constructivist approach to learning that has gravitated away from the activities of the teacher, what he calls a shift from teaching to learning. He argues that 'the point of education is never that children or students learn, but that they "learn something", that they learn this for a "particular purpose", and that they learn this "from someone"' (Biesta 2013, 36). According to Biesta (2013, 37), the process of transmitting content knowledge from the teacher to the student is neglected in a concept of learning that seeks to measure and control learning outcomes. This he sees as an uneducational extreme, built on the assumption 'that the world – social and natural – simply is at our disposal and thus should obey to our whims rather than we acknowledge that it exists independently from us' (Biesta 2013, 36). In a similar line of argument, Willbergh (2015) claims that contemporary ideas of competence 'obscure and hide the content aspect of education from public debate' (Willbergh 2015, 348). Instead, she proposes a new concept of *Bildung* to include the development of higher-order critical thinking, creativity and innovation and to reinvent content in a more consistent theoretical framing of education in the twenty-first century.

The debates on competency and learning that I have outlined above are seen by many (Biesta 2004; Priestley 2011; Nordkvelle and Nyhus 2017) as part of a neo-liberal agenda that increasingly employs education as a competitive tool in the global economy. The effects of such an agenda can be seen in research (Mølsted and Karseth 2016; Pettersson, Prøitz, and Forsberg 2017) demonstrating how the educational concepts of competence and learning have become commonplace in curricula across many European countries.

Points of contention in competence and Bildung

The tradition of *Bildung* emphasizes the autonomous meaning making of students based on content knowledge. What is learned in schools, from the perspective of categorical *Bildung* are categorical insights that can be applied to understand the world, and oneself in meaningful ways. These insights are transferable to other situations and serve as form of meta-knowledge that helps to student to acquire new knowledge in fields

and situations that are not covered school curriculum. I will for the purpose of this article summarize the points of contention between competence and Bildung in three points. First, the position of the teacher in The Bildung-tradition is envisioned more as a master passing on her wealth of knowledge to students, and more as facilitator of learning in the competence tradition with teacher possessing a wealth of teaching methods to help students find insights. Second, the task of the curriculum is seen in the Bildung-tradition as emphasizing the content of school subjects, whereas it is seen as highlighting the outcome of students leaning in the competence tradition. Third, the student role is seen as acquiring meaning and categorical insight in Building, while it is seen as acquiring skills and adaptability to deal new situations in the competence tradition.

These points are not contradictions in the absolute sense that they are incompatible, but contradictory in the sense that they emphasize different aspects and espouse different normative directions for curricula and practice in schools. The concepts of Building and competence resemble one another as they both recognize content knowledge and practical skills as important aspects of education, and the aim of education to prepare students for life outside the classroom. Both traditions also employ the term learning to describe the process of students' and teachers' engagement with curricula in schools, but with different emphasis and understanding, and rarely with an explicit theory of learning to support such practice.

Building on this background, I will now explore how the understanding of competence and Bildung is negotiated in a practical educational setting using the recent curriculum reform in Norway as a case in point.

Competence and Bildung in Norwegian curriculum reform

Norwegian curriculum reform is an interesting illustration of how tensions between the traditions of competence and Bildung are negotiated in contemporary curricula. Research has found that the Norwegian curriculum is historically engrained by the German traditions of Didaktik and Bildung (Karseth and Sivesind 2010), while also being significantly influenced by the Anglo-American tradition of competency and learning. Mølsted and Karseth (2016) have investigated the role of learning outcomes in curriculum in Norway and Finland. They find significant differences in how such outcomes are incorporated, with the Norwegian curriculum positioned further from the content-oriented tradition than the Finnish curriculum. The Norwegian national curriculum defines the outcome of learning as competence. Learning goals are described at the local level based on the competency aims of the central curriculum (Mølsted and Karseth 2016).

In the recently revised core curriculum of Norway, the definition of competence is given: 'Competence is acquiring and applying knowledge and skills to manage challenges and solve problems in familiar and unfamiliar settings and situations. Competence entails understanding, reflection and critical thinking' (St.meld nr. 28 (2015–2016)). In the white paper preceding the reform, the government reaffirms its commitment to the OECD framework of key competencies (OECD 2005) in the national curriculum, stating that 'the tasks and situations that students meet in school and later in life are often complex and demand that students not only acquire knowledge and skills, but also to use them in concrete tasks and situations' (St.meld nr. 28 (2015–2016), 27). This curricular alignment is indicative of a global discourse on learning spearheaded by the OECD emphasizing

twenty-first-century skills and the ability to adapt and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts and situations (OECD 2010). According to the OECD, research on learning is plagued by a 'great disconnect' of theory from practice, rendering many theories limited in practical value to teachers and difficult to implement in a practical school setting. Although the report points to numerous advances in the learning sciences, it nonetheless calls for continued theoretical and empirical research 'to elaborate a more thorough explanatory theory of the learning processes that facilitate and enhance the acquisition of adaptive competence' (OECD 2010, 56).

Hilt, Riese, and Søreide (2019) argue that the curriculum reform in Norway indicates a shift towards a more economically driven system of education where 'skills are now promoted to ensure the production of human capital for economic prosperity' (393). Such a shift, they argue, may preclude the expression of certain types of identities and end up excluding students who do not conform to the narrow ideals of the education system. Willbergh (2016) further argues that the limited knowledge base underlying the Norwegian curriculum reform (NOU 2015:8 2015) risks subordinating the role of content knowledge by failing to formally address the contents of the curriculum through public debate. Willbergh thus fears the Norwegian curriculum is becoming a formal functional model of Bildung, emphasizing practical skills and competencies over students' acquisition of content knowledge.

In the new General Core Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research 2017), schools are obligated to provide students with both competence and Bildung by helping them to acquire knowledge, practical experience, and to work in cooperation with others. The curriculum emphasizes the goal of supporting students to develop all aspects of their personality and abilities. Despite these descriptions, it is not clear what concept of Bildung the new curriculum subscribes to. The task of decoding what Bildung actually means is given to teachers, as they 'must carefully consider what, how and why students learn, and how they best can lead and support the learning, development and Bildung of students' (Ministry of Education and Research 2017, 18).

As the above text illustrates, there are a number of contradictions underlying the discussions on competence and Bildung in the Norwegian curriculum reform. These contradictions include a lack of theoretical grounding for the amalgam concept of competence, while formally obligating teachers to view competence as learning, and by failing to provide a clear definition that allows teachers to determine how they will support students' Bildung. Each tradition serves as a critique of the other, with the competency-based argument highlighting the lack of policy relevance in the Bildung tradition, and the Bildung tradition criticizing competence for its reduction of the complex phenomena of students learning to meet measurable outcomes. As these contradictions remain unresolved, I will explore how critical realism may contribute to reconciling competence and Bildung. I start by visiting some recent examples of critical realist research on curriculum, learning and the learning environment.

Critical realist contributions to education and learning

Reinvigorating curriculum theory

Priestley (2011) argues that many contemporary curricula are theory agnostic and riddled with contradictions. Proponents of such curricula, he claims, seek to combine the best

features of top-down and bottom-up approaches, to provide both strong central guidance and local flexibility (Priestley 2011, 222). Such efforts create new contradictions as ‘the new curriculum models fail to differentiate between theoretical and everyday knowledge, depriving students of a basis to develop and critique disciplinary knowledge’ (Priestley 2011, 223). This may lead to an instrumental approach to learning – with curricula ‘concerned with setting out not what children are expected to know, but how they should be’ (Priestley 2011, 223). The problem, as Priestley (2011) sees it, is that the current curricular emphasis on learning fails to address the core questions of what learning is, thereby degrading debates on educational policy to a set of ‘common-sense orthodoxies’ (225). In his view, a reinvigoration of curriculum theory is sorely needed to counter such degradation. Critical realism, he argues, offers one way to revisit problems that may be only partially understood by ‘tracking the ebbs and flows of morphogenic cycles over time’ and allowing us to ‘infer the existence and nature of the mechanisms that underpin such events and entities’ (Priestley 2011, 234).

Dispelling reductionist views on learning

Tikly (2015) is critical of the ‘what works agenda’, ‘in which the task of research is to empirically test the effectiveness of interventions aimed at raising learning outcomes’ (239). Tikly also criticises the interpretivist views on learning, including social constructivism, that emphasise the situated and social nature of learning, thereby negating reality outside interpretation and favouring the individual and group representation of reality over reality itself. Both the empiricist and interpretivist concepts of learning are dispelled as reductionist and ontologically deficient for explaining learning in an open school system. Tikly (2015) argues that ‘critical realism has the potential to build on the strengths, while avoiding the pitfalls of both empiricism and interpretivism’ (237), recognizing learning as an empirical outcome and causal tendencies at one level of reality, while also maintaining that, at other levels, there are always powers at work than those we can empirically observe. Using critical realism Tikly (2015) explains: the

aim of research into learning ought to be to understand what causes (or indeed prevents) learning from occurring, causality can never be determined in that the range of causes at play inevitably vary in relation to the context and to the individual learner. (239)

The starting point for critical realists is, then, the underlying structures and mechanisms that give rise to observed empirical reality and to present ‘a middle way’ between empiricism and interpretivism (Tikly 2015, 242).

Overcoming dualisms

In a recent contribution, Nunez (2013a, 2013b, 2015) demonstrates the power of critical realism by proposing to overcome the unresolved dualisms in activity theory. In her work, Nunez explains how the nature of learning constitutes itself as a stratum emerging from the need to rectify mental inconsistencies left by what we have yet to explain in our understanding of human reality. She develops her critique, in the field of mathematics education, by criticizing the constructivist theories of Piaget for failing to consider the independent prior existence and causal efficacy of objects in the dimension of ontology,

and she criticizes the social constructivist theories of Vygotsky for focusing too narrowly on interactions between individuals rather than between social phenomena and for giving primacy to language over practice. In Nunez, we find an example of how the tenets of critical realism can be employed to expand existing theories, foregrounding ontological assumptions and theoretical inconsistencies to underlabour for a more consistent theoretical framework of learning. As such, Nunez' work is indicative of the critical realist (see also Bhaskar 2008, 2016; Danermark 2011) vocation of building a middle way based on an ontology that is 'less concerned with defining and measuring the relationship between the observable parts of the system as in representing the dynamic, dialectical nature of the relationship between the underlying structures and mechanisms that give rise to learning over time' (Tikly 2015, 245). To further advance research, policy and practice, Tikly (2015) argues, 'it is important to be clear about our starting ontological assumptions, i.e. about what learning is and the structures and mechanisms that facilitate or inhibit learning in different contexts' (248).

The laminar model of the learning environment

Zembylas (2017) describes the ontological turn in education as a move away from cognitive, psychologized, phenomenological and interpretive approaches from discourse and interaction, to the objects of education themselves. The ontological turn offers a reconceptualization of learning as a 'de-centred practice of human and nonhuman entanglements, as events that make visible singularities, which are not captured by the mere language of learning outcomes' (Zembylas 2017, 1411). As an example, Zembylas points to Brown (2009), who sees the learning environment as 'a complex ensemble of causal mechanisms that enable and constrain learning' (31). Learning environments, according to Brown, are layered open systems that respond to both internal and external factors, changing morphogenically over time. They are laminar systems, where learning is an emergent property with multiple and tiered determinants. Any experienced teacher, Brown (2009) argues, will easily recognize how

learning is enabled and constrained by the lighting, heat, time of the day, time in the week and spatial layout (mechanisms operation at the physical level), by whether the children are hungry or sated, tired or alert, well or unwell (mechanisms operation at the biological level), and by the learners' motivation, aptitude and confidence (at the psychological level).
(24)

Adding to the physical, biological and psychological levels, Brown argues that there are also mechanisms operating at the sociocultural level – such as group dynamics in the classroom, and at the curricular level where meaning (intended and unintended) from curricular content has causal effects on learning (see Figure 1).

Brown (2009) emphasizes that 'The mechanisms operating at these levels interactively determine learning, but learning, which is emergent from them, cannot be reduced to any particular element or level' (25). It must, rather, be seen as an emergent property of the interacting mechanism (both enabling and constraining) at all levels. These mechanisms are facilitated by social relations and language that enable teachers and students to interact meaningfully in the classroom. The learning environment is, then, viewed as an open system, susceptible to influences that penetrate the porous walls of the classroom.

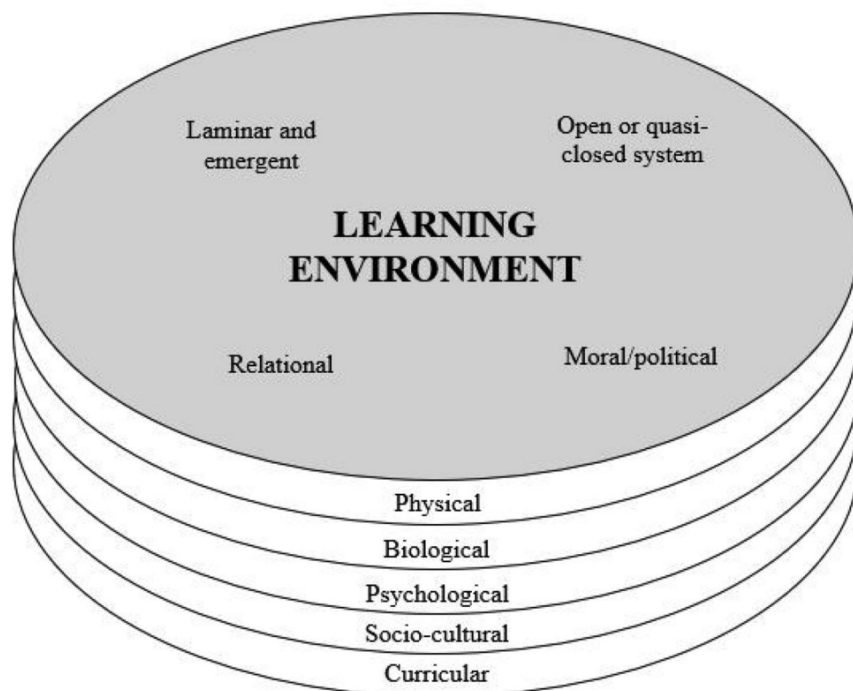


Figure 1. Critical realist model of learning environment (adapted from Brown 2009).

In summary, the works of Priestley, Tikly and Zembylas all have a commitment to ontology and a stratified view of the world. They share an interest in the structures and causal mechanisms that underline their phenomena of their research and shy away from reductionist explanations of simple input-output logic. These interests and commitments can all be seen as general traits of applied critical realism (Price and Martin 2018) that have been adopted in a range of academic fields over the past decades. Of particular interest for this article is the criticism of reductionist theories of learning – as illustrated by Tikly’s rejection of both objectivist and interpretivist approaches and in Nunez’ efforts to overcome dualisms in activity theory. These examples illustrate how critical realism can be usefully applied as an underlabourer for a more ontologically coherent understanding of learning. In the following, I will build on Brown’s model of the laminar learning environment to discuss how the concepts of competence and Bildung can be theoretically reconciled in a critical realist ontology.

How can critical realism add to the debates on competence and Bildung?

The problems of competence and Bildung

The concepts of competence and Bildung both present unresolved issues in the field of education and learning. Hodge (2007) argues that competency-based training lacks theoretical grounding, leaving it open to flexible interpretation and application. This fits well

with the 'what works agenda' criticized by Biesta (2013), Nordkvelle and Nyhus (2017) and Priestley (2011) as it makes competence oriented curriculum an instrument of policy in a competitive global economy. Adding to this, Willbergh (2015) criticizes the concept of competence for being educationally inept and unpractical in teaching.

Brown (2009) argues that it is 'demonstrably not the case that following even a straight-forward teaching procedure leads to intended learning outcomes' (11). Knowledge, he argues, by its very nature is fluid and indeterminate since students construct meaning in a variety of ways, and knowledge therefore cannot be categorized as objective. Brown is also critical of the constructivist position for recognizing any and all constructs of knowledge as being of equal value, making it difficult to deal with the public character of knowledge. Such judgemental relativism is rejected in critical realism, and by Brown, who argues that the constructivist accounts do not provide the criteria needed to meet the planned outcomes of curriculum.

Similarly, the tradition of *Bildung* does not support a view of learning as meeting planned outcomes. By insisting that *Bildung* is always a whole and rejecting the possibility of any form of 'part-*Bildung*' as an empirical reality, this position also reduces its view on learning to what it can theoretically support in a flat ontology. Neither the position of competence nor the position of *Bildung* seems to recognize the intransitive nature of learning, with a reality outside of what is objectively observable or subjectively and socially constructed (Brown 2009, 15). Both positions also fail to recognize schools as open systems influenced by internal and external forces that make it inherently difficult to control how knowledge is constructed and acquired. The critical realist assertion of the stratified and intransitive world, revealing itself in the empirical, while staying hidden in the actual and the real, rejects such reductionist tendencies by understanding learning as emergent from generative mechanisms at multiple layers.

I take issue with the proposition of Deng and Willbergh that the contradictions between competence and *Bildung* can be resolved by merely developing new theories of knowledge, without also dealing with issues at the ontological level. Rather, I contend, these traditions need an ontological platform in critical realism before any coherent theory can be devised to bridge these concepts. In the following, I will explore how Brown's laminar model of the learning environment can provide a steppingstone towards reconciling the problems of competence and *Bildung* that we have discussed so far.

Laminar reconciliation

Brown's model provides an understanding of the learning environment as an open social structure that defines and limits options for teachers and students, while at the same time enabling them to act to reproduce or transform the structure over time. There are a number of advantages to this model. First, by welcoming epistemic plurality, the critical realist ontology recognizes both objectivist and constructivist accounts of learning, as well as those espoused in competence and *Bildung*, while at the same time providing a deep ontology to counter the reductionist tendencies of these perspectives. Second, learning is seen as an emergent property of the learning environment, creating conditions for transitive competence and *Bildung* at the empirical level, while acknowledging both competence and *Bildung* as more than 'knowing something' or 'being able to do it' (Hopmann 2007, 115) in the intransitive dimension. Third, Brown's framework addresses the role of

content and the purpose of education and adds the moral political level of curriculum as a generative mechanism in the learning environment. This allows a recognition of curricular content and teaching as causal mechanisms and means that Bildung can be seen as intransitive learning in the ongoing struggle to create meaning from opening up the world and being opened to it. Fourth, Brown argues that the learning environment is a moral political entity, as education in both practice and policy involve decisions about how and why things should be done in schools. These decisions influence how mechanisms are activated, and by consequence, how learning emerges through the environment. Questions of values and purpose are brought to the fore, providing an emancipatory impulse to educate students to flourish and become self-determinant. From his perspective, students should ‘possess the knowledge to act in their own real interests (cognitive outcome), have the skill and capability to access the resources and opportunities to do so (skills outcome) and are disposed to so act (affective outcome)’ in accordance with those interests (Brown 2009, 28). This notion is, in many respects, similar to those expressed in Klafki’s concept of categorical Bildung.

Although providing a more ontologically coherent framework in his model of the laminar learning environment, there are problems with Brown’s argument. First, it would seem Brown (2009) haphazardly conflates learning with knowledge when he writes, ‘it is the ontology that enables and constrains the acquisition of knowledge, that is, learning’ (14). Here Brown can be interpreted as reducing the critical realist concept of learning to the individual acquisition of knowledge. Further, Brown (2009) ‘foregrounds the learning environment, arising from the critical realist premise that the possibilities for knowledge are given in the ontology’ (5). This emphasis overshadows any real engagement with the question of what learning is and the way students actually learn anything. One could also argue that the position that students at all levels possess the necessary knowledge to act in accordance with their own interests underestimates the power leveraged over students by institutionalized schooling and educational policies.

Taken together, it would seem that Brown is unclear about how learning in schools can be understood and how it relates to the environmental conditions that he describes in his model. To answer Tikly’s call to determine ‘what learning is’, there is a need to develop a more coherent explanatory theory of learning. Given the tensions I have described above, such a theory should also contribute to reconciling the tensions between competence and Bildung for a more sustainable view on learning in the twenty-first century.

Expanding new theory

Nunez aptly demonstrates how critical realism can be used to develop existing theories, such as the sociocultural theory of learning by Vygotsky and the later developments of activity theory by Engeström and others. There are two major problems with this approach. First, as Priestley states, most modern curricula are theory agnostic, meaning that educational policy rarely subscribes to any particular theory of learning. This makes it difficult to develop a transformative critique that has relevance for educational policy and practice. Second, as Illeris states, there is a great variety of more-or-less compatible theories competing for attention in the global educational marketplace. To follow Nunez’ example, in order to critique an individual theory of learning requires that one would have to argue for the relevance of that critique in the face of the myriad of other

theories available in the marketplace. Trying to critique any and all existing theories of learning from a critical realist perspective would be a daunting task and certainly beyond the scope of this paper. Also, since the discussions on learning in curriculum draw on an amalgam of concepts from different theoretical perspectives, such efforts seem impractical and time consuming if one is trying to make an impact on educational realities. Instead, I will try to expand on the critical realist model of the learning environment by adding insights from Illeris' general model of learning to open up a path towards reconciling competence and Bildung. Finally, I will investigate how the absence of an explanatory theory impacts contemporary curriculum development.

Illeris' model of learning coincides with Brown's model of the learning environment in a number of ways. First, it recognizes the interaction of factors at the psychological (cognition/emotion), curricular (learning content) and sociocultural (environment) levels. Second, it grounds the possibilities for learning in society (social ontology), recognizing the interaction of internal and external forces and the possibility of learning as objective empirical outcomes in the classroom. It also recognizes the intransitive dimension of learning as existing when a time of crisis compels the learner to reconfigure everything she thought she knew about herself and the world.

Another interesting point is Illeris' (2003) attentiveness to absence: 'very often people do not learn what they could learn or what they are supposed to learn' (403). Such non-learning can be seen in light of the conditions created by modern society. To cope with complexity of the human existence and information overload, modern learners employ defence mechanisms to deal with elements that do not correspond to pre-existing understanding by either rejecting or distorting such influences. Such elements can be seen as examples of psychological counteracting mechanisms that are generative of learning, in the sense that 'learning very often becomes a question of what can penetrate the individual, semi-automatic defence mechanisms and under what conditions' (Illeris 2003, 404).

Illeris' model presents a number of valuable additions to Brown's model. Notably, it explains generative mechanisms and absence at multiple levels and recognizes learning as transformative and intransitive. There are, of course, also problems. From a critical realist perspective, it would seem that Illeris' understanding of generative mechanisms at the physical and biological levels are underdeveloped. His emphasis on managing the challenges of practical life and personal functionality, does not take into account the moral political dimension of Brown's learning environment or the critical realist impulse that education and learning should help students flourish and become self-determinant. I argue that what is missing from Illeris' model is a concept of categorical Bildung as a moral purpose of teaching and learning. Moreover, it seems clear that Illeris' model, although including the environment and society as conditions for learning, does not provide an explanation of how structures and mechanisms interact to create such conditions. This can also be seen as a lack of ontological clarity, as Illeris suggests with his recognition of something (out there) existing beyond the individual learner, though he does not address what that something is or how it effects the process of learning.

It would seem, then, that Brown's theory of the laminar learning environment and Illeris' general model of learning have much to offer each other. The former providing ontological clarity and specificity to structures and mechanisms affecting the environment and the latter providing depth and clarity to the process of individual learning in laminar and the open system of the school.

From this I argue that existing theories of learning, summarized in Illeris' general model of learning, lack ontological depth and fail to explain how structures and mechanisms at multiple layers of reality interact in the emergence of learning. In the final section of this discussion, I will deliberate on the effects of the absence of an explanatory theory of learning in contemporary curriculum reform.

The effects of absence in curriculum reform

How can a more ontologically coherent theory of learning benefit current efforts to develop curriculum? As Hodge's rendition of competency-based training makes clear, there are distinct benefits to ontological unclarity, rendering concepts to be flexibly applied in many policy contexts. It can also be argued that critical realism does not lend itself to grand theorizing, and that the underlabouring contributions of Brown, Priestley and Nunez are about as far as we should go in addressing learning. My argument in favour of more critical realist theorizing of learning is, however, not derived from a functional inclination towards theories that are easily adaptable to policy, nor is it from a hegemonic impulse to explain everything in a coherent theoretical framework. Rather, as I will argue in the following, I believe the absence of more a coherent explanatory theory of learning may have a real and negative impact on curriculum development in many countries. Using the Norwegian curriculum reform as an example, I will briefly comment on some of these impacts.

First, at the research level, this paper illustrates a long-standing division between competence and *Bildung*, two concepts that arguably have much to offer, and that, in the case of Norway, are engrained in the national curriculum. Although both the policy and practice fields have long since adopted the language of learning in education, the absence of a more comprehensive and ontologically coherent theory of learning provides fertile soil for dichotomous positioning among researchers, as expressed in the notion of 'bringing the teachers back in' (as if they were ever really gone) from the perspective of *Bildung* and of 'child-centred approaches' (as if teaching is anything but) from the perspective of competence. This absence leads to continued divisions, missed opportunities for dialogue and the underuse of multidisciplinary approaches to development of new theoretical understandings of competence and *Bildung* for the twenty-first century.

At the policy level, as illustrated by Willbergh's critique, the absence of a more coherent theory of learning provides policymakers with a shallow knowledge base and a continued inclination for an unbalanced cherry-picking of research in line with the 'what works agenda'. Policymakers have a democratic obligation to make public the grounds on which they base their decisions and to use the best evidence available to them. When scholarly fields are at odds and unable to provide clear and balanced guidance, policymakers are left with suboptimal choices that in recent years have favoured reductionist theories claiming that learning outcomes can be reliably produced and measured in classrooms or simply that educational outcomes do not matter. This absence feeds the 'what works agenda' in education and obstructs the development of policies that balance learning outcomes with the development of autonomous self-determining students and teacher professionalism.

At the practice level, the absence of a more coherent explanatory theory of learning leaves teachers to rationalize their teaching methods based on a limited understanding

of the complexity of learning that they encounter in their classrooms. In the Norwegian example, teachers are left to deal with the contradictions of competence and Bildung that are ingrained in the national curriculum. This makes teachers vulnerable to influences from both policy and research that emphasizes a narrow and instrumental view of learning that can undermine their professionalism. Children in schools experience the absence of a broader theoretical understanding as a narrowing window of success and increased use of educational metrics that make it difficult for students to maintain a positive sense of self when they do not perform according to the standard. The autonomy and self-determination of students may become collateral damage in an educational system that risks marginalizing children that do not 'measure up' to society's expectations.

Finally, and on a more reconciliatory note, an understanding of learning grounded in a critical realist ontology can cater to both empiricists, who want to measure competence as an outcome of learning, and those who want to support the autonomous meaning making of students through Bildung by recognizing that educational measurements do not capture all aspects of learning in an open system of education. Critical realism is, at its core, an emancipatory philosophy with an impulse to liberate humanity from master-slave relations and enabling communities of free and self-determining individuals (Bhaskar 2008, 2016). Critical realists should make every effort to counter the damaging effects of school systems that create outsiders and exacerbate growing inequalities. Underlabouring for a more coherent explanatory theory to unite competence and Bildung thus becomes important, not only in answering Tikly's call for progress in research, policy and practice, but also to mobilize the research community to prevent our educational systems from becoming the fifth E in the global crisis system.

Is education in crisis?

In the film *The Fifth Element* (Besson 1997), the lead character Leeloo after studying all of human history tearfully utters; 'Humans act so strange ... Everything you create is used to destroy.' Her counterpart, the disgruntled taxi driver Korben Dallas, answers: 'Yeah, we call it human nature'.

If we are to respond to the crisis system in more sustainable ways, more work needs to be done to ensure that education can protect against, rather than exacerbate, the problems facing humanity in the twenty-first century. In this article, I have outlined some of the longstanding disputes between the concepts of competence and Bildung and how the absence of a theory to reconcile these concepts impacts current efforts to develop curricula. These disputes, I have argued, have a negative impact that provide fertile ground for dichotomous theoretical positioning in research, short-sighted cherry picking in policy and instrumental practice in schools. This being the case, valuable energy is wasted that could be spent more productively in bringing the research community together to tackle the very real challenges facing education today. Building on the ideas of a stratified ontology and epistemological plurality, I have argued that critical realism may provide a 'middle way' to reconcile these positions. I have also argued that the critical realist laminar model of the learning environment provides a steppingstone towards theoretical expansions that, combined with an explanatory theory, may outline a more ontologically coherent framework for learning. The absence of such a framework, I have argued, may have causal effects on curriculum development not just in Norway but

in many countries across the world. Failing to provide a more coherent theory of learning may reinforce the unsustainable view of learning as merely a commodity in an expanding global knowledge economy and strengthen the claims of those who see education as part of the global crisis system. Rather than succumbing to this grim proposition, I propose to harness the transformative power of critical realism to revision education, not as a fifth E, but as the Fifth Element of Luc Besson's 1997 film; the element that protects humanity from self-destruction.

Note

1. IACR 2018 conference website: <http://konferanser.hil.no/iacr2018/about/>

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Notes on contributor

Frode Restad is a PhD candidate with the Research Centre for Child and Youth Competence Development.

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2

Is There a Hole in the Whole-School Approach? A Critical Review of Curriculum Understanding in Bullying Research

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates curriculum understanding in bullying research and discusses how such an understanding can contribute to bullying prevention in schools. So far, no studies have systematically investigated an understanding of curriculum in research on bullying prevention.

Building on a critical review of 29 studies, the article identifies curriculum as a broadly understood concept constricted in different categories of bullying research. Such compartmentalization, the article argues, may contribute to the underutilization of curriculum knowledge in bullying research and obstruct the development of new and innovative approaches to prevent bullying in schools.

The study concludes that curriculum knowledge should be more explicitly addressed in bullying research, and that more collaboration is needed. Emphasizing a whole-school approach, without a broader understanding of curriculum, risks constraining the application of pedagogical knowledge in bullying prevention.

Keywords: *bullying prevention, curriculum, whole-school approach, critical realism, teacher professionalism*

A curriculum perspective on bullying prevention

The global quest for educational excellence has resulted in an increased emphasis on social and emotional learning in schools (Durlak et al., 2011; Heckman & Kautz, 2013). Mirroring this concern, the OECD now includes rates of bullying in its framework for individual well-being and social progress (OECD, 2015, 2018). Building resilience

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though social and emotional learning, it is argued, may help reduce bullying involvement and associated long-term health and social costs. The OECD is highly influential (Pettersson, 2014; Pettersson et al., 2017) in setting the agenda for curriculum development in many countries. In Norway, for example, the national government emphasises the development of social and emotional skills as an integrated part of both core and subject curriculum in the ongoing revision of the Norwegian national curriculum (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2016). In Finland such revisions are already manifest (Halinen, 2018) in a new integrative national curriculum focusing on school culture and student well-being.

The Nordic countries have long been at the forefront of bullying research with internationally acclaimed efforts such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and the KiVa anti-bullying programme (2014; 2018). Nordic scholars, notably Sønnergaard (Sønnergaard, 2014; 2018) and colleagues have contributed to a new understanding of and novel approaches to the integration of social and academic learning to prevent bullying in schools. Thornberg and colleagues (Thornberg, 2011; Thornberg, Wänström & Jungert, 2018; Thornberg, Wänström & Pozzoli, 2017) have emphasized moral climates among peers and call for more pedagogical research on bullying to “address all the processes that go on in school, and how these processes may produce but also counteract bullying” (Thornberg, Baraldsnes & Saeverot, 2018, p. 295). In a recent special issue of *Nordic Studies in Education*, Horton (2018) argues that scholastic competition may drive teachers to emphasise delivery of the official curriculum over dealing with issues of bullying in their classrooms. So far, however, no studies have systematically investigated how curriculum is understood in bullying research or how curriculum perspectives can add new insights to bullying prevention in schools.

In this article I employ a broad concept of curriculum as content, framework and enactment in schools. Building on curriculum theory I use curriculum dimensions (Dillon, 2009), curriculum narratives (Elgström & Hellstenius, 2011) and system ontology (Bhaskar, 2008, 2016; Brown, 2009; Priestley, 2011; Tikly, 2015) as concepts to analyse curriculum understanding in bullying research. This framework is used to address theoretically curriculum understanding and highlight pedagogical constraints imposed by such an understanding as a key component of bullying prevention in schools. The current approach is inspired by a critical research review (Suri, 2013) and critical realism (Bhaskar, 2008, 2016), to identify gaps and critically examine strong ideas in bullying research. To this end, I answer two questions: How is curriculum understood in contemporary research on bullying, and how can a curriculum perspective add new insights to bullying prevention in schools?

Addressing curriculum understanding in bullying research

In preparation for this study, I identified six systematic reviews of bullying research using a combination of database searches and snowball sampling (Cohen, 2018). I read the selected reviews for an overview of the field and to inform the search and coding

strategies. In the following, I give a brief outline of how these studies have addressed curriculum in bullying research.

Vreeman and Carrol (2007) investigated the use of curriculum to prevent bullying, including videotapes, lectures, and written curriculum applied in the classroom. They found only four out of ten studies with documented reductions in bullying rates. They also found that comprehensive whole-school approaches that included classroom curriculum had a greater chance of success. Rigby and Slee (2008) found modest effects of standalone curriculum interventions, concluding that “when curriculum work focuses upon the teaching of appropriate social skills, the outcomes are less successful than when a whole-school approach is employed” (p. 177). Farrington and Ttofi (2009; 2012) found that programmes of longer duration, higher intensity and a greater number of components had a greater chance of reducing bullying. Researchers, however, have also cited fears that longer time commitments may be a barrier to the ability and willingness of teachers to participate in such programmes.

In a review of efforts to prevent cyberbullying, Cassidy et al. (2013, p. 587) argue for the need to move “beyond merely teaching about cyberbullying”. Efforts should focus on both the formal and informal curricula of schools and accommodate the rapidly changing nature of cyberbullying by including students in the development of curriculum and by continuously revising content in line with what is current and projected in the media. Tancred and colleagues argue that integrated approaches to prevent substance abuse, violence and bullying aimed “not only to integrate the teaching of health and academic education but also to bridge the relationship between staff and students so that affective bonds are strengthened, teachers serve more effectively as role models and students become more engaged in school” (Tancred et al., 2018, p. 2). Researchers contend that such approaches are underdeveloped but may support local adaptation and professional autonomy in dealing with time constraints and resource limitations in schools.

Several points from these reviews are relevant to the current study. First, studies highlighted bullying curriculum as an essential component of both standalone and whole-school interventions. Second, the reviews demonstrated how bullying prevention may be integrated both in and across subject curriculum. Third, studies emphasised bullying prevention through both formal and informal curricula. Together, these reviews highlight curriculum as a relevant concept in bullying research. Before I explore how this concept is understood in current research, I will briefly present my analytical framework building on curriculum theory and critical realism.

Curriculum theory as an analytical framework

How can we understand the concept of curriculum, and how can it be applied to an analysis of the field of bullying research? Initially, this seems like a difficult question to answer considering that there is little agreement among researchers on how to define curriculum (Dillon, 2009). On a societal level Pinar sees curriculum as “the site on which the generations struggle to define themselves and the world” (Pinar et al.,

1995, p. 848). Westbury (1998) understands curriculum at the institutional level, as defining the role of school in culture and society as educational policy, and at the classroom level, as an event initiated by the teacher and jointly developed with the students as an educative experience. Other scholars (Mølstad & Hansén, 2013) have described curriculum as a process of governance whereby actors in power leverage control over who is able to influence the curriculum. Westbury (1998) has further argued that there are important differences between American and European curriculum traditions. One such difference, is the American emphasis on curriculum explicitly directing teachers in both content and methods of delivery. This contrasts with the influential German *Didaktik* tradition, which sees curriculum as a selection of content that must be embedded through the self-determined work of teachers. The role of the teacher, then, represents a major point of contention between the two traditions, the European tradition favouring teachers as curriculum-makers and the American view of teachers as curriculum-deliverers.

Young has described the task of curriculum theory in this way: “to identify the constraints that limit curriculum choices and to explore the pedagogic implications that follow” (Young, 2013, p. 103). Another way of exploring such constraints is through curriculum dimensions (Dillon, 2009), using the ‘what’-question to analyse curriculum by its nature (what is it?) and content (what is in it?). Further, the ‘how’-question addresses methods of curriculum delivery, while the ‘who’-question focuses on the overarching structures (who decides?) but also on the actors (who does what to whom?) engaging with the curriculum. Finally, the ‘why’ question highlights the purpose of the curriculum in terms of desired student outcomes or societal needs. Adding to this, Elgström and Hellstenius (2011) analyse curriculum as narratives. Starting with the perennialist narrative, they describe a curriculum rooted in tradition and cultural heritage, conveying knowledge in the form of classical literature and historical discoveries. In the essentialist narrative, the curriculum conveys evidence-based knowledge and emphasises the relationship between science and teaching. Progressivism links curricula with contemporary societal problems, emphasising adaptation through participatory and integrated approaches. Finally, reconstructivism sees curriculum as conveying knowledge to transform society in radical ways, fostering critical citizens who question existing structures and engage with contentious political issues.

Building on critical realism, schools can be seen as “stratified, comprising individuals, social groupings and the school as a whole” (Priestley, 2011, p. 228). Tikly has argued that schools are open systems, and should not be treated “as if they were closed systems with the possibility of producing replicable and generalisable results on which to base predictions” (Tikly, 2015, p. 239). Others see the learning environment of schools as “open or at most quasi-closed” (Brown, 2009, p. 31), meaning that what is enacted in schools may appear planned and regular, but never fully corresponds with the law-like tendencies of closed systems. For Priestley, education systems exhibit cycles of change and continuity “as new cultural, structural and individual properties emerge, and as existing patterns are perpetuated” (Priestley, 2011, p. 231). The

education system then, from a critical realist perspective, can be seen as a product of continuous interplay between structure and agency at different levels, and the curriculum as one of many causal factors contributing to the emergence of that system.

In this article, I address the constraints imposed by current understandings of curriculum in bullying research. I use curriculum dimensions, curriculum narratives and system ontology as concepts to theoretically explore these constraints. My aim has been to expose gaps that limit the application of pedagogical knowledge in bullying prevention and to bridge two research traditions to pave way for new insights. Such bridging requires not only respectful inquiry and conscientious dialogue, but also rigorous critique. In the following I outline my methodology for the critical review of bullying research.

Conducting the critical research review

This review was inspired by a critical synthesis approach. Suri (2013) has argued that the purpose of the research synthesis is “to produce new knowledge by making explicit connections and tensions between individual study reports that were not visible before” (p. 889). The aim of the synthesis is not only to summarise but also to enhance multiple discourses and refute simplistic explanations. Typical questions asked in the synthesis include, what are the gaps in the prevailing understanding, what methodologies are employed, and whose questions have received insufficient attention. It employs an eclectic and methodologically inclusive approach allowing for both qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies in the corpus. Similarly, the concept of immanent critique as described by Bhaskar (2016, p. 3) involves an internal critique of intrinsic ideas or positions held in a particular field of research. In its purest form it seeks to identify weaknesses or blind spots in ideas deemed the weightiest in the field by their proponents.

Building on my initial reading of systematic reviews, I conducted a preliminary search following six lines of inquiry: 1) “Standalone” “curriculum” “bullying,” 2) “Bullying curriculum” “whole-school approach,” 3) “Bullying” “subject curriculum,” 4) “Bullying curriculum” “media” “citizenship,” 5) “Bullying” “informal curriculum,” 6) “Bullying” “integrated curriculum.” This generated a comprehensive body of literature of varying relevance to the current study. Search procedures were subsequently revised, limiting the scope to English language peer-reviewed articles from 2009 to 2019, containing the keywords/topics ‘bullying AND curriculum’. English language journals were preferred in order to gauge how bullying researchers address curriculum issues in their published work, and in dialogue with colleagues from around the world. Limiting the search to studies from the last decade significantly reduced the number of items for review, while still retaining a corpus fit for purpose in this study.

The main search was conducted on 6 March 2019 using the Web of Science, Scopus, and ORIA databases. These databases were selected to ensure a broad representation of studies from the natural and social sciences, and the humanities from both Nordic and international contexts. This search returned in excess of 100 articles from each database. I added additional criteria to exclude studies related to preschool, higher/teacher education, disability/special education, workplace, nursing, and nursing education.

Is There a Hole in the Whole-School Approach?

Exclusion criteria were derived from the purpose of the study, namely, to investigate curriculum understanding in bullying research in general compulsory education. Although studies of bullying prevention in related fields such as in preschool and kindergarten (see Helgeland & Lund, 2017; Repo & Repo, 2016; Repo & Sajaniemi, 2015) address similar issues, such studies were considered less relevant for the purpose of this review. Similarly, although certain groups, such as students enrolled in special education (Juul, 1989; Rose et al., 2009), have been shown to have a higher risk of bullying victimization, differentiation based on bullying prevalence and students groupings was deemed of minor consequence in the current study.

A total of 54 abstracts were identified and reviewed. Ten articles were excluded for lack of peer review, full text in English, and relevance. Five additional articles from frequently cited anti-bullying programmes (KiVA and Second Step) were removed to prevent overrepresentation. The most recent and relevant studies from both programmes were included.

A total of 35 articles were reviewed in full text. Six articles were excluded for lack of relevance, leaving a corpus of 29 studies (see Appendix 1 for details) that were added to NVIVO 12 for further analysis and coding. Two of the articles investigating students' experiences with LGBTQ-inclusive curricula in schools were written by the same author (Snapp, Burdge et al., 2015; Snapp, McGuire et al., 2015). Both articles were considered relevant and substantially different enough to warrant inclusion in the current study. This inclusion has contributed to a higher number of items from North America, and to a greater emphasis on LGBTQ-issues in the corpus, than would otherwise have been the case.

Based on the reading of systematic reviews, three main categories were used in the coding of articles. Studies addressing curriculum in anti-bullying programmes, including standalone and whole-school programmes are coded in the programme category. The subject category contains studies addressing bullying prevention as topics in school subjects and across different subjects. Finally, the standard category contains studies addressing curriculum through issues such as school norms, teacher conduct and national standards. In the following, I present my findings of curriculum understanding using these categories.

Finding curriculum understanding in bullying research

The programme category

The programme category consists of twelve studies, including investigations of eight standalone programme interventions and four whole-school programmes.

Standalone

Batthey and colleagues (2013) studied the Bully Prevention Challenge Course using a curriculum of one full day of rope challenge exercises that ask students to address bullying behaviour. Researchers found that the intervention needed to be delivered by an external facilitator and that it proved hard to sustain for regular teachers. In the Take

the Lead programme examined by Domino (2013), teachers were trained by external trainers for a minimum of six hours to deliver a curriculum designed to enhance students' social learning during regular class periods. Fekkes et al. (2016) also found teachers were extensively trained in the principles and ideas of the Skills for Life curriculum to deliver 25 lessons over two school years.

Espelage and colleagues (2013) emphasised teacher delivery of weekly student lessons on social and emotional learning in the Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention programme. Lessons were designed to be highly interactive, incorporating small group discussions, dyadic exercises, whole-class instruction, and individual work. In the Steps to Respect programme, Low and associates (2010) found that student engagement with lessons was influenced by classroom ecology and teachers' skills in both instruction and classroom management. Patchin and Hinduja (2010) also argued that programmes incorporated into the school curricula should include substantive instruction on cyberbullying.

Wurf (2012) found that the Shared Concern curriculum was less likely to have an impact when used in isolation, and it was more likely to have an impact in concert with other preventive components and used across the whole school. This contrasts with Renshaw and Jimerson (2012), who argue that while large-scale, multi-component programmes are likely to have a negative impact on school staff motivation, a new wave of bullying prevention programming emphasising teacher feasibility and local adaptation could increase staff support for interventions against bullying.

Whole school

Haataja et al. (2014) investigated differences in teacher delivery of the KiVA anti-bullying curriculum. The study found that teachers' belief in the programme and time spent preparing for lessons influenced the quality of implementation of anti-bullying interventions. Bonell and colleagues (2018) found curriculum delivery to be one of the most time-consuming components of their programme, and, due to lack of fidelity, such components were less likely to contribute to a reduction in negative health outcomes. In a study of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP), Cecil and Molnar-Main (2015) also found that, with experience, teachers become more skilled at integrating programme activities into their curriculum.

A Friendly Schools intervention on the transition to secondary school evaluated by Cross et al. (2018) found positive effects on rates of bullying in the first year, but the effects could not be sustained over time. Researchers argue that efforts to prevent bullying should engage more with students in co-design and leadership of future interventions.

Themes in the programme category

Taken together, the programme category is dominated by studies from North America that favour a quantitative assessment of bullying prevention.

In the programme category, understanding of curriculum can be described using three main themes. First, several studies emphasise teacher training for and student

Is There a Hole in the Whole-School Approach?

engagement with lessons on bullying (Cecil & Molnar-Main, 2015; Domino, 2013; Haataja et al., 2014; Low et al., 2014). It also discusses how teacher fidelity (Bonell et al., 2018; Cecil & Molnar-Main, 2015; Renshaw & Jimerson, 2012) and the scope of programming affect staff support. Finally, studies across both subcategories (Cross et al., 2018; Low et al., 2014) emphasise curriculum delivery as time consuming, calling for engagement with students to design new interventions.

The subject category

The subject category contains ten studies, including seven studies investigating bullying prevention in specific school subjects, and three studies related to outcomes across multiple subjects.

Single-subject

O'Connor and Graber (2014) found that physical education teachers supported a bullying climate by providing mixed information about social interactions, ignoring instances of bullying, and making inappropriate curricular choices in classes. Recognizing the risk of embarrassment in physical education classes, Gibbone and Manson (2010) argue that educators can contribute to school-wide prevention of bullying through character education and a positive classroom, school, and community climate. Kidger and colleagues (2009) found that both students and staff felt too little time was spent teaching about emotional health. Students also felt such issues should be addressed in other non-health-related curricula, such as English and drama, to avoid stigma.

Gourd & Gourd (2011) found the use of forum theatre in social studies provides students with an opportunity to experience democracy and reflect on cases of bullying. Schmidt (2010) found LGTBQ issues missing in national standards for social studies. This, she argued, reinforces heterosexual roles, limits gender and sexual imagination, and constrains student engagement with and questioning of curricula in school.

Wang and Goldberg (2017) found positive outcomes from the use of children's literature to reduce bullying among elementary school students. The researchers argued that such approaches may support integration of bullying prevention into daily language arts instruction. Similarly, Mack (2012) argued that English teachers can address the problem of bullying by teaching about emotions through the study of literature, writing, drama, media, and language. Every literary text, she claims, can be read for social justice, and teaching argumentative writing could be used to offer an alternative to a polarising and dichotomous media culture.

Cross-subject

Snapp, Burdge et al. (2015) found that students could identify LGBTQ curricula, mainly in the social sciences, humanities, and health classes, while subjects such as math and science do not appear to integrate LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in their lessons. Teachers in these subjects, the researchers claim, may benefit from instruction on

making their lessons more LGBTQ-inclusive. In a related study, Snapp, McGuire et al. (2015) also found that inclusive curricula may heighten students' awareness of bullying and safety, leading to more reports of bullying, but also had positive implications for safety at the school level.

Hawe and colleagues (2015) highlighted how the CORE intervention did not recommend a particular curriculum package or lesson plans but rather encouraged teachers to think about how to address issues in the teaching of math, English and social studies and to develop pedagogies to promote student well-being in their classes.

Themes in the subject category

Taken together, the subject category is influenced by qualitative studies of curriculum in a North American context. The category highlights three themes. The first involves the way formal curriculum frameworks can limit students' perceptions of identity (Schmidt, 2010) but also encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching practices (O'Connor & Graber, 2014) and contribute to bullying prevention (Gibbone & Manson, 2010; Gourd & Gourd, 2011; Mack, 2012). The second involves the way some school subjects, such as math and science (Hawe et al., 2015; Kidger et al., 2009; Snapp, Burdge et al., 2015) are not being leveraged for bullying prevention. The third theme concerns the way teachers are encouraged to integrate (Hawe et al., 2015; Mack, 2012; Wang & Goldberg, 2017) bullying prevention in subject curricula.

The standard category

The standard category contains seven studies, including four exploring general issues of professional conduct, and three studies related to government policies. The studies are explored using the subcategories of professionalism and governance.

Professionalism

Bibou-Nakou and colleagues (2012) argue that teacher practices such as name-calling, favouritism, and scapegoating are considered bullying practices by students. Iwasa (2017) argued that moral growth cannot be transmitted to students by teachers, but that teachers need to engage in moral issues as learners striving to become positive role models for students.

Cunningham et al. (2016) showed that teachers found it difficult to implement separate measures against bullying, prompting them to modify anti-bullying programmes or implement components as time and curriculum allowed. Fenaughty (2019) found that working with teachers in a co-design process while emphasising curricular alignment in tune with teachers' needs was particularly important for educators concerned about how and whether they should be teaching controversial issues.

Governance

Roland (2011) analysed two government interventions against bullying in Norway, finding that while bullying prevalence decreased during the first intervention

(2002–2004), rates increased during the second intervention (2004–2008). He argued that implementation of a new national curriculum in 2006 may have had a negative impact on efforts to prevent bullying in schools.

Although the government, as compared to health workers, parents, and teachers, was seen as playing a minor role in prevention efforts, Puhl and colleagues (2016) found support among school staff for policies to address eating disorders in health curriculum as a means to prevent bullying.

Ullmann noted that curriculum is seen as “both a window and a mirror” (Ullman, 2018, p. 500), for students to learn about and reflect on gender and sexual diversity. She found that psychological explanations of bullying and confined government policies may constrain educators’ curricular translation and limit questioning of the heteronormative gender climate that contributes to marginalisation and bullying of non-binary youth.

Themes in the standard category

The standard category is the only category not dominated by studies from North America. Taken together, it can be understood as highlighting moral standards (Iwasa, 2017) and professional conduct (Bibou-Nakou et al., 2012), through professional autonomy (Ullman, 2018) seen as adaptation (Cunningham, Mapp et al., 2016) and curricular alignment (Fenaughty, 2019). The category not only highlights curriculum as government policy and standards for addressing issues (Puhl et al., 2016), but also as a source of competing priorities that may undermine efforts to prevent bullying in schools (Roland, 2011).

Discussing curriculum understanding in bullying research

The findings in this study shed light on how curriculum is understood in contemporary bullying research. While the concept of curriculum is seldom explicitly discussed, it is addressed in different ways across all categories. In the programme category, emphasis is mainly on curriculum as lesson content, whereas it is considered more as a framework in the subject category, and policy in the standard category. Views on teacher roles also differ, focusing on fidelity in the programme category, pedagogical integration in the subject category, and autonomy in the standard category. There also seem to be differences in how studies frame the research agenda going forward. In the programme category, new research to engage with students in efforts to prevent bullying is emphasised, while the subject category stresses research on subjects that have not been leveraged, and the standard category indicates a need to address competing priorities in policies. These findings reaffirm curriculum as a relevant concept in bullying research. They do not, however, make clear the theoretical understandings of curriculum employed by researchers in their work. In the following, I use my analytical framework to analyse such concepts, and to identify gaps that may constrain new insights into bullying prevention in schools.

Gaps in understanding of curriculum dimensions

Using curriculum dimensions (Dillon, 2009), the programme category, including whole-school approaches, can be seen as emphasising the what-dimension of curriculum as content on bullying in student lessons. This is clear in Espelage et al. (2013), who describe the Second Step curriculum as “content related to bullying, problem-solving skills, emotion management, and empathy” (p. 181). This is also evident in Haataja et al. (2014), who note that high implementers “covered approximately 85% of curriculum content per lesson” (p. 570). Espelage has also emphasised that “lessons are highly interactive, incorporating small group discussions and activities, dyadic exercises, whole-class instruction, and individual work” (Espelage et al., 2013, p. 181), indicating a concern with the how-dimension of curriculum as content delivery. In line with this, several studies emphasise teacher training (Cross et al., 2018; Haataja et al., 2014; Wurf, 2012), for example Haataja et al. (2014, p. 567) who describe a two-day pre-implementation training programme for teachers responsible for delivering lessons or for managing acute cases of bullying. Concern for curriculum delivery was also evident in the emphasis on implementation manuals (Battey & Ebbeck, 2013; Bonell et al., 2018; Domino, 2013; Fekkes et al., 2016), as demonstrated by (Cross et al., 2018) who described a six-hour group training session for pastoral care staff complemented by “a manual to guide whole-school implementation” (p. 501).

Lessons on bullying, teacher training, and programme manuals – the ‘what’ and ‘how’ dimensions of curriculum, are emphasised to a lesser degree in the subject category. Studies in this category instead emphasise teachers’ existing subject knowledge and pedagogical knowhow, as in Hawe et al. (2015), who note that researchers did not recommend a particular curriculum package or lesson plan but encouraged teachers to “think about how to address emotional literacy in the regular curriculum” (p. 3). Both the subject and standard categories then, are more concerned with questions of “why” and “who” in the curriculum. Mack (2012), for instance, argues that “emotional literacy has an important place in the English curriculum” (p. 18). Gourd and Gourd (2011) claim that the “social studies curriculum needs to help students to connect to all individuals with compassion and understanding” (p. 408). This is also evident across curriculum subjects, as illustrated by O’Connor and Graber (2014), who argue that we “must examine the extent to which our curricular choices are standards-based, developmentally appropriate, and focused on students’ development within each domain of learning” (p. 407), and by Schmidt (2010, p. 330) who insists that “the use of standards and themes to organize content and thinking is a normalizing process” (p. 330). The ‘who’-dimension of curriculum as governance is addressed by Ullman (2018), who calls for policies and leadership which explicitly invite teachers to share in a broad-based social agenda for their school communities, and laments “state and federal education departments’ current political distancing from specific LGBTQ inclusions at the policy and curriculum levels” (p. 507). Fenaughty positively stresses that “curriculum alignment has power to leverage official documentation to support the delivery of bullying prevention” (Fenaughty, 2019, p. 15), while Kidger and colleagues raise students’

Is There a Hole in the Whole-School Approach?

concerns that “other lessons such as English and Drama, should also be acknowledged and supported in policy documents” (Kidger et al., 2009, p. 15).

As demonstrated above, bullying research engages with a broad range of curriculum dimensions across the different categories. While teachers’ existing pedagogical knowledge and the purpose of education are of greater concern in the subject and standard categories, the program category tends to emphasize content and delivery of a specific bullying curriculum. This constriction of curriculum knowledge within different categories of bullying research highlights a potential gap that may impede the development of a broader curriculum understanding in the field, and the use of such knowledge to prevent bullying in schools.

Gaps in understanding of curriculum narratives

Drawing on Elgström and Hellstenius (2011), bullying research can also be seen as conveying a curriculum narrative. Many studies (Cecil & Molnar-Main, 2015; Fekkes et al., 2016; Haataja et al., 2014; Wurf, 2012) in the programme category advocate an evidence-based approach to bullying prevention. Wurf (2012), for instance, has claimed that “whole-school approaches have been internationally recognised as the best evidence-based method to reduce school bullying” (Wurf, 2012, p. 139). Most studies in the programme category, and all in the whole-school subcategory, have employed quantitative designs to investigate the effects of interventions. Some studies have also emphasised expert knowledge and external facilitation (Battey & Ebbeck, 2013; Bonell et al., 2018), indicating a separation of expertise in bullying prevention from the expertise of teachers in school.

Accordingly, the programme category conveys an essentialist narrative of curriculum, emphasising bullying prevention through transmission of scientific knowledge by external experts. This is in contrast to the progressive narrative of the subject category, stressing the role of curriculum to address societal problems by recognizing that “individuals, families, and schools all exist within communities that may foster or hinder bullying” (O’Connor & Graber, 2014, p. 399) and how curriculum should be “promoting the use of critical questions about how inequality is institutionalized into society” (2010, p. 316). The progressive narrative is also evident in sentiments supporting the integration of bullying prevention into existing domains of knowledge (Gibbone & Manson, 2010; Gourd & Gourd, 2011; Snapp, Burdge et al., 2015; Wang & Goldberg, 2017). This is expressed by Wang and Goldberg (2017), who stress the importance of integrating “bullying prevention into general classroom instruction to facilitate skill generalization” (p. 919), and Snapp, Burdge et al. (2015), who argue that “when schools integrate LGBTQ inclusive curriculum across multiple subjects, students feel safer and report more positive well-being than if inclusion only occurred in a couple of courses” (p. 261).

The reconstructive narrative, aiming at societal transformation through critical citizenship, is also more highly emphasised in the subject and standard categories. For instance, Fenaughty (2019), argued that a “norm-critical approach can be used

to examine and critique the social norms” (p. 7), and that a curriculum focused on engaging young people in critical thinking, respect, stereotypes, diversity, and empathy is an important element in prevention. Similarly, Schmidt (2010) argues that “if a primary mission of schools is to prepare citizens, then it is important to query how students are prepared to take on the role of citizens in relation to the common good and the extension of rights” (p. 315).

In this section we have seen how bullying researchers convey a broad range of curriculum narratives across the different categories. These narratives are, however, unevenly distributed, with the subject and standards categories emphasizing progressive and reconstructive narratives, while the program category tends to favor the essentialist evidence-based narrative. This discussion highlights a potential gap in bullying research, where different categories of research operate from a singular narrative understanding of curriculum. This may impede the application of a broader curriculum understanding in bullying research and limit the use of plural narratives to prevent bullying in schools.

Gaps in an understanding of education systems

Finally, drawing on the critical realist distinction of open and closed systems (Bhaskar, 2008, 2016; Brown, 2009; Priestley, 2011; Tikly, 2015), the programme category, emphasising quantitative research and evidence-based approaches, can be seen as advocating an empiricist closed systems ontology of education. This is apparent in an emphasis on controlling teachers’ application of programming, as in Haataja et al. (2014), who insist that “fidelity of implementation is a critical factor” (p. 564) for successful prevention, Renshaw’s teacher fidelity checklists (2012), and Fekkes et al. (2016), who used logs to assess teacher fidelity in the Skills for Life programme. Such examples underline the assumption that factors can be successfully controlled to produce reliable outcomes across educational contexts—as within a closed system of education.

Contrary to this assumption, approaches in the subject and standard categories emphasise teacher professionalism and adaptation in bullying interventions. Notable in this regard are Hawe et al. (2015), who describe how teachers were “encouraged to adapt and embed these strategies into their teaching” (p. 2), and Cunningham, Mapp, et al. (2016), who cite educators’ perceptions that “failure to adapt the developmental level of anti-bullying activities limited their application across grades” (p. 467). This is in line with an ontological premise of education as an open system with multiple layers and interplay of agencies that produce inherently variable outcomes across different educational contexts.

Similarly, studies emphasising layers outside the school, as with Fenhaughy’s (2019) insistence on alignment with the national curriculum and Ullman’s (2018) call for greater engagement with LGBTQ issues at the policy level, indicate an understanding that these layers influence bullying in schools in an open educational system. Bullying research does recognize the need for “complementary components directed at

Is There a Hole in the Whole-School Approach?

different levels of the school organization” (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007, p. 86). It seems however, less inclined to engage in a discussion about the nature of the education systems in which it operates. Research in the program category seems to accentuate control and reproduction in a closed system ontology, while the subject and standard categories focus on teacher professionalism and outside influences more in line with education as an open system.

These findings indicate a gap between categories of bullying research that favor either closed or open system ontology. Such dichotomous positioning may exacerbate differences between different modes of bullying research and inhibit the development of a deeper ontological understanding of education systems. This in turn may constrict efforts to prevent bullying in schools in more theoretically coherent and collaborative ways.

Conclusions and implications

Building on the discussions above, curriculum understanding in bullying research can be illustrated in the following table. (Table 1: Curriculum understanding in bullying prevention)

	PROGRAMME	SUBJECT	STANDARD
Sub-categories	Standalone Whole school	Single-subject Cross-subject	Professionalism Governance
Themes	Lessons Fidelity Student engagement	Framework Integration Subjects not leveraged	Policy Autonomy Competing priorities
Context	North America	North America	Asia-Pacific/Europe
Design	Quantitative	Qualitative	Qualitative
Dimension	(What) How	(What/How) Why	(What/Why) Who
Narrative	Essentialist	Progressive	Reconstructive
System	Closed	Open	Open

The current review confirms curriculum as a relevant concept in bullying research as it connects the core activities of teaching and learning with efforts to prevent bullying in schools. Nevertheless, curriculum understanding is rarely discussed in bullying research. With the notable exception of Snapp et al., who declare “curriculum may be used to describe content in the form of lessons, diversity training, or programmes of study within the school context” (Snapp, Burdge et al., 2015, p. 261), none of the reviewed studies explicitly define their use of the term curriculum. This lack of conceptual clarity makes it difficult to assess how researchers understand curriculum in schools, and in their own research. It also makes it more difficult for researchers engaged with bullying and curriculum to work together. Using curriculum theory as an analytical framework, this article suggests that new insights can be gained by outlining understandings of curriculum in bullying research. From a bullying perspective,

teaching and learning in schools may be seen as competing demands (Cunningham, Mapp et al., 2016) offsetting efforts to prevent bullying (Roland, 2011). From a curriculum perspective however, such juxtaposing seems misplaced, as schools are increasingly expected to work on both social and academic outcomes. In the review by Tancred et al. (2018) a push towards more integrated approaches to teaching and prevention in schools is evident. Researchers, however, also point out that such approaches need to be developed further. Instead of juxtaposing, would it not make more sense for scholars in bullying and curriculum research to collaborate on new strategies to prevent bullying and enhance learning in schools?

Findings from the current research also indicate that while the bullying field as a whole represents a broad curriculum understanding, such understanding seems constricted to different modes of bullying research, in the program, subject and standard categories. This compartmentalization of knowledge is analyzed here as gaps in understanding of curriculum dimensions, curriculum narratives and education systems ontology, and risks underutilizing insights from across the field and constricting the development of new and innovative ways to integrate bullying prevention on all levels of the curriculum. Building on the critical realist notion of immanent critique (Bhaskar, 2016, p. 3), the strong idea of the whole-school approach (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Rigby & Slee, 2008; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007) Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Rigby & Slee, 2008; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007) can be seen as perpetuating a narrow understanding of curriculum that is counterproductive to bullying prevention. Several of the programmes investigated in this study (Bonell et al., 2018; Cecil & Molnar-Main, 2015; Cross et al., 2018; Haataja et al., 2014) subscribe to this approach, and typically include anti-bullying policies, student curriculum, staff training, and engagement with parents and community. Such programs, however, rarely include subject curriculum or curriculum standards as components in bullying prevention. Labelling efforts as “whole-school” while ignoring these central components of curriculum in schools is a red herring that may constrain the application of teachers’ pedagogical knowledge in bullying prevention. Rather than hailing the whole-school approach as a panacea, perhaps we should be asking, is there a hole in the whole-school approach? One way a curriculum perspective can add insight into bullying prevention is by insisting that curriculum knowledge should be more broadly included in the whole-school approach. This may liberate, rather than constrict, teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and enable more sustainable strategies to preventing bullying in schools.

A general implication of this study is that curriculum understanding should be more clearly addressed in bullying research. Further research is needed to identify how curriculum concepts are understood by researchers in the field, and how curriculum understanding may be leveraged to improve bullying prevention in schools. Researchers working on program development should be mindful of existing pedagogical knowledge in schools, and how curriculum understandings may be employed in a broader strategy to prevent bullying. Without such strategies bullying research

Is There a Hole in the Whole-School Approach?

may lose favor in schools that are increasingly called upon to deliver on curriculum demands, and inadvertently disconnect bullying prevention from the core activities of teaching and learning. Policymakers and funders of bullying research should encourage more collaboration within and across relevant fields to ensure a broad understanding of curriculum is put to work to tackle bullying in schools. New partnerships and strategies to align bullying prevention and curriculum development should also be explored. Such partnerships should be informed by multi-disciplinary longitudinal research and a deep ontological understanding of education as a complex layered system.

Finally, this study has particular relevance for research and policy in the Nordic context. As the cradle of bullying research (Heinemann, 1972; Olweus & Møller, 1975) Nordic countries have a long history of developing knowledge and measures to deal with bullying in schools. Nordic countries also share a common influence from curricular traditions (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010; Oftedal Telhaug et al., 2006) that emphasise teacher professionalism, pedagogical knowledge and social learning in schools. As such it is ideally suited to support innovations that can integrate bullying prevention with teaching and learning in schools. I agree with Thornberg and colleagues who posit that a pedagogical perspective on bullying “has to consider national and local school policies; school as an organization and as an institution; teachers as role models, their classroom management and efforts to influence students social and moral growth; and social processes in school classes and peer groups” (Thornberg, Baraldsnes, et al., 2018, p. 296). To this I would add, it should also consider curriculum as a core component of pedagogy and bullying prevention in schools. It is encouraging to see how Nordic scholars (Eriksen, 2018; Eriksen & Lyng, 2018; Horton, 2018; Lyng, 2018; Repo & Repo, 2016; Repo & Sajaniemi, 2015; Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Søndergaard & Hansen, 2018; Thornberg, Wänström, et al., 2018; Thornberg et al., 2017) are increasingly addressing similar issues in bullying research. Many more such efforts should be welcomed, and more researchers working in the Nordic context should publish their work widely for international colleagues to read. Recently, revisions of the national curriculum in Norway (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2016) and Finland (Halinen, 2018) focusing on school culture and an integrative curriculum also indicate a shift toward a more holistic approach to bullying prevention at the policy level. Moving forward, these developments should inspire new research and collaborations that may light the way towards more systemic, systematic and sustainable ways of addressing bullying in schools.

Caveats and limitations

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the small number of articles included does not represent the full width, nor the depth of curriculum understanding in the field. A research design allowing for more studies and better differentiation across contexts may alter and add nuance to the findings discussed here. This is certainly pertinent with regards to the overrepresentation of quantitative studies from

the North American context in this review. Secondly, the conclusion drawn indicating a constricted understanding of curriculum in bullying research does not necessarily mean that researchers are constricted in their understanding of curriculum. As I have only included peer reviewed journal articles in this study, there is a good chance these findings stem, not from a lack of curriculum understanding, but from a lack of space in the format I have chosen to review. Including books, reports and other scholarly works may provide a broader picture of how scholars understand curriculum in their work and add nuance to the picture painted here. There is reason to believe that scholars understand, and are already addressing these issues at the practice level. Bonell et al. (2018), for instance, argue for “single coherent interventions rather than overburdening busy schools with multiple interventions” (p. 2452). After recognizing the constraints on teachers’ time, Cross et al. (2018) adapted their programme in line with teachers’ feedback. Finally, the biases associated with single authorship and a theoretical positioning in critical realism should also be considered, as these factors have undoubtedly impacted on both the selection and coding of articles. With these limitations in mind the claims made here should be viewed not as claims of fact, but rather as arguments to stimulate debate on the role of curriculum in bullying research.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Selected corpus and initial coding

AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	JOURNAL	CATEGORY	METHOD	CONTEXT	SUMMARY
Kidger et al.	2009	Supporting adolescent emotional health in schools: a mixed methods study of student and staff views in England	BMC Public Health	SUBJECT – Health education	MIX – focus group, interview, survey	EUROPE (UK)	Schools can improve adolescent health inside and outside curriculum. Should be combined with whole school approach.
Gibonne & Manson	2010	Bullying: Proactive Physical Educators' Contribution to School-Wide Prevention	Journal of Physical education, Recreation & dance	SUBJECT – Physical Education	QUAL – literature review	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Physical Education ideal for preventing bullying and promoting positive development. Focus on effective teaching strategies, class management & climate.
Schmidt	2010	Queering Social Studies: the role of Social studies in Normalizing Citizens and Sexuality in the Common Good	Theory and Research in Social Education	SUBJECT – Social Studies	QUAL – document analysis	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	National standards in social studies are normalizing – create implicit and explicit norms of identity. Does not value pluralism. Restricts LGBTQ in classroom.
Gourd & Gourd	2011	Enacting Democracy: Using Forum Theater to Confront Bullying	Equity & Excellence in Education	SUBJECT – Social Studies	QUAL – action research	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Forum theatre as teaching strategy for student engagement with bullying. Part of OBPP and social studies curriculum.
Patchin & Hinduja	2011	Cyberbullying and Self-Esteem	Journal of School Health	PROGRAM	QUANT – survey	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Cyberbullying should be included in programmes and school curriculum. Self-esteem and cyber can be addressed jointly.
Roland	2011	The broken curve: Effects of the Norwegian manifesto against bullying	International Journal of Behavioral Development	STANDARD curriculum reform	QUANT – descriptive statistics	EUROPE (Norway)	New national curricula may threaten anti-bullying work.
Wurf	2012	High school anti-bullying interventions: An evaluation of curriculum approaches and the method of Shared Concern in four Hong Kong international schools	Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling	PROGRAMME – Shared Concern	QUANT – quasi experiment	ASIA-PACIFIC (Australia)	Strong support for curriculum intervention as part of whole school approach. Shared concern, none – punitive, zero-tolerance – not safer?

(Continued)

Appendix 1: (Continued)

AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	JOURNAL	CATEGORY	METHOD	CONTEXT	SUMMARY
Mack	2012	Bullying Reconsidered: Educating for Emotional Literacy	English Journal	SUBJECT – English	QUAL – essay	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Bullying can be addressed through teaching of literature, writing, drama and language.
Renshaw & Jimerson	2012	Enhancing Students attitudes via a Brief, Universal-Level Bullying prevention Curriculum	School Mental Health	PROGRAMME – P3R	QUAL – quasi experiment	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	New wave of brief universal programmes emphasises social validity and sustainability at local level. Part of health curriculum. Art curriculum no effect?
Bibou-Nakou et al.	2012	School factors related to bullying: A qualitative study of early adolescent students	Social Psychology of Education	STANDARD – Informal	QUAL – focus group	EUROPE (Greece)	Hidden curriculum (teacher-student relations) impact on students contribute to student discourse on bullying.
Espelage et al.	2013	The impact of middle school program to reduce aggression, victimization and sexual violence	Journal of Adolescent Health	PROGRAMME – Second Step	QUANT – nested cohort longitudinal	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Fifteen-week SEL curriculum leads to decrease in physical aggression. Teachers delivered weekly 50/25 min sessions through year.
Batthey & Ebbeck	2013	A Qualitative Exploration of an Experiential Education Bully Prevention Curriculum	Journal of Experiential Education	PROGRAMME – BPCCC	QUAL – focus group	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Rope course challenge enhances communication and trust among students. Teachers may not have knowledge to implement.
Domino	2013	Measuring the Impact of an Alternative Approach to School Bullying	Journal of School Health	PROGRAMME – Take the Lead	QUANT – cohort study	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Supports theory driven alternatives to address bullying behaviour. SEL curriculum delivered in classroom may improve social competencies.
Low et. al.	2014	Engagement Matters: Lessons from Assessing Classroom Implementation of Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program Over a One-year Period	Prevention Science	PROGRAMME – Steps to Respect	QUANT – multilevel regression	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Student engagement higher impact than fidelity. Classroom environment neglected in programmes. Curriculum skills + literature unit.
O'Conner & Graber	2014	Sixth-Grade Physical education: An Acculturation of Bullying and Fear	Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport	SUBJECT – Physical education	QUAL – interview, observation	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Interventions have ignored needs of physical education setting. Must examine curricular choices and facilitate class prosocial culture.

Is There a Hole in the Whole-School Approach?

AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	JOURNAL	CATEGORY	METHOD	CONTEXT	SUMMARY
Howe et al.	2015	Replication of whole school ethos-changing intervention: Different context, similar effects, additional insights	BMC Public Health	SUBJECT – Math, English, Social	QUANT – regression modeling	NORTH AMERICA (Canada/Australia)	No formal curriculum. Process with students and teachers – integrate into formal curriculum. Positive effects for girls, but not for bullying.
Snapp, Burdige et al.	2015	Students Perspectives on LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum	Equity & Excellence in Education	SUBJECT – Multiple	QUAL – focus group	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Students experience LGBTQ-curriculum in humanities, and social studies, mostly as standalone lessons. Not math/science. Should integrate more broadly.
Cecil & Molnar-Main	2015	Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: components Implemented by Elementary Classroom and Specialist Teachers	Journal of School Violence	PROGRAMME – OBPP	QUANT – multilevel regression	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Teacher confidence impacts delivery. More experienced teachers integrate programme in curriculum. OPBP not curriculum, but system.
Haataja et al.	2015	A process view on implementing and antibullying curriculum: How teachers differ and what explains the variation	School Psychology Quarterly	PROGRAM – KIVA	QUANT – survey, factor mixture modelling	EUROPE (Finland)	Teacher beliefs, support and lesson planning effect implementation of anti-bullying curriculum.
Snapp, McGuire et al.	2015	LGBTQ-inclusive curricula: why supportive curricula matter	Sex Education	SUBJECT – Multiple	QUANT – multilevel regression	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	LGBTQ Inclusive curricula as strategy to prevent bullying and increase safety. Effective at school level, and across multiple subjects.
Fekkes et al.	2016	Effects of Dutch Skills for Life Program on the health behavior, bullying and suicidal ideation of secondary school students	Health Education	PROGRAMME – Skills for life	QUANT – cluster randomized trial	EUROPE (Netherlands)	Skills for Life curriculum as part of Health Promoting Schools approach. Twenty-four weekly lessons over two years. No effect on bullying.
Puhl et al.	2016	Policy Actions to Address Weight-Based Bullying and Eating Disorders in Schools: Views of Teachers and School Administrators	Journal of School Health	STANDARD – Policy	QUANT – survey	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Teacher support for government policies including curriculum to prevent eating disorders and weight-based bullying.

(Continued)

Appendix 1: (Continued)

AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	JOURNAL	CATEGORY	METHOD	CONTEXT	SUMMARY
Cunningham et al.	2016	What Limits the Effectiveness of Antibullying Programs? A Thematic Analysis of the Perspective of Teachers	Journal of School Violence	STANDARD – Teachers agency	QUAL – focus group	NORTH AMERICA (Canada)	Programme implementation limited by time, support and training. Take time away from curriculum demands.
Iwasa	2017	Children's everyday experience as a focus of moral education	Journal of Moral Education	STANDARD – Moral standards agency	MIX – survey and essay	ASIA-PACIFIC (Japan)	Reintroduction of morality as a special school subject in general curriculum to prevent bullying. Teachers as role models.
Wang & Goldberg	2017	Using children's literature to decrease moral disengagement and victimization among elementary school students	Psychology in the schools	SUBJECT – Language art	QUANT – quasi experiment	NORTH AMERICA (USA)	Use of children's literature to target bullying should be incorporated into language arts instruction.
Cross et al.	2018	Impact of the Friendly Schools whole-school intervention on transition to secondary school and adolescent bullying behavior	European Journal of Education	PROGRAMME – FSP	QUANT – cluster randomized trail	ASIA-PACIFIC (Australia)	Multilevel comprehensive intervention, including curriculum for students, teachers and parents in secondary school. Small effects first year, not sustained.
Bonell et al.	2018	Effects of the Learning Together intervention on bullying and aggression in English secondary schools (INCLUSIVE): a cluster randomized controlled trial	LANCET	PROGRAMME – Learning together	QUANT – cluster randomized trail	EUROPE (UK)	Restorative justice and SEL programming reduce bullying in secondary schools. Curriculum components contribute less to education.
Ullman	2018	Breaking out of the (anti)bullying 'box': NYC educators discuss trans/gender diversity-inclusive policies and curriculum	Sex Education	STANDARD – policy	QUAL – focus group	ASIA-PACIFIC (Australia/USA)	GSD inclusive policies and bullying discourse limit curricular translation of content on GSD. Content as window and mirror.
Fenaughty	2019	Developing resources to address homophobic and transphobic bullying: a framework incorporating co-design, critical pedagogies, and bullying research	Sex Education	STANDARD – norms	QUAL – case study	ASIA-PACIFIC (New Zealand)	Design and align content aligned with curriculum objectives to facilitate teachers in reaching learning objectives.

3



Social and emotional skills in curriculum reform: a red line for measurability?

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Social and emotional skills in curriculum reform: a red line for measurability?

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ABSTRACT

This article applies a current example of curriculum reform to investigate mechanisms driving the push for international comparative assessment of social and emotional skills in contemporary education. Using a combination of bibliometric and content analysis the article identifies key sources in the recent Norwegian curriculum reform. The article considers how understanding and measurability of social and emotional skills is negotiated in policy documents and the cited knowledge base. Nine international sources are identified in the policy documents underlying the reform. Arguments from these sources are compared with arguments in policy documents to demonstrate overlap and potential misalignment. The final curriculum is found to be in non-alignment with the knowledge base that supports of a broad understanding of social and emotional skills and the measurement of such skills in schools. Drawing on critical realism the authors argue that Norwegian policymakers have rejected the global push for comparative assessment. They have drawn a red line to prevent social and emotional skills from becoming part of students' subject competence and to protect students from standardized assessment of such skills in schools. This position represents a strong case against measurability that may influence ongoing debates on quantification and comparisons in education.

KEYWORDS



Social competence;
curriculum; critical realism;
quantification; policy

Introduction

This is the dance of history on our age: slow, slow, quick, quick, slow, back and forth and from side to side, we step across these fixed and shifting lines.

- Salman Rushdie, *Step Across This Line*

The global quest for educational excellence and equity, as framed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2015, 2018), has brought an increasing emphasis on social and emotional learning in schools. This quest, recently underlined by the integration of 21st-century competence (Voogt & Roblin, 2012) in curricula across the world, has resulted in a push for a long-term strategy for international comparative assessments of social and emotional skills. Studies have found such skills to be helpful in preventing problem behaviours such as substance use, interpersonal violence, bullying, and school failure (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Studies (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017) have also found these skills to be effective in promoting well-being and the academic achievement of students across socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. How such skills should be understood and measured in schools is, however, highly

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debated. In this article, we have asked *how can we understand the mechanisms driving international comparative assessments of social and emotional skills?* To answer this, we explore the knowledge base cited on social and emotional skills in the Norwegian curriculum reform and how the curriculum and knowledge base align in understanding and measurement of social and emotional skills.

For decades, new rationales and logics in education have been driven by a chimera of quantifications and comparisons inscribed as a 'number-intelligent' way of acting and a 'fear of being left behind' (Mølsted & Pettersson, 2019, p. 1). Scholars (Pettersson, 2014; Pettersson, Prøitz, & Forsberg, 2017) have shown how OECD policy recommendations work in parallel with national discourses to create ontological narratives of evaluations and assessments that are natural, self-evident, and rational in the national setting. Voogt and Roblin (2012) have also argued that assessment of 21st-century competence requires 'complex tasks to provide students with opportunities to apply and transfer their understandings to real situations, to solve problems, to think critically, and to work in collaborative ways' (Voogt & Roblin, 2012, p. 312). Current assessment models, they argued, are inadequate for assessing such competence.

In this article, we have drawn on the concept of the knowledge base (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993, p. 253) as a 'distillation of understandings' of social and emotional skills in the cited articles, reports, and reviews of the curriculum process. Few studies have investigated how such understandings are leveraged in curriculum reform. The article has sought to contribute to curriculum research in three ways. First, we have identified the international knowledge base cited in the Norwegian curriculum reform. Second, we have analysed how Norway has negotiated tensions in the understanding and measurement of social and emotional skills in the new national curriculum. Third, we have discussed the mechanisms driving the push for measurements of social and emotional skills in international education policy and research. We have then provided a new perspective to curriculum research, emphasizing social and emotional skills as part of the ongoing debates on quantification and comparison in education.

Starting off, we have briefly explored the Norwegian educational context before outlining the main theoretical perspectives and methodological framework used in the article. Our data analysis is presented in two parts. The first part involves the understanding of social and emotional skills in policy documents and the knowledge base. The second part concerns assessment and measurability of such skills.¹ In our discussion we explore how these debates, from a theoretical perspective of critical realism, can shed light on recent international efforts to develop frameworks for standardized assessments of social and emotional skills in schools.

The Norwegian context

Discussions on social and emotional skills are not new in the Norwegian context. The Norwegian school system has a long tradition of emphasizing social goals and developing communities where students can both acquire academic knowledge and learn social skills (Ofstedal Telhaug, Asbjørn Mediås, & Aasen, 2006). The Norwegian curriculum is described as historically engrained in the northern European tradition of *Didaktik* and *Bildung* (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010) while also being open and responsive to influences from the Anglo-American tradition of competency and learning. As such the Norwegian curriculum has been developed in parallel with international processes. Following the results of the 2001 PISA survey, the government initiated a curriculum reform (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2004; NOU 2003:16), emphasizing basic competencies as outcomes of education. Knain (2005) saw this as an alignment with the OECD's concept of competence, though social and emotional skills were not included in the curriculum's concept of basic skills. One of the reasons for this omission was that the large number of potentially relevant skills would make it difficult to define the concept in a meaningful way (NOU 2014:7, 2014). In 2013, the Norwegian government commissioned an official committee to assess whether the contents of the current curriculum has adequately covered the competencies and skills needed in students' future lives as citizens and workers (NOU 2015:8, 2015, p. 15). This decision was made following a white paper that argued for a greater emphasis on competencies to deal with issues of diversity,

digitalization, and cooperation in an ever more competitive global economy (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2013, p. 67). The committee delivered two official reports (NOU 2014:7; NOU, 2015:8) in 2014 and 2015. Building on these reports, a government white paper (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research) was approved by Parliament in 2016, and, the following year, a revised core curriculum was issued by the Ministry of Education and Research (2017).

Scholars, notably Willbergh, have criticized the ongoing curriculum reform. Willbergh (2016) argued that the emphasis on competence risks devaluing content knowledge as an outcome of education in the new curriculum. She (Willbergh, 2015) argued that the educational concept of 21st-century competence is deficient and theoretically inferior to the historically engrained concept of *Bildung*. Researchers Hilt, Riese, and Søreide (2019) claimed that the curriculum reform indicates a shift—where social and emotional abilities were previously promoted to support personal development and human cultivation, ‘the same skills are now promoted to ensure the production of human capital for economic prosperity’ (Hilt et al., 2019, p. 393). Hilt and colleagues argued that, although the official report’s recommendations may be well intended, the distinction of objectives and methods of assessment implies a narrowing of competencies that may ‘legitimize the need for new assessment technologies in the next round’ (Hilt et al., 2019, p. 395). Paradoxically, this may end up excluding students who do not conform to the narrow ideals of the education system.

Theoretical perspectives

In this article, we have drawn on insights from critical realism (Bhaskar, 2008, 2016) as applied to the field of curriculum theory and education systems. In particular, we have drawn on Tikly’s (2015) concern with the empiricist debates reflected in the quest for learning metrics and the ‘what works’ agenda. Such efforts, he argued, downplay the complex and continuous interaction of structure and agency with learning as an emergent property of the open system of education (Brown, 2009; Scott & Bhaskar, 2015; Shipway, 2011). Critical realism has been proposed as a useful framework for analysing the ebb and flow of curriculum debates (Priestley, 2011), as it foregrounds the ontological assumptions and underlying mechanisms driving those debates. In Roy Bhaskar’s model of the ‘self-sustaining heteronomous system’ (Shipway, 2011, p. 135), we have found one way of theoretically explaining systems of measurability in education. In its general form the model is expressed as

$$S \rightarrow (s \rightarrow p \rightarrow a) \rightarrow S'$$

In the model, (S) signifies the ‘social structure’ of standardized testing, and (s) signifies the ‘source’ of that structure in the need to know about educational outcomes. This need leads to a ‘misrepresentation’ (p) of outcomes, which then leads to *actions* (a) by stakeholders that in turn *reinforce* the social structure (S’). The reinforcing cycle of need-misrepresentation-action is propagated by two distinct features. The first is a *psychological rationalization* in which the misrepresentation of outcomes causes the need to know and reinforces the misrepresentation as a valid measure of those outcomes. The second feature is *ideological mystification* in which the relationship between the structure of standardized testing and the actual outcome (O) is obscured so that the structure of standardized testing is validated by the misrepresentation of outcomes and vice versa. Simply put, the model describes how measures of educational outcomes reinforce the structures that support its measurement and obscure students’ actual outcomes. Consequently, what ends up as a desired outcome of education is what the system is able to measure (Shipway, 2011, p. 135).

In this article we have used critical realism to frame our research question emphasizing mechanisms of international comparative assessment, and to support selection of data to highlight ontological assumptions in the knowledge base and policy documents. We have also made use of the critical realist model of self-sustaining heteronomous systems to discuss our findings. These theoretical perspectives will be elaborated later in the paper. For now, we proceed to outline the methods we have used to analyse documents and produce our findings.

Methods

This article has systematically mapped the policy field related to social and emotional skills using a combination of bibliometric and content analysis. This approach provides an overview of documents in a systematic fashion (Weber, 1990) and the identification of patterns in the documents (Stemler & Bebell, 1999), allowing inferences to be made and corroborated using other methods of data collection, as well as further in-depth content analysis (Pettersson, 2014). The term *knowledge base* has been used to denote a body of generic knowledge to be mastered by students (Kloppenburger, van Bommel, & de Jonge, 2019); teachers' beliefs, orientations, and cognitions (Beijaard & Verloop, 1996); and the shared knowledge of the teaching profession (Campbell-Barr, 2018; Hermansen & Mausestagen, 2016). Young and Muller (2013) also likened the knowledge base of social scientists to the powerful knowledge of surgeons who know where to insert the scalpel based on their specialized understanding of anatomy and physiology. In this article, we have used the concept of the knowledge base (Wang et al., 1993) to identify distilled understandings in policy documents and to assess sources for coverage and relevance before being included in the knowledge base for the curriculum reform. Bowen has stated that content analysis entails 'finding, selecting, appraising, and synthesizing data contained in documents' (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). The process has five basic functions in gathering data on context, developing questions for research, supplementing other data, tracking changes, and verifying findings. In our case, content analysis has been employed to develop questions for research and for tracking changes in discussions on social and emotional skills in the Norwegian curriculum reform. Reviewing policy documents involves the subjective reasoning and choice of researchers in framing issues from the data. Therefore, to strengthen reliability, we try in the following to make our process of analysis as clear and transparent as possible (Bowen, 2009, p. 38).

The first step in our analysis was to identify key policy documents in the curriculum reform. The governmental white paper (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2016) was initially read and found to have cited two official reports (NOU 2014:7, 2014; NOU 2015:8, 2015). Both reports were read and included in the review. The final core curriculum, enacted in 2017 (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2017), was also read and included for context and understanding of how policy discussions were reconciled in the final core curriculum. All documents were analysed for discussions on social and emotional skills and for the sources cited in these discussions. Two main themes emerged from these readings—discussions on the nature and understanding of social and emotional skills and discussions on whether and how to assess such skills.

Following this process, we registered sources using set criteria for coverage and relevance in the final selection of the knowledge base. The coverage criteria included the source being cited in all policy documents or in one official report and the final white paper. The relevance criteria included the source addressing the understanding of social and emotional skills or assessment of such. A total of 39 sources were identified in the reading of policy documents. The sources were catalogued according to type, context, and number of citations across the three documents. Twenty-one sources were excluded for failing to meet the coverage criteria. The remaining 18 sources were reviewed for relevance by reading abstracts, summaries, and introductory chapters of the publications. From this reading, nine sources were excluded for lack of relevance. This process resulted in a list of nine items as the knowledge base of the Norwegian curriculum reform. All sources were reviewed using the themes identified in policy documents. Sources were categorized according to the time of publication, including sources from 2005 to 2010 in the *early* category, and sources from 2011 to 2015 in the *late* category. The knowledge base includes three reports, three papers, two books, and one journal article. Four sources stem from the United States, three were published by the OECD, and the remaining two are from Sweden and New Zealand. Documents related to the development of the OECD framework Education 2030, cited in the final white paper, were found to be of relevance for our discussion but were not included in the knowledge base since the framework was published after the white paper. The findings from our analysis are presented below.

Findings

Understanding of social and emotional skills

In the following we address how social and emotional skills in the curriculum align with similar concepts in its cited knowledge base. The first official report defined social and emotional competence as 'a person's attitudes, behaviour, emotions, social skills and relations' (NOU 2014:7, 2014, p. 37). The concept consists of an individual's 'self-perception, motivation, ability to cooperate and manage [his or her] own emotions' (p. 37). Students' social and emotional development is seen as a central part of the broad mandate of schools. The report cited research indicating that social and emotional competencies can be influenced and learned throughout life and that such competencies are of particular importance for students who do not perform well in school. The second official report argued that a broader understanding of competence is needed to help students meet the complex challenges and tasks of the future (NOU 2015:8, 2015, p. 18). The report proposed a new definition where competence means the mastery of challenges and the solving of tasks in different settings and entails both cognitive, practical, social, and emotional learning and development, including attitudes, values, and ethical considerations. The report argued that social and emotional competencies can be developed in all aspects of learning, through such means as subject-specific competence, learning to learn, communication, cooperation, and participation (NOU 2015:8, 2015, p. 22).

Building on the two official reports, the white paper has recognized subject and social learning as highly connected. The paper, however, has not supported a wider definition of competence, emphasizing that 'competence is first and foremost about students' subject learning outcomes' (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2016, p. 21). The white paper has instead prescribed a new core curriculum to address the development of students' social and emotional learning through subject training. It argued that, while some aspects of students' social and emotional learning (such as beliefs and attitudes towards democracy) are included in certain subjects, the curriculum should not set goals for students' personal attitudes and opinions (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2016, p. 27). The core curriculum, enacted in 2017, states that 'schools must support and contribute to the students' social learning and development during subject work throughout the school day' (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 10). The curriculum further emphasizes that social learning occurs both during instruction and in all other activities organized by the school and that such learning cannot be separated from subject learning. The term 'social competence' is not used in the core curriculum, instead including social skills among a broad range of general skills, such as motor skills, practical skills, and creative skills, to be developed in schools.

Building on this brief outline, it is interesting to see how the understanding of social and emotional skills in curriculum documents aligns with the knowledge base it cites. In the following, we have presented our findings using two main categories (see Table 1) to illustrate how the understanding of social and emotional skills has evolved from the early to the later sources. In the 2005 DeSeCo report, the ability to 'interact in heterogeneous groups' is related to terms such as 'social competencies,' 'social skills,' 'intercultural competencies,' or 'soft skills' (OECD, 2005, p. 12). Dumont and Istance (2010) also emphasized the social nature of learning and the development of a learning environment that actively encourages well-organized co-operative learning. These authors argued that global drivers call for an increasing focus to 21st-century competences in education, including deep understanding, flexibility, and a range of soft skills and teamwork. In Dede's (2010) analysis of the American Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) framework, he found such skills include leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity and responsibility, people skills, self-direction, and social responsibility. Dede argued that the European frameworks place a greater emphasis on affective and psychosocial skills than the frameworks generated in the United States (Dede, 2010, p. 6). Hattie's (2009) influential book on visual learning is also cited in this category. In it he argued that social competence programmes are usually administered to either socially isolated and withdrawn or highly externalized and exhibitionist students with an aim of

Table 1. Cited knowledge base on social and emotional learning in the Norwegian curriculum reform.

Category	Source	Type	Context	Citations
Late sources (2011–2015)	OECD (2015) <i>Skills for Social Progress. The power of social and emotional skills</i>	Report	OECD	3
	National Research Council (2013) <i>Education for Life and Work</i>	Book	USA	15
	Heckman and Kautz (2013) <i>Fostering and measuring skills: Interventions that improve character and cognition</i>	Paper	USA	7
	Swedish National Agency for Education (2013) <i>The significance of non-cognitive skills</i>	Report	Sweden	8
	Durlak et al. (2011) <i>The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions</i>	Journal Article	USA	6
Early sources (2005–2010)	Dumont and Istance (2010) <i>Analysing and designing learning environments for the 21st century.</i> (OECD, Nature of Learning)	Paper	OECD	14
	Dede (2010) <i>Comparing Frameworks for "21st Century Skills"</i> .	Paper	USA	7
	Hattie (2009) <i>Visible Learning.</i>	Book	New Zealand	6
	OECD (2005) <i>The definition and selection of key competencies.</i>	Report	OECD	6

raising 'levels of social appropriateness, social problems solving skills, self-control, or social perspective training' (Hattie, 2009, p. 149).

In later sources, Durlak et al. (2011) defined social and emotional learning (SEL) as 'the process of acquiring core competencies to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations constructively' (2011, p. 406). The National Research Council report (2013) proposed a framework for 21st-century skills for American schools in three domains of cognitive, intra-personal, and interpersonal competencies. It posited enough evidence to support the teaching and learning of such competencies in ways that enable their transfer to different situations (National Research Council, 2013, p. 180). Included in the interpersonal domain is 'teamwork and collaboration,' aligned with the personality factor of agreeableness, and the building on such skills as communication, collaboration, teamwork, cooperation, interpersonal skills, and empathy. It also included 'leadership,' aligned with the personality factor of extroversion, and the building on such skills as leadership and responsibility, assertive communication, self-presentation, and social influence (National Research Council, 2013, p. 95). Heckman and Kautz (2013) claimed that it is necessary to 'discard obsolete views about the origin and malleability of "traits"' (Heckman & Kautz, 2013, p. 6) and to recognize that skills such as perseverance, self-control, resilience, openness, and empathy can, in fact, be successfully defined and developed through interventions. Authors also argued that building an early base of skills to promote such learning from an early age is a better strategy than trying to remediate the absence of skills later in life. In a summary of research conducted by the Swedish National Agency for Education report (2013), however, concluded that there is no broad consensus on the definition of non-cognitive skills. It identified seven clusters of skills in creative, empathic character traits—such as responsibility and perseverance—social and communicative skills, self-perception, problem-solving, and learning (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2013, p. 20). The report also argued that the attainment of such skills is often not expressed as clear individual goals but rather as something that schools should support and nurture in students for the development of a positive sense of self.

In the OECD report on Skills for Social Progress (OECD, 2015) social and emotional skills are defined as individual capacities that can be (a) manifested in consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, (b) developed through formal and informal learning experiences, and (c)

important drivers of socioeconomic outcomes throughout the individual's life (OECD, 2015, p. 35). Citing the work of Heckman and Kautz the report argues that '[s]ocial and emotional skills are as important as cognitive skills in shaping outcomes' (OECD, 2015, p. 24) and that malleable periods between early childhood and adolescence should be leveraged systematically in schools.

Alignment in curriculum and the knowledge base

While the official reports argued that social and emotional skills should be broadly understood and systematically integrated as a part of students' subject competence, this view is not supported in the white paper or the core curriculum. The white paper emphasized a narrower understanding of academic learning as the core purpose of education and distinguishes clearly between social skills and cognitive skills. The early knowledge base displays a wide range of understandings gravitating towards broader competencies. It argues for more research on defining such concepts and draws a distinction between US-based and European frameworks emphasizing more affective and social aspects of learning. The later knowledge base reflects a more ambiguous understanding, particularly following the work of Heckman and colleagues' more confident assertion that social and emotional skills can be clearly defined and developed. These findings are summarized in Table 2.

While the curriculum demonstrates a *partial alignment* with the knowledge base emphasizing broader social and emotional competencies, it *does not align* with the knowledge base emphasizing social and emotional skills that are clearly defined and of equal importance to cognitive skill development in schools. Discussions on how to define social and emotional skills are highly related to debates on measurability in education. As we shall see in the following section, the Norwegian curriculum not only rejects the broad understanding of social and emotional skills, but also the measurement of such skills recommended by the OECD.

Measuring social and emotional skills

In the following, we will address how the curriculum aligns with views on the measurement of social and emotional skills in the cited knowledge base. The first official report (NOU 2014:7) stated that 'whether it is possible, or desirable, to assess and define objective goals and criteria that are closely related to the students' personal development and relations to others, has been a question that has been frequently revisited' (p. 56). The report also pointed to the existing practice of providing students with individual feedback on their development and learning in areas such as cooperation and communication. The second report went further, highlighting the absence of the social and emotional aspects of students learning from subject competence goals in the current curriculum. Consequently, the report argued, there is a lack of coherence between the broad mandate of schools and the competence aims of the curriculum. The report also recognized a lack of available knowledge that would support teachers' assessments of social and emotional competencies and that current standardized measures are inadequate for assessing the complexity of such learning (NOU 2015:8, 2015, p. 94). The report did not recommend developing the national quality assessment framework to include social and emotional skills or for such skills to be included in students' final

Table 2. Understanding of social and emotional skills in curriculum reform and knowledge base.

Source	Understanding	Concept
Curriculum documents		
Official Reports	Broad	Social and emotional competence
White Paper & Core curriculum	Narrow	Social learning, social skills
Knowledge base		
Early (2005–2010)	Social competence	Group competence, Social competence, 21st-century skills, 21st-century competence
Late (2011–2015)	Social and emotional skills	Social and emotional learning, 21st-century skills, Non-cognitive skills, Character skills, Social and emotional skills

assessment but argued that students' social and emotional competence should be emphasized in process goals and assessment at the system level.

The white paper maintained the current practice of dialogue on issues that are not directly related to the students' academic development, and it considered assessment of students' social and emotional learning an ethical dilemma. It reinforced the principle that schools should not formulate individual goals for students' personality, attitudes, or preferences, and it argued that this could lead to an instrumentalization of social and emotional development that would undermine students' academic learning (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2016, p. 28). The paper did, however, point to the OECD Education 2030 framework and to the need to develop more coherent curriculum models to enhance the broad set of competencies addressed by the OECD. This framework, the paper argued, may also influence the development of large-scale comparative assessments, such as the PISA study. In line with the white paper, the final core curriculum (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2017) did not address the assessment of social and emotional skills. The purpose of assessment was described as providing a picture of what students know but as promoting learning and development. Tools, such as screening and observation, were supported, but teachers were cautioned to 'balance the need for good information about the students' learning and unwanted consequences of different assessment situations' (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, p. 16). Teachers were further tasked with realizing the broad mandate of schools in the daily meetings between students and teachers and with helping students set and assess their own development goals. Teachers were directed to negotiate the tensions between different objectives and values in the curriculum (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 19).

Building on the above review, we have in the following shown how measurement of social and emotional skills is addressed in the knowledge base and how curriculum decisions align with the main categories of the knowledge base it cites. In the early sources, the DeSeCo framework (OECD, 2005) noted considerable progress in measuring cognitive competencies and that there is need to move further in assessing and measuring attitudes and dispositions. The report pointed to early work with PISA, including a separate questionnaire to measure students' attitudes and motivations towards learning. Also from a OECD perspective, Dumont and Istance (2010) claimed that assessment objectives are influential in shaping content and the dynamics of teaching and learning. As a core goal, they claimed, education should enhance students' acquisition of 'adaptive competence,' and apply learned knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts and situations (Dumont & Istance, 2010, p. 24).

From the US perspective, Dede claimed that because 21st-century skills are not part of high-stakes testing, schools do not adequately support students' development of such skills. Since the P21 framework recommended assessing such skills as part of core subjects (Dede, 2010, p. 5), Dede concluded that the barriers to altering assessment practices are primarily 'not conceptual, technical, or economic, but instead psychological, political, and cultural' (p. 11). In his assessment of social skills programmes, Hattie argued that the effects are stronger for at-risk and younger children (2009) and that the impact is stronger on peer relations and social outcomes but lower for students initially identified as having social problems.

In the later sources, Durlak et al. echoed Hattie's findings of SEL programmes significantly improving students' skills, attitudes, and behaviours while also improving academic performance (2011, p. 419). Such programmes, they argued, combine, rather than separate, the teaching of social and emotional skills to promote integration, and attempts to separate social and emotional skills may be short-sighted. The National Research Council report argued that there are not many practical assessments of interpersonal competencies available, partly due to 'an essential tension between the nature of group work and the need to assign valid scores to individual students' (2013, p. 148). More research on common definitions and reliable measures is recommended, initially for research purposes, and eventually for formative and summative assessment. Most current assessments, the authors argued, measure maximum performance rather than typical performance, which may be more relevant in assessment for interpersonal competence. The authors argued that while

collaborative problem-solving tasks are being developed by PISA, there are few examples of large-scale assessments of social and collaboration competencies.

The Swedish National Agency report (2013, p. 9) considered non-cognitive skills more complex and difficult to measure than cognitive skills. Most research on the measurement of such skills, it claimed, is based in the Anglo-American context. There are no available data sets to compare non-cognitive skills across different countries, and the report considered this one of the main reasons behind the OECD's ongoing work to gather coherent data on such skills across countries. The report argued that the development of scientific methods may give the appearance of measuring complex skills and that it is only a question of time before we are able to do so reliably. However, the report also iterated that measures have been notoriously difficult to develop and that there has so far been no consensus on how to measure such skills (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2013, p. 28).

Contrary to the Swedish report, Heckman and Kautz (2013) argued that there are 'reliable ways to measure' character skills and 'proven ways to enhance' and 'evaluate' efforts to foster them (p. 6). The literature, they claimed, suggests that objective measurements of character are not plagued by reference bias and that conscientiousness—the tendency to be organized, responsible, and hard-working—is the most widely predictive skill for future success across a variety of outcomes (Heckman & Kautz, 2013, p. 23). The authors also called for the development of standardized assessments that account for incentives, effort, and other skills when measuring both character and cognitive skills. The OECD report on social and emotional skills followed Heckman and Kautz's assertion that there are reliable measures of such skills that can be used across age groups and within a cultural and linguistic boundary (2015, p. 14). The report suggested social and emotional skills are undervalued in policy debates, in part because it is often assumed that such skills cannot be reliably measured. While most countries do not provide standardized assessments, many provide guidelines to help schools assess students' social and emotional skills in school. Detailed guidance on the development of such skills is however, lacking (OECD, 2015), and assessment tends to be less transparent and more informal. The report recommends longitudinal measurements of cognitive, social, and emotional skills from an early age and development and validation of measures of social and emotional skills across cultural and linguistic boundaries (OECD, 2015, p. 135). In the report, the OECD also revealed its plans to conduct an international longitudinal study of skill development in cities to gather comparable data on children's social and emotional skill development over time and across cultures.

Alignment in curriculum and the knowledge base

The official reports support a more systematic assessment of social and emotional competences through process goals and systems-level evaluation but did not support a comprehensive assessment framework. The white paper argued that assessment of students' personality and preferences is not a part of the school mandate and reasserts teacher dialogue as the main approach. Policy documents seem to agree on strengthening emphasis on social and emotional learning as part of the broad mandate of schools. Documents, however, have also pointed to international developments that may, in the long run, facilitate the measurement of social and emotional skills in schools. The early knowledge base demonstrates a cautious optimism concerning the measurability of social and emotional skills and tends to emphasize the need for more research to develop reliable methods and measures of assessment. Later sources seem to assert more strongly that such skills can be reliably measured within cultural and linguistic boundaries and that the barriers against assessment are mainly cultural and political. These findings are summarized in Table 3.

Despite drawing on a knowledge base that, to a large degree, supports more comprehensive assessment frameworks, there is little explicit engagement with such views in the policy documents. The decisions on measurement in the curriculum process, however, demonstrate a *partial alignment* with a knowledge base that emphasizes the need for assessment of social and emotional skills in schools. The policy process also demonstrates a *non-alignment* with the knowledge base that recommends standardized testing of social and emotional skills in schools.

Table 3. Measurement of social and emotional skills in the curriculum and knowledge base.

Source	Position	Recommendation
Curriculum documents		
Official Reports	More systematic assessment	Process goals and system-level evaluation
White Paper and Core curriculum	Part of broad mandate	Formative assessment and teacher dialogue
Knowledge base		
Early (2005–2010)	Develop measures	Develop measures; should be part of core subjects and high-stakes assessment
Late (2011–2015)	Implement measures	Implement reliable measures within cultures; develop cross-cultural instruments

Our analysis of understanding and measurability of social and emotional skills indicates that the Norwegian curriculum does not align with the broad position of an international knowledge base that sees social and emotional skills as an equally important and integrated part of academic learning in schools. The curriculum documents also demonstrate a non-alignment with the knowledge base argument that social and emotional skills can and should be measured in schools. Our analysis further underlines the global push for the development of standardized measurement of social and emotional skills in schools. In the following, we employ our theoretical framework in critical realism to understand the mechanisms behind this push.

Drawing the red line

From the critical realist perspective (Brown, 2009; Scott & Bhaskar, 2015; Shipway, 2011), the narrow understanding of social and emotional skills, as employed in the Norwegian curriculum, can be seen as undervaluing non-cognitive aspects of students' learning. Such aspects are causative of the emergence of students' learning in the critical realist understanding of an open and stratified learning environment. The framing of competence as subject learning reduces the complex and entangled process of learning to the acquisition of subject knowledge in the empirical domain while neglecting the influence of other forms of learning and the forces working in the actual and the real domains of the social world. The reduction reflects a flat positivist ontology consistent with an epistemic position of a closed education system where cognitive learning can be taken to represent what counts as students' learning in the curriculum.

While the broad position seems to argue for the inclusion of practical, social, and emotional learning in understanding competence, it does so primarily by referencing empirical studies indicating a statistical relationship between social and academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Hattie, 2009; Heckman & Kautz, 2013; National Research Council, 2013). Such studies draw strength from predictive claims that social and emotional learning will have a positive impact on desirable educational outcomes but do not provide a consistent theoretical framework or explain the ontological mechanisms that generate such learning in schools. Rather, the empiricist 'what works' agenda downplays the complex and continuous interaction of structure and agency in the open system of education (Brown, 2009; Scott & Bhaskar, 2015; Shipway, 2011; Tikly, 2015) and reduces learning to empirical outcomes that propagate an a priori generalization of competence while neglecting the casual mechanisms in the emergence of learning.

Both the broad position of the knowledge base and the narrow position of the curriculum can then be understood as lacking in ontological depth and viewing education as a closed system. This constitutes a positivist epistemic fallacy (Shipway, 2011, p. 134) where the narrow position, on the one hand, reduces competence to academic learning, and the broad position, on the other hand, reduces it to that which has an empirical impact on educational outcomes. The revised national curriculum of Norway increasingly expects teachers to be knowledge-based in their practice while at the same time asking them to negotiate the tensions between policy and research. In this light,

critical realism can offer an impulse for teachers and researchers to negotiate tensions by rejecting reductionist theories of social and emotional learning and demanding greater conceptual clarity from knowledge cited to guide practice in schools.

The mechanisms driving the push for more comprehensive assessment of social and emotional skills, identified in both policy and research, can be understood using Bhaskar's model of self-sustaining heteronomous social systems with the following adaptation: $Sc \rightarrow (sc \rightarrow pc \rightarrow a) \rightarrow Sc'$. The OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills can be seen as a social structure (Sc) propagated by the need (sc) to develop students social and emotional skills for 'greater well-being and better school performance' (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 406) and for 'improving economic and social outcomes' (OECD, 2015, p. 13). Building on these needs, assessment is seen as 'the essential foundation of a 21st Century education' (Dede, 2010, p. 5), but with a lack of high-stakes tests to measure such skills it is 'necessary to standardize for incentives, effort, and other skills in measuring any particular character or cognitive skill' (Heckman & Kautz, 2013, p. 88). The measurement of social and emotional skills is propagated by a process of psychological rationalization where the need to develop students' skills (sc) causes the misrepresentation (pc) of such skills because 'educational stakeholders would benefit from receiving information on what works' and there are 'big gaps between stakeholders' knowledge expectations and capabilities on how to mobilize children's social and emotional skills' (OECD, 2015, p. 15). Actions (ac) taken by stakeholders to include students in the survey and to publicize its results reinforce the misrepresentation and the need to develop students' social and emotional skills according to the measures in the survey. This creates a cycle in which the more we know about the misrepresentation of students' social and emotional skills, the more we need to know about these misrepresented skills and the further we must develop them. By ideological mystification, the system obscures the relationship between the measurement of social and emotional skills through standardized testing (Sc) and students' actual social and emotional skills (Oc). Such mystification is expressed in the claim that 'social and emotional skills can be reliably measured within a culture or linguistic boundary' (OECD, 2015, p. 14) and in suggestions that 'there are objective measurements of character that are not plagued by reference bias' (Heckman & Kautz, 2013, p. 21).

The system itself is supported by a narrative of uncertainty where policymakers are cautioned that '[u]nless steered with a purpose, the rapid advance of science and technology may widen inequities, exacerbate social fragmentation and accelerate resource depletion' (OECD, 2018, p. 3). This provides the existential contingency of the system for stakeholders who cannot aspire to steer through such rough terrain without the information and leverage that standardized testing provides. Surveys of social and emotional skills can then be seen as a heteronomous social system, one caused by policymakers' need to develop social and emotional skills in students, which causes the misrepresentation of such skills and actions that reinforce the system.

In critical realism, education is an open, or at most a semi-closed system (Brown, 2009; Scott & Bhaskar, 2015) that does not display the same regularities commonly associated with natural sciences. Positivist educational mechanisms, such as standardized testing of social and emotional skills, requires regularity and consistency of objects for validation. Building on these insights, we argue that social and emotional skills represented in the results of standardized testing across cultural and linguistic boundaries should be recognized as a misrepresentation that reinforces the system of standardized assessment as an existential necessity for education in the 21st century. Recognizing it as such does not predicate the idea that efforts should be abandoned altogether. Systematically analysing the misrepresentations of social and emotional skills may be helpful in developing practices and research to better understand the mechanisms that produce such skills. However, given the push for increasing educational measurement, it is vital that the educational research community does not succumb to empiricist monotheism. A comprehensive research base building on multiple perspectives and interdisciplinary cooperation is needed to inform the drawing of lines of measurability in more sustainable ways for students, teachers, and education systems.

We argue that Bhaskar's model of self-sustaining heteronomous social systems can be usefully applied to visualize the structures and mechanisms that generate the need for quantification and

comparison in education (Mølstad & Pettersson, 2019) and for the exploration of how such measurements can be combined with other forms of knowledge in a more ontologically coherent framework. Bhaskar's model underscores such systems as, indeed, heteronomous, meaning that they are caused and governed by external forces through policies and legislation, which in turn means that they can be influenced and reshaped by the actors of that system. Despite the curriculum reform having drawn heavily on OECD policy recommendations, Norway explicitly opposes the broader understanding and the measurement of social and emotional skills. It is not clear from our data whether the red line drawn in Norway has influenced the development of the Education 2030 framework. One indication that this might be the case is the framework's recognition that new assessment methods are needed to 'value student outcomes and actions that cannot always be measured' (OECD, 2018, p. 7). Given that this is the second time Norway has declined to align with OECD's views on social and emotional skills (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2004), this could indicate that policy narratives are not unidirectional (Pettersson, 2014; Pettersson et al., 2017) but, instead, that actions taken by member states also affect the narratives espoused by the OECD. In the Education 2030 framework, however, there are clear indications that this red line will be challenged, as the OECD in 2019 'will change gears and begin to explore the translation of the framework into pedagogy, assessment and the design of an instructional system' (OECD, 2018, p. 2). A major cross-cultural survey is currently under way,² with results to be presented in September of 2020. This may lead to renewed calls for universal measurement of social and emotional skills in curricula. In the face of such developments, it will be interesting to see how the red line is drawn in other OECD countries and how long the line will hold in Norway. It will also be interesting to see how the OECD and other global players develop their understanding of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills as separate and interrelated skillsets to be developed in schools.

Conclusions

In this article we have explored the knowledge base cited for framing social and emotional skills in the Norwegian curriculum reform. We have shown how the Norwegian curriculum does not align with the international knowledge base that emphasizes a broad understanding of social and emotional skills and the measurement of such skills in schools. Norwegian policymakers have drawn the red line to avoid inclusion of social and emotional skills as part of the students' subject competence and to avoid standardized assessment of such skills. Norway then, presents a strong case of rejecting measurability that may influence the global debates on quantification and comparisons in education.

Drawing on critical realism, we have shown how the drive for international comparative assessment of social and emotional skills can be understood as a self-reinforcing system that employs psychological rationalization and ideological mystification as mechanisms to sustain itself. Building on a vast body of knowledge, to which we have tried to add, curriculum research should therefore continue to demystify the ideas used to support and reject further quantification and comparison in education. More research is needed to understand how and why countries align their curricula with an international knowledge base that increasingly supports the measurement of social and emotional skills. This is the dance of history in our time: to constantly renegotiate the lines we draw between what we can and will measure as educational outcomes to promote the well-being and prosperity of our children and societies.

Notes

1. We will be using the term *social and emotional skills* as a general term for the broad range of concepts, such as social competence, non-cognitive skills, 21st-century skills, etc., that are described throughout the article.
2. International Study on Social and Emotional Skills: <https://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/study-on-social-and-emotional-skills-the-study.htm> Results released in September 2020.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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4

Exploring the problems and potential of curriculum-making for social learning: Implications for policy and practice.

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Abstract

Although social and emotional learning is a central concern in curriculum-making at the policy level, little is known about how teachers support such learning in practice. Building on interviews and classroom observations of students and teachers, this study investigates how social learning is influenced by curriculum-making in lower secondary science and language education.

The study finds that social learning is influenced in four main ways: framing personal experiences as contents, facilitating belonging in peer assessment, using group work to broker practices and extending the purpose of subject teaching to support the overall formation (Bildung) of students.

The study concludes that curriculum-making at the practice level has potential as a strategy to support students' social learning in more sustainable and meaningful ways. Realising this potential, however, will require addressing the problems related to such practices and providing long-term policy incentives to avoid overburdening teachers and marginalising students.

Introduction

In recent years, social and emotional learning (SEL) in education policy and research has received increasing attention (Durlak et al., 2011; Heckman & Kautz, 2017; OECD, 2015, 2018). SEL approaches typically involve programmes, policies and instructional practices aimed at enhancing students' social and emotional competencies – that is, the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that students need to manage their affective, cognitive and social behaviour (Weissberg et al., 2017).

In a recent review, Yoder (2014) found that SEL research recommends integrating SEL *in teaching*, emphasising student-centred classroom management, collaborative learning and the engagement of students in self-assessment. In Norway, the new core curriculum emphasises how 'learning subject matter cannot be isolated from social learning' (NMER, 2017) and requires schools to support students' social learning and all-round development (Bildung) *through subject teaching*. This curriculum is heavily influenced by SEL research; nonetheless, policymakers reject formal standards and assessment of social and emotional learning (Restad & Mølsted, 2020) and do not recommend the use of SEL programmes. Underlying this stance is a concern that a narrow framing and assessment of social learning can marginalise the students (Biesta, 2016; Hilt et al., 2019) who do not meet the required standards.

These developments highlight two contrasting positions in curriculum-making at the policy level to support social learning. On the one hand, integrated SEL interventions in teaching are supported by international policy and research. On the other hand, Norwegian policymakers propose that social learning can be supported through subject teaching without the use of standardised SEL interventions. So far, however, this proposition has not been systematically investigated in research.

To explore whether and how students' social learning is influenced by curriculum-making at the practice level, I conducted an ethnographic field study comprising observations (N = 35) and interviews (N = 36) with students and teachers of four lower secondary classes in Norway. I draw on a deliberative tradition of curriculum theory to analyse how teachers negotiate the contents, methods, assessment and purpose in their teaching of a language and science curriculum. I also employ Wenger's social theory of learning to analyse curriculum-making as a social practice of learning to establish community, meaning and identity in the classroom.

Background

To the author's knowledge, no studies have systematically investigated curriculum-making for social learning without the use of SEL interventions. Previous studies have, however, found positive effects of integrating SEL interventions in schools (Elias et al., 2015; Jones & Bouffard, 2012) and indicated that social and academic learning are intertwined in classroom management and bullying prevention (Lyng, 2018; Plauborg, 2011; Søndergaard, 2014; Søndergaard & Rabøl Hansen, 2018).

Previous research has also explored curriculum-making as a complex social practice involving teachers and students in the construction of meaning through their interaction with subject material (Priestley & Philippou, 2018). Some studies, notably Kirk et al. (2018), have identified how teachers involve students as co-creators of a curriculum by authorising student voice, offering choices, mobilising the class environment and rethinking the structure of their curriculum. Mack (2012) has explored how language teachers using literature and writing can help students learn more about their emotions and mobilise social awareness to prevent bullying. These studies indicate that curriculum-making at the classroom level can have a positive influence on students' social learning.

Anker-Hansen and Andrée (2015) have identified tensions in teachers' use of classroom debates in science education, as students' use of scientific knowledge is entwined with social motives, such as expressing social responsibility or winning the debate. Uitto and Saloranta (2017) have explored how affecting, non-academic issues, such as values, attitudes and wellbeing, can challenge subject

teachers who do not always feel competent to deal with such issues. White and Kern (2018) have emphasised that teaching for wellbeing and a sense of belonging can have positive outcomes but that simplistic interventions in complex settings may do more harm than good. Studies have also found that overcrowded curricula and overburdened teachers are significant obstacles for promoting non-academic outcomes in schools (Tancred et al., 2018). This previous research has highlighted how teachers do not necessarily feel comfortable addressing non-academic issues and that including such issues in subject curriculum-making may have adverse effects.

These findings from previous research have indicated that it is important to know more about how subject teaching can influence students' social learning and about the problems related to such practices.

Theory

This study aims to investigate how social learning is influenced through subject teaching and to explore the challenges related to such practices. To analyse subject teaching, I draw on the deliberative tradition of curriculum theory (Deng, 2015, 2017; Englund, 2015; Reid, 2016). This tradition considers teaching as a practice of 'making', rather than of 'implementing', a curriculum and sees students and teachers as active negotiators of the curriculum in practice. In this study, I envisage teachers as curriculum makers as they design learning experiences that invite students to negotiate meaning from their encounter with subject knowledge and help students to relate their knowledge to the problems and concerns in their own lives. Subject teaching, understood in this study as a planned and jointly enacted practice of curriculum-making, can be observed as 'instructional events' (Deng, 2017) in the classroom. I employ the concepts of purpose (why), contents (what), working methods (how) and assessment of learning (Priestley, 2019) to highlight teachers' choices in curriculum-making and how these choices influence students' social learning. This analytical framing foregrounds teachers as curriculum makers while also recognising students as agents in the negotiation of the curriculum.

To analyse social learning through subject teaching, I draw on Wenger's social theory of learning (Farnsworth et al., 2016; Illeris, 2018; Wenger, 1999). Social learning can be understood as a process of developing a common practice, community, meaning and identity through the collective enactment of a curriculum in the classroom. Over time, individuals develop a *shared repertoire* of routines, symbols and styles to express themselves as a community. These individuals participate in varied and often conflictual ways and may alternate membership in a social landscape of multiple communities. Such participation can be understood as *brokering*, where individuals transfer and negotiate practices from one community to another. I use the concept of *meaning* to describe a collective experience derived from students' and teachers' encounters with subject *contents*. The concept of *community* is used to describe individuals who share a sense of *belonging* and pursue a *joint enterprise*. I also use the concept of *practice* to denote students' and teachers' ways of working together through physical, verbal and symbolic exchanges in the classroom. Finally, I use *identity* as a concept to describe the individual and collective processes of *becoming*, where students and teachers develop an understanding of who they are by negotiating purpose in subject teaching.

Methods

To investigate practices of curriculum-making for social learning, I conducted an ethnographic field study in a lower secondary high school in Norway. Inspired by previous research (Eriksen, 2018; Eriksen & Lyng, 2018; Lyng, 2018), I employed a best practice, mixed methods sampling strategy (Cohen, 2018) to enable data collection from high-quality subject teaching. A list of 20 best practice schools was compiled based on quantitative data on academic achievement and social outcomes from the Norwegian national quality assessment system. One highly recommended school was

selected for the study. This school is located in a middle-income rural area on the outskirts of a medium-sized city in Norway. At the time of data collection approximately 350 Grade 8–10 students attended the school. Four classes were selected – two from Grade 8 (13–14-year-old students) and two from Grade 10 (15–16-year-old students) – based on recommendations from the headmaster of the school to enable data collection from different age groups and subjects. Language and science were selected because these subjects are taught throughout compulsory education and represent contrasting traditions in the humanities and natural sciences. The selected classes had 27–29 students of mainly native Norwegian background, with a minority of immigrant students from Asia, Africa, South America, the Balkans and the Middle East.

I used participant observation (Christensen & James, 2017; Okely, 2013) to observe a total of 35 lessons over a 5-month period in the fall and winter of 2019/2020. All observations were recorded in field notes. I initially observed how teachers framed purpose, contents, methods and assessment in their subject teaching. Over time, I also observed how students interacted, and I compared notes to understand the differences between the selected classes. I also conducted qualitative interviews (Brenner, 2006); Brinkmann and Kvale (2015); (Heath et al., 2009) with 32 students (17 boys and 15 girls) and 4 teachers in the second semester of field work. These interviews were based on a preliminary analysis of observations, highlighting three lessons from each class that were rich in social interactions and examples of curriculum-making. Teachers were provided with preliminary transcripts of these lessons and asked to reflect on their experiences in the interviews. Students were selected for interviews based on their consent and participation in the discussed lessons. For each group of 7–10 students, I provided a general description of the lessons and asked the students to recall their experiences. Data selection and analysis for this paper was inspired by an informed grounded theory approach (Thornberg, 2012). I initially used data-driven coding to identify key instructional events in each class. This involved using grounded axial coding to compare students' and teachers' perspectives on the discussed lessons and horizontally comparing observations between classes and the selected subjects. In the later stages of coding, I used curriculum concepts, as described above, to identify four main instructional events that illuminate general tendencies in curriculum-making from across the four classes and the two subjects selected for the study.

Analysis

In the following, I explore how social learning is influenced through subject teaching. I draw on observations of four instructional events and the reflections of students and teachers obtained in the interviews. I find four main ways in which teachers influence social learning: framing personal experiences as contents, involving students as peers in the assessment, using group work as a method of learning and extending the purpose of subject teaching to influence the lives of students. Such practices are fraught with challenges. For students, challenges include negotiating their personal and public lives and expressing their sense of belonging to different groups in the classroom. For teachers, challenges include brokering influences between multiple communities and balancing how they shape the identities of their students through their subject teaching.

Personal contents and meaning

The first way teachers influence social learning is by framing personal experiences as contents. This is illustrated in the Grade 8 'Book of me' language assignment. Prior to this event, students spend three weeks writing a book about themselves and one week preparing an oral presentation for their peers. The following is an excerpt from the observation of their presentations in class:

Helle has written about her grandfather, who recently passed away, and about her dog. She is wearing a white oversized hoody strapped tightly around her face. A boy at the back of the class starts laughing as Helle is explaining how her grandfather died. 'Oh, sorry!' the boy exclaims. 'I didn't mean to laugh at your grandfather dying. I just found your presentation funny', he says. Vibeke [teacher] intervenes to remind the students to respect one another

and that everyone should try to create a safe atmosphere in the classroom. Stian, a tall stocky boy seated at the back of the classroom, is frequently visited by the assistant teacher during the presentations. He explains energetically that he has written about his childhood and about the things that keep him awake at night – but he can't really talk about it in front of the class. Instead, he shares a story from kindergarten, when he and some friends locked themselves in a shed and had to cry for help to get out. As he is telling the story, he bursts into laughter and his face turns red. 'OH MY GOD, we were so stupid!' he cries, 'OH MY GOD!' His whole body is shaking from laughter and tears well up in his eyes. The other students can't help it and start laughing too.

This event illustrates how teachers frame students' personal experiences as contents in subject teaching. The language teacher, Vibeke, said in her interview that she uses this assignment with new students at the start of every school year and thinks that it is a good way of helping her students get acquainted with each other in the class. Her comments, along with the observations from other classes and subjects, indicate that such curriculum-making is a common occurrence among teachers.

Vibeke also stated that she had given the students a list of requirements for the text and that the students received an overall assessment for both oral and written presentations. Helle mentioned in her interview that this was a fun exercise and that she is proud that she got a B on the assignment. Korian, another boy in the class, got a C. In his interview, he said that the assignment 'sucked' and that he was frustrated he only managed to write one paragraph about being at a football cup during the summer. Following the assignment, the students were eager to compare grades. Some of the students were elated and happily passed around their graded assignments in the classroom. Others quietly sat guarding their texts with bowed heads. These observations indicate that being graded influences the students' behaviour in the classroom and can make it difficult to separate academic feedback from feedback on their person.

During the presentations, Helle did not seem to be bothered by being interrupted and rather encouraged interaction with her peers by dressing up and making funny gestures. Other students also employed humour to negotiate the tensions of presenting themselves to the class. Stian found the written exercise more challenging than others and said in his interview that 'I hit a wall, and then I managed to write something, and then I hit a wall again. It happened over and over again'. His frustration illustrates how texts can carry a personal and sometimes troubling meaning that may interfere with learning. Stian's presentation, although entertaining, also illustrates how some students are more cautious about sharing personal stories with their peers.

Being personal and presenting oneself in front of the class can be challenging for some students. Vibeke said that she spent a considerable amount of time making her students feel confident about presenting themselves. Her intervention during Helle's presentation encouraged the students to participate in creating a safe atmosphere. By inviting her students to share their life stories, Vibeke entangles the social process of getting to know each other with academic learning – to write and orally present their work. Similar enactments are also evident in the Grade 10 'Question box' assignment described below, where students post and discuss anonymous questions about sex in their science class. In this event, Lasse, the science teacher, encourages his students to share personal experiences to help build relationships while also gaining scientific knowledge. He also shares his personal stories and positions himself as a member of the class community.

These events demonstrate how subject teaching can be understood as a process of negotiating meaning through the sharing of personal experiences in language and science teaching. On the one hand, such curriculum-making can help students relate subject knowledge to their own lives and establish positive and meaningful relationships in their class. On the other hand, it can increase the difficulty for students to understand feedback and not be distracted by personal concerns in their academic learning. A challenge for teachers, then, is to consider how their enactment of personal

contents can support their students' process of sharing meaningful experiences as a community while also avoiding adverse consequences for individual students.

In sum, when teachers frame personal experiences as contents, their curriculum-making can help students connect subject knowledge in meaningful ways as a community but can make it more difficult for some students to gain subject knowledge.

Peer assessment and community

The second common way in which teachers influence students' social learning is using peer assessment in their subject teaching. A typical example of this is the 'Exam prep' exercise in the Grade 10 language class. Prior to this event, students write individual papers from a chosen topic in the previous year's language exam. Students are divided into groups of three to anonymously assess each other's texts. Each group is required to read three texts and agree on a shared assessment using criteria from the national examination guidelines. The following is an excerpt from the observations of the event:

'People!' Betina [teacher] exclaims, 'When you are assessing a text, it is important that you remember that someone has put a lot of emotions into it, and new emotions can be stirred up by reading your feedback. It is important that you remember and respect this. If you read something that you think is odd or funny, you must also remember that you have a responsibility to consider how you would like to receive feedback on your text. You can pretend that you are me. It is ok to think that some texts are not all that good. I can do that sometimes. But it is not ok to say it out loud so other people can hear'.

In one of the groups, Abdi is joined by two girls Sanna and Valborg. The girls finish reading quickly and start discussing the text while Abdi continues to read. Betina comes over and answers a question from one of the girls. Abdi is still sitting quietly with his text. He looks over at the girls but neither of them makes any initiative to collaborate. Sanna and Valborg begin working on the second text and continue at their own pace. A teacher student comes over to see if the girls need any help. Abdi glances over at them and starts waving his worksheet around looking a little dejected. He goes back to work on his assessment sheet but does not ask for help. After a while, he becomes passive and drifts off, staring into thin air. He gets up and walks around the classroom with his sheet. Betina looks over at Abdi as he stands by the classroom door reviewing the lesson schedule, but she leaves him be. After a while, Abdi returns to the group and sits down. He looks over at the girls again. They hardly take notice of him and diligently continue to complete their task.

In the interviews, the students talked about this particular exercise as a good way of learning how their text will be assessed in their upcoming exam. However, they also vividly remembered one of the texts being read aloud and made fun of by a group of students, despite the teachers' warning. Sanna said in her interview that the texts were recognisable even though they had been anonymised because the students at this stage are all well-acquainted with each other. This familiarity is also evident as Sanna and Valborg expediently complete their task by working in a pre-rehearsed manner in their group. These observations indicate a shared repertoire developed through a history of mutual learning that helps the students to work and express themselves as members of the class community.

In her interview, Betina explained that her language class is a 'darling' of the school and is recognised as one with an ambitious and socially inclusive group of students. When presented with the transcripts of the lesson, she said she realised that Abdi was left out by the girls but also that 'It is

super difficult to get it organised right for everyone, especially when there are 30 different individuals and he [Abdi] only came in during the fall of ninth grade and has not really found his place yet'. Betina stated that she has worked hard to help Abdi get settled but that he is a very gentle and quiet person who does not demand much attention. She also said that she found it difficult to intervene because the girls 'were very quiet and sat there reading, and they respected each other'. Abdi on the other hand, 'kind of pulls away' and is positioned by Betina as someone who lacks the ability to 'get in' with the community. These observations demonstrate how newcomers can have a difficult time getting in with an established community and how teachers themselves can become engrained in a class repertoire.

Betina also said that she uses peer assessment to help her students learn from each other. In other parts of the material, peer assessment also helps students to understand how they can work well together in class. This is evident in the Grade 8 'Cars and loops' science assignment presented below, wherein Aasne, the science teacher, requires her students to perform a self-evaluation after group work. In her interview, she said, 'there are always some – usually boys – who have unrealistic assessments, and then we can have a conversation in class about how we can make groups work better'. Aasne's comments demonstrate how teachers use peer assessment to facilitate students' negotiation of a shared repertoire for learning in the classroom.

These enactments illustrate how subject teaching can be understood as a practice of establishing a community in the class. By including peer assessment in curriculum-making, teachers invite students to express themselves as members of a community by developing and practicing a shared repertoire. Such curriculum-making can affirm students' sense of belonging in the community and make their learning more efficient. However, it can also make students who have not established themselves vulnerable and create blind spots for teachers who have become insiders in the class community.

In summary, by including peer assessment in curriculum-making, teachers can help students to express themselves as members of the community, but they also risk excluding the students who have not yet adopted the established class repertoire.

Group work and practice

The third way teachers influence students' social learning is by employing group work as a method of learning in subject teaching. The Grade 8 'Cars and loops' science assignment illustrates this. In the event, students are engaged in a three-week practical challenge to learn about gravitation and energy transfer. The students are required to design a car, build an obstacle course and test their designs in a race on the final day of the assignment. The students are assigned to work in groups of three and are awarded points based on their design and how far they can propel the car with the energy generated by a steel ball that must pass through the obstacle course. The following is an excerpt from the observations of one of the groups:

Bjørnar, Beate and Silje have been awarded top score for their car in the preliminary design assessment. Bjørnar wants to make a course with two loops. He takes a mount to fix the first loop on top of the desk and instructs Beate to hold the second loop steady while he runs a small steel ball through the course—it runs perfectly. Bjørnar tells Silje to fix the first loop with tape as he tries with a bigger ball, but this time the ball gets stuck inside the loop. They try again with a smaller ball and place the car at the end of the track. The ball runs smoothly through the course and hits the car perfectly, propelling it two metres out on the floor. 'Wow, it can really go far', Bjørnar says enthusiastically.

Midway through the lesson, Aasne [teacher] suggests that the students take a break. The girls go outside to get some fresh air, while Bjørnar stays behind to work on the course. Some

other boys come over to check how Bjørnar is doing. Bjørnar says that the course is pretty bad but that the car is awesome. One of the boys laughs and says that he is going to 'destroy' Bjørnar in the final challenge. The girls return from their break. Bjørnar tries again with the medium-sized ball and manages to push the car even further out on the floor. 'There we go!' he shouts contently. Silje turns to Aasne and says they're done with the course, but Bjørnar still wants to make some adjustments. The girls find a spot beside the course and start to tickle one another. Bjørnar keeps on working, but the girls are more interested in what's going on in the other groups.

In their interview, the students remembered the exercise as a fun and practical way of learning. Bjørnar revealed that this was 'the best science lesson ever' and was genuinely excited about having won the challenge. The girls in his group seemed less enthusiastic about winning and quickly engaged in other social activities when the opportunity arose. Janne, a girl from another group, said in her interview that the competitive aspect of the assignment dissuaded her from taking a more active part in her group. She stated that competition brings out the worst in some of her classmates 'who can't control it, just snap and get mad'. Janne also said that she enjoyed learning how to collaborate with new people and that this was a more rewarding aspect of the assignment. These observations illustrate how some of the girls distance themselves from the competitive practice of the boys but also share a mutual engagement in other social gestures. This indicates how boys and girls can establish different communities of practice in a class.

In her interview, the teacher Aasne recognised that the competitive aspect of the assignment might be off-putting for some of the girls but said that she also wants her students to practice staying committed to a task despite not always getting their own way. Some of the boys are less mature in this respect, she said, and often give up or blame others if they do not do well right away. She also said she thinks it is good for the girls to engage in a bit of friendly competition 'as long as they keep a good tone'. The teacher's enactment of group work in this event is then also a way of brokering influence between the competitive but immature boys and the mature and socially oriented girls and to support their development of new social skills. Group work is also used by other teachers, such as in the 'Exam prep' exercise described above. In this Grade 10 event, Betina recognised how her students over time have developed a common understanding of how they can work together despite their differences. She now finds it easier to manage group work and said that 'there are a mix of personalities here that I don't think of that much about anymore ...it's kind of no problem to mix and match'. Betina's comments illustrate how throughout the material, teachers use group work to support students' development of social skills and collective practice of learning through subject teaching.

The enactments highlighted here illustrate how subject teaching is engulfed in the process of establishing practices across multiple communities in the social landscape of a school class. In Grade 8, the students have only just begun to find their place in the science class. The boys participate in the group work, but their practice transcends the groups set up by the teacher and reifies the assignment as a competition to establish rank within their community. Such group work can facilitate bonding and the brokering of influences between multiple communities in the class. However, students and teachers are also challenged to negotiate their positions as insiders and outsiders in different communities, and teachers can find it difficult to establish a common practice of learning in the class.

In sum, the third overall finding is that teachers influence students' social practices by employing group work as a method of learning in curriculum-making. Such practices can help students develop social skills and broker influences across multiple communities but can also make it difficult for teachers to establish a shared practice for subject learning.

Extended purpose and identity

The fourth common way that teachers influence social learning is by extending the purpose of subject teaching to include the overall development (Bildung) of students as responsible citizens. One illustration of this is the Grade 10 'Question box' natural science assignment, where students write anonymous questions about sex and place them in a box. In the following excerpt from observations, the teacher picks out one question at a time and answers without preparation:

'How long can you last if you have really rough sex?' This is an interesting question, says Lasse [teacher]. It depends on what you mean by 'rough', but if there is a lot of energy and friction, this can affect how long a boy can last before he ejaculates. Boys are quite simple this way – usually hormones such as endorphins and pheromones take control when you get horny. Girls often need a bit more warming up, says Lasse. Their emotions are a little more complicated and they may need more time to get in the right mood. But once you get started, it's all about friction, and if there is a lot of friction, boys will usually ejaculate faster. But if the girl is in the right mood, there will also be more fluid in the vagina and that reduces friction, which means that the boy can last longer.

'How do you know if a boy likes you?' This is not always easy, says Lasse. Usually you can tell if a boy gets red in the face or tries to act tough and tickles you in the hallway. 'What do you think girls? Maybe he writes you messages with lots of hearts?' 'But you could be wrong!' Ola interjects, 'Maybe he just wants to be friends?' Lasse says he remembers being offered three Donald Duck stickers and a Tom and Jerry chewing gum to go steady with a girl in elementary school. 'That's how we did it', he says, 'and when the boy answered yes, you were pretty sure he liked the girl!'. Lasse also remembers how his wife was charmed by the neatly folded shirts in his wardrobe. 'You must be joking – and you are still married?' Sebastian cries. 'Yes, we are still married', Lasse smiles. 'Often, it is the odd and peculiar things we fall in love with. The point is that if you get a response from someone, then you know something is working. If you feel you want to be close to somebody, then you also know that you like them'.

In the 'Question box' event, the students appreciate how Lasse actually engaged with their questions 'and in a weird way too', as Ola explained in his interview. Ola challenged Lasse's narrative of how lovestruck boys behave, whereas Sebastian cracked a joke at the teacher's expense, sparking laughter and amusement in the class. Their interactions with subject knowledge form a mutual engagement that strengthens the students' sense of community, as Kit, one of the girls in the class, reflected in her interview: '... if you take like atoms and the periodic table – some people might find it interesting... but when it comes to puberty and those kinds of things... everyone has a sexuality, and everyone is interested in finding out about their own sexuality, so it becomes a shared interest that everyone is concerned with'. The teacher's curriculum-making then contributes to shaping the students' mutual identities as sexually mature teenagers who share common questions and seek answers together in their science class.

Lasse said in his interview that it is important to use scientific knowledge to counter the perceptions that students form about sexuality from the media and their peers. He demonstrates this by answering the questions using scientific concepts of friction and hormones. Lasse also shares stories from his childhood and marriage and explained in his interview that he is very conscious about using humour and personal experiences to build relationships and trust with his students. Lasse explained that one of his main challenges is 'to catch their attention' and to position subject knowledge as a relevant point of reference in their overall formation. This is important, he said, to make the students feel safe and confident to ask questions and practice using subject knowledge to engage in public debates. In a similar vein, Vibeke, the language teacher in the Grade 8 'Book of me' language assignment described above, explained in her interview how she regularly encourages her students

to be active in class discussions 'because talking and presenting out loud is something you cannot avoid'. Vibeke's comments also underline how teachers throughout the material emphasise collective development and the application of academic knowledge and skills and extend the purpose of their subject teaching to include the overall formation of their students as responsible citizens.

The enactments can strengthen the students' sense of identity and belonging in the class and provide a greater sense of purpose in subject learning. However, the open discussion and presentation format chosen may favour a small number of students who feel confident engaging in public. Teachers also need to balance their use of humour and personal interjections to avoid stereotyping ('boys are quite simple'; girls are 'a little more complicated') gender roles and leaving non-conforming students feeling that scientific knowledge has little relevance in their lives.

In summary, teachers extend the purpose of their subject teaching to include the overall formation of their students. This can help students better understand themselves and develop a sense of identity as citizens but also make it challenging for teachers to reach a varied group of students in their curriculum-making.

Discussion

In the above analysis, I have identified four main ways in which teachers influence social learning through their subject teaching in language and science. First, teachers frame personal experiences as contents to help students connect subject knowledge in meaningful ways but also make it more difficult for some students to learn. Second, teachers include peer assessment to help students express themselves as members of the community but also risk excluding the students who have not yet established themselves as members. Third, teachers employ group work as a method of learning to help students develop skills and shared practices but also make establishing a common practice in the class difficult. Finally, teachers extend the purpose of their subject teaching to help students understand themselves and develop a sense of identity as citizens but also make it challenging to reach a varied group of students in their curriculum-making. These findings lend support to the proposition that students' social learning can be influenced through subject teaching. However, the findings also highlight a number of challenges and pitfalls related to these practices. In the following, I discuss some of these problems and the potential for more a sustainable policy and practice to support students' social learning in schools.

The enactment of personal contents and peer assessment is not without its perils. Previous research (White & Kern, 2018) has emphasised how interventions to influence students' sense of belonging can do more harm than good. The current study supports such claims by demonstrating how students risk being personally exposed and socially marginalised by the intertwined practices of curriculum-making. Other studies (Lyng, 2018) have demonstrated how social mechanisms of marginalisation are enacted through subtle distinctions within a group of 'normals' to produce inadequacy, inferiority and powerlessness in outsiders. Subject teaching can then also support a social process of bullying and exclusion 'which circulates and smoulders in all social groups, due to the ever-present risk of someone being judged unworthy of belonging to a community' (Søndergaard & Rabøl Hansen, 2018). The findings in this study reaffirm Wenger's proposition that students need teachers' support 'in resolving the complex equation of identity they face' (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 156). A key message from this research is that teachers need to be mindful of how different students are represented in their curriculum and to consider how they can prevent students from being overly exposed or marginalised through their subject teaching.

Although previous research (Plauborg, 2011) has found that successful teachers manage to combine social and academic learning in their classrooms, other research (Kirk et al., 2018; Uitto & Saloranta,

2017) has also indicated that teachers are not always comfortable being more flexible and student-oriented in their teaching. The findings in the current research underline how teachers' use of group work, humour and personal stories as formative experiences create new social dynamics that require them to constantly adapt their practice. Wenger posits that 'you cannot give people knowledge without inviting them into an identity for which this knowledge represents a meaningful way of being' (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 145). A paradox illustrated in this study is that whereas most students seem to appreciate dynamic forms of teaching and more genuine engagement by their teachers, some students are alienated by such practices and do not necessarily see them as meaningful pathways to identity and learning. Teachers have a responsibility to reach and support all their students. Another key message from this study is that teachers need to consider the needs and identities of their students and to not become overly dependent on a predefined purpose or prescribed methods of teaching.

Previous research (Anker-Hansen & Andrée, 2015; Mack, 2012) has shown how subject teaching has the potential to positively influence students' social learning. SEL research (Jones & Bouffard, 2012) has however also identified a lack of systematic approaches to such learning in schools. In this study, I found that the Norwegian curriculum provides an impetus for teachers to support students' social learning in all subject teaching. Such framing may in time produce new and more systematic practices. Being systematic, however, does not necessarily mean implementing a fixed programme or curriculum. As the findings of this study also convey, providing incentives at the macro level and supporting better planning and consideration of problems at the micro level may contribute to a different kind of systematic practice that can produce more enduring social outcomes.

Previous SEL research (Elias et al., 2015) has highlighted a need to move beyond SEL as a standardised 'add-on' in schools. Teachers in this study demonstrate remarkable confidence and ingenuity in their curriculum-making to influence social learning through subject teaching. In my analysis of their practices, I have used a broad framing of social learning to foreground the 'negotiation of meaning at the core of human learning, as opposed to merely the acquisition of information and skills' (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 145). This framing illustrates the potential of engaging teachers as curriculum makers to develop meaningful learning experiences beyond a narrow and standardised framing of social and emotional skills. Wenger suggests that 'teachers have a local geography of competence' (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 157) that influences how they approach their teaching. Building teachers' capacity to create meaningful learning experiences may not necessarily mean that more external support and training is needed. Local capacity can also be supported by providing incentives for teachers to exchange experiences and practices within their professional communities and by involving students as co-creators of their subject curriculum.

Finally, previous research (Biesta, 2016; Tancred et al., 2018) has highlighted how teachers are overburdened by overcrowded curricula and a constant push for better learning outcomes. This study provides an impulse to reassess the current strategies in policy and practice to support social learning in more sustainable ways. In this study, social learning is seen not merely as an outcome but also as a deeply meaningful and contentious process of learning to establish a collective identity and practice as a community through subject teaching. A community-based approach to supporting social learning may require more time and yield less measurable outcomes than implementing a standardised one-size-fits-all programme. It does however also hold considerable potential as a strategy to help students learn and thrive as a community in the classroom without adding more stones to teachers' already heavy workload.

Concluding remarks

The proposition of the Norwegian curriculum investigated in this study is that social learning can be supported through subject teaching. I have found that teachers influence students' social learning by framing personal experiences as contents and facilitating expressions of belonging through peer assessment. I have also found that teachers use group work to broker influences and shape students' identities by extending the purpose of their subject teaching to include the overall formation of students as citizens. Although such curriculum-making can positively contribute to students' social learning, these practices may also inhibit learning and marginalise some students in the classroom. Teachers may also find it difficult to establish a common practice for subject learning and may have a hard time reaching all students through their subject teaching.

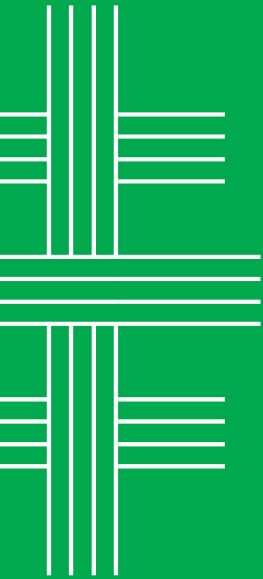
Based on these findings and the ensuing discussion, I conclude that the strategy devised by Norwegian policymakers has the potential to support students' social learning in a more sustainable and meaningful way. Realising this potential, however, will require a more systematic approach to address the problems associated with supporting social learning through subject teaching. The strategy needs long-term incentives at the policy level and enduring support for local capacity building. Further research is needed to investigate how curriculum-making at the policy and practice level can support social learning in more systematic ways without marginalising students and teachers.

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I denne avhandlingen har jeg undersøkt ulike forståelser av skolens nye begrep om sosial læring i læreplaner og praksis. Et hovedfunn er at sosial læring kan forstås som et kompromiss mellom individuelle sosiale ferdigheter og kollektiv dannelse gjennom inkluderende fellesskap. Dette kompromisset gir nye muligheter for integrering av sosial og faglig læring, men skaper også nye spenninger som må håndteres av beslutningstakere, lærere og elever i innføringen av nye læreplaner i skolen.

Internasjonal forskning har de senere årene vist en stigende interesse for elevers sosiale og emosjonelle læring i skolen. Nyere forskning om mobbing og læringsmiljø har også pekt på undervisning i fag som en strategi for å styrke fellesskap og motvirke sosial ekskludering i skolen. I Norge har sammenhengen mellom sosial og faglig læring blitt aktualisert gjennom arbeidet med Fagfornyelsen (LK20), men inntil videre har det blitt forsket lite på hvordan denne sammenhengen blir forstått i skolens læreplaner og praksis.

Som grunnlag for studien har jeg analysert læreplandokumenter og undervisning i norsk og naturfag på ungdomstrinnet. Analysen viser at læreres didaktiske valg av mål, innhold, arbeidsmåter og vurderingsformer i den faglige undervisningen påvirker elevene både sosialt og faglig. Disse valgene bidrar til å utvikle sosiale ferdigheter og fellesskap, men kan også motvirke faglig læring og marginalisere sårbare elever i klasserommet. Dette understreker behovet for mer forskning om hvordan skolens læreplaner og undervisning i fag kan bidra til å fremme, uten å hemme, elevenes sosiale og faglige utvikling i skolen.