Global and critical perspectives in Norwegian Social Work Education

Submitted by: Sunniva Sleire

Candidate number: 4006

Supervisor: Prof. Vishanthie Sewpaul

Word count: 21069

Date of submission: 11.06.2023

Nordic Master in Social Work and Welfare

Acknowledgement

I would like to start off by thanking the University of Stavanger for granting me the opportunity to be a part of the international study of *Nordic Master in Social Work and Welfare*. Throughout this two-year programme I have gained new ways of thinking, applying knowledge as well as irreplaceable experiences, thanks to different educators and stakeholders involved in this programme. Beyond practical benefits, this programme has provided me with new friendships that have been immensely important for my happiness and wellbeing as a student. A special thanks to Kamil Horbiński who, in addition to becoming a dear friend, was my flatmate for five months, thus creating treasured moments and providing educational support. And Mascha Wiechmann, who has also become a dear friend - especially during this last year, both socially, as well as being an important study companion in writing the thesis. Furthermore, I am thankful for my partner Espen Henriksen who encouraged and supported me in the decision of pursuing higher education, and who has been a safe-haven when I experienced obstacles. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Vishanthie Sewpaul, who has been of great support with her exceptional knowledge and experience, and contributing exceedingly to the success of this study. Lastly, I would like to thank all my participants that agreed to participate in my study, without whom this work would not have been possible.

Abstract

Although it can be seen as somewhat of a new social work agenda, there is increasing literature addressing the implications of a globalised era for local social work education, research and practice. This includes moving beyond the traditional multicultural approach, increasing the amount of critical and global perspectives in the social work curriculum, and in turn increasing social work students' awareness to treat people as whole persons. To what extent this has been done in different social work education programmes varies across institutions. Therefore, this study investigated the current educational situation at three different Norwegian universities by conducting a document analysis on the social work curricula, benchmarked against national and global standards for social work education and training. The findings facilitated some recommendations for national guidelines on social work education, in terms of implementing global and critical perspectives. Furthermore, a focus group discussion with social work educators was conducted to investigate possible challenges of implementing global and critical perspectives in education. The challenges addressed in this study are related to neoliberal educational policies and practices creating specialised courses, time constraints and lack of a central thread. Furthermore, the lack of relevant literature and the individual-oriented tradition influencing several levels are addressed. These findings also facilitated recommendations for Norwegian social work education, related to institutional openness to collaboration and information-flow, new publications, and closer collaboration with the field placements.

Key words: Critical perspectives, global perspectives, social work education, social work curriculum, educational standards, critical theory, Scandinavian social work, Norwegian Welfare state.

Table of content

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Ever since the first immigration "wave" in the late 70-ties, social workers in the Norwegian and Nordic context have been guided by the notion of the society as a "multicultural" one, where this multicultural notion has also been influential in educating future social workers in terms of a cultural awareness approach (Henriksen, 2016; Jönsson, 2013). However, the literature now argues that the classical "multicultural" approach is not sufficient, as it under-communicates the complexities that people with immigrant backgrounds face in a globalised society (Flem et al., 2017), and that it, to some extent, works against its purpose by reproducing cultural otherisation when seeking to explain social problems (Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson & Flem, 2022; Jönsson, 2013). Researchers argue that the exotifying and culturalisation of social problems when working with people with immigrant backgrounds reflect a lack of deeper understanding and sensitivity among social workers (Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson, 2013; Midbøen & Lidén, 2015; Ylvisaker et al., 2015). In addition, some criticism of the multicultural approach relates to its inadequate attention given to the history of colonisation, and how colonisation adopts new forms in a postcolonial present creating a legacy of asymmetrical power relations (Henriksen, 2016). The lack of postcolonial perspective also reinforces the idea that Norway, as a multicultural country as something "new", disregarding a long history of indigenous Sami people and national minorities, and Norway's own colonial history regarding this (Keskinen et al., 2019). Curious about what the literature states as pedagogical implications to broaden the awareness of social work students to be better prepared to work within a globalised society, a literature search was conducted.

The literature calls for more critical and global perspectives, and for a greater emphasis on emancipatory social work, which turns the spotlight back onto the practitioner and their attitudes and worldviews (Anish et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson & Flem, 2022;

Sewpaul, 2013). This also means to move beyond individualisation, and understanding the service user with all the intersections of the societal context, including the global impacts on local social problems (Flem et al., 2017). Inspired by such emphasis on critical perspectives, this study sought to investigate the current situation of social work education in Norway. In doing so, I reviewed social work curricula content across three universities in Norway, which I benchmarked against national and global standards for social work education, and I conducted a focus group discussion with social work educators to ascertain their views on the extent to which global and emancipatory approaches are included in the curricula and the possible challenges that they might experience in doing so.

1.2 Personal inspiration for the study

In qualitative research, it is of great importance to reflect on one's position, motives behind the research, and how one as a researcher might influence the different processes based on one's individual beliefs and worldviews (Holmes, 2020). Stating such notions is important for the credibility and transparency of the study. Furthermore, the reflexivity acknowledges how the findings presented are partly a result of my own interpretation, although I bear with me previous research, literature and theory as well (Holmes, 2020). The idea for my research arose during the course of being a NOSWEL (Nordic Master in Social Work and Welfare) student at the university of Stavanger. Here, we would hear about several cases related to social workers working with people with minority backgrounds who were misunderstood, whose needs went unmet and who did not get the service that they should by the state. Both in my Bachelor degree and Masters degree I have been attending courses of gender studies, where I was introduced to concepts of intersectionality, postcolonialism and structures of power and oppression. Also here, we would learn about cases where social problems were dealt with as cultural problems in the Norwegian welfare setting. A second source for my idea arose from my previous work experience in a social work setting. I occupied a temporary position and made a couple of attempts to get permanent employment which were unsuccessful, because "social worker" is a protected title in Norway, and I was from a different discipline. This sparked a thought that any given social work workplace might bear the risk of having a homogenous group of professionals, with all the same theories and discourses, without other disciplines providing new perspectives.

Pierre Bourdieu writes of the doxa of a profession, referring to taken-for-granted assumptions, in which things become self-evident and naturalised and creates blind spots (Bourdieu in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This professional blindness and reproduction of "myths" is not limited solely to organisations, it also occurs in educational institutions (Mik-Meyer & Villardsen, 2013). With social work being a protected profession in Norway, one would hope that the education social workers receive are of high standard, benchmarked against Norwegian national requirements and the *Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training* that was first adopted by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) in 2004 (Sewpaul and Jones, 2004) with a revised version adopted in 2020 (IASSW/IFSW, 2020).

1.3 The relevance of this study

As already mentioned, the literature related to the Nordic and Norwegian context suggest that there is a need for adopting a critical and postcolonial framework in social work education to make students reflect on privilege and oppression, hold knowledge of postcolonial structures, have a global ethical awareness and in this way produce adequate outcomes in their field of work (Anish et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson & Flem, 2022). The literature shows how these global and critical perspectives was first and foremost valued in international/intercultural social work education in Nordic countries, or in preparing social work students who were about to do international field training (Anish et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson & Flem, 2022). In doing so, the "Global standards for Social Work Education and Training" was seen as the most prominent resource (Anish et al., 2021; Flem, et al., 2017; IASSW/IFSW, 2020; Sewpaul and Jones, 2004). With increased globalisation and the rising awareness of global roots of local social problems (Flem et al., 2017), an infusion of global aspects seems to be of high relevance, also in classical social work courses (Anish et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson, 2013).

The global inequalities rooted in local settings, also referred to as "glocal" issues (Flem et al., 2017), can be seen in the Scandinavian settings as many Non-Western countries facing poverty and instability force people to move to Scandinavian countries in hope for a better life (Jönsson, 2013). Vulnerable groups of people with immigrant backgrounds face the glocal problems of living in marginalised areas, being unemployed, lacking documents, being victims of war, trafficking and so on, and makes for great complexities that future social workers need to be prepared to address (Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson, 2013). Thus, broadening the scope of the social work education curricula can make the students more aware of the impact of global phenomena on local social problems, and gain a deeper understanding of the complexities people of immigrant background face in a plural Scandinavian context (Dominelli, 2010, as cited in Flem et al., 2017). The importance of broader perspectives have also been on the agenda ever since the first version of the "Global standards for social work Education and Training", which call for the "preparation of social workers within a holistic framework, with skills to enable practice in a range of contexts with diverse ethnic, cultural, "racial" and gender groups, and other forms of diversities" (Sewpaul and Jones, 2004, p. 498).

 The literature emphasises and acknowledges that teaching is not only for transferring knowledge, rather, a necessity for facilitating social development and upholding of both national and global values and principles (Anish et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson & Flem, 2022). Thus, this calls for the lens to be turned on the educational system. Social work students need to acquire skills that make them act in anti-discriminatory ways, and to strive for civil and human rights and social justice and address inequality (IASSW/IFSW, 2020; Sewpaul and Jones, 2004), as well as increasing their ethical awareness in a globalised world (Flem et al., 2021; IASSW, 2018). There is a need to develop critical awareness in an era of globalisation and increased mobility of people, where the schools of social work play a vital role for developing students' skills and ways of thinking (Anish et al., 2021). This also includes emancipatory approaches that could make students reflect on power, privilege and oppression (Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017).

Previous research suggests that to what degree Nordic educational institutions have chosen to adapt critical and global perspectives in the curriculum varies across the institutions (Anish et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson & Flem, 2022). It seems that if educators are to inspire students to adopt global and critical perspectives, there is a need to develop classroom teaching that will facilitate new perspectives for their students (Flem et al., 2021). With the current situation just presented, this study sought to investigate how national standards of social work education addresses the theme of working with diversity, social classes and global awareness, and if global standards are applied. Furthermore, the study investigated if national guidelines are currently creating emancipatory and structural perspectives within the existing social work curriculum in Norway. After all, it is the legislation that makes the foundation of the educational framework, and argues what needs to be present for the education to be of a high standard. Although research has emphasised the importance of global and critical perspectives, and researchers have investigated how these perspectives can be addressed in both theoretical courses and professional training, little is still known of why educational institutions include the perspectives to different degrees.

The identified gaps in the literature and my experience as a student in Norway, motivated me to review institutional social work curricula against the requisites of the Norwegian national standards and the "Global Standards for Social Work Education". Given the limitations of sole reliance on the review of the curricula, which is elucidated on in the methodology chapter, I conducted a focus group discussion with social work educators to understand their perspectives and the possible challenges to incorporating global, postcolonial and emancipatory approaches into social work education. The data-triangulation of document analysis and the focus group discussion enhanced the credibility of the study.

1.4 Research questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate how national and global guidelines are reflected in the curriculum of the bachelor in social work (BSW), if it facilitates global and critical

perspectives, as well as educators' own impressions of the possible difficulties in implementing global and critical perspectives. Informed by an integration of systems theory and critical theory, which I discuss in chapter three, the study was guided by the following specific research questions:

1) *To what extent are the BSW curricula at Norwegian educational institutions benchmarked against Norwegian national educational standards and the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training?*

2) *What are the challenges to implementing global and critical perspectives within the existing educational framework of the bachelor in social work?*

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The current chapter has explained the background of the research, personal motivation as well as conceptualising the need for the research. Continuing the thesis are four additional chapters. Chapter two represents the literature review, which puts the current Norwegian social work situation on the agenda, together with what the literature states as ways of implementing global and critical perspectives, to show in practice what these perspectives include and look like in the social work curriculum. As the research question investigates possible difficulties for implementation of the perspectives, some challenges due to neoliberal education policy are discussed. Chapter three presents the different parts of the research design, and the methods used for data-collection. These include a curriculum review, and a focus group discussion among social work educators. Furthermore, the theoretical framework will be presented, where System theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Critical Theory is applied. Chapter four represents the data presentation and data analysis from both the curriculum review and the focus group discussion. In chapter five we return to the research questions and discuss possible recommendations based on what was found in the analysis of the data, as well as some final remarks.

Chapter two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter continues from chapter one in terms of the relevance of the study, by discussing the current situation in the Norwegian field of social work. As the critical, postcolonial, emancipatory perspectives are implemented to different degrees at different universities, a short discussion on what possible difficulties related to implementation is presented. Furthermore, this chapter discusses how implementation of critical and global perspectives looks like in practice, both in terms of curriculum outline, as well as teaching situations.

2.2 Critical awareness in Norwegian field of social work

Research in the Scandinavian context states that critical awareness among some newly educated social workers seems to be missing in terms of showing understanding of the various challenges that people with immigrant backgrounds face in society (Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson, 2013; Midbøen & Lidén, 2015; Ylvisaker et al., 2015). Although people with immigrant backgrounds are a highly heterogeneous group, their social issues become individualised and exotified. Social problems are being viewed as cultural problems, and in doing so, people with immigrant backgrounds are being viewed as a source for their own marginalised positions (Križ & Skivenes, 2010; Ylvisaker et al., 2015). This culturalisation of social problems and otherisation of people with immigrant background means that cultural biases stand in the way of social workers giving sufficient social assistance and can be viewed as a sort of structural racism (Flem et al., 2017; Midbøen & Lidén, 2015; Jönsson, 2013). The cultural otherisation of ethnic minorities in Norway manifests itself in several parts of the social welfare systems, as ethnic minorities are overrepresented among the unemployed (Midtbøen, 2014), in social service, and child welfare systems (Skivenes, 2015; Tembo, 2022; Østby, 2008).

The understanding of people with immigrant backgrounds as the "other" is an unfortunate ideological component that has made social workers actively engaging in assimilation, with service users expected to mirror Norwegian "standards", such as what constitutes a family, to what extent has the Norwegian language been learned, et cetera (Ylvisaker et al., 2015). This confrontation of social problems with people of immigrant backgrounds is highly unfortunate and does not comply with the basic ethical principles of human dignity, acknowledging diversity, holistic view on human beings, and social justice (Fellesorganisasjonen, 2019; IASSW, 2018). The infusion of critical and global perspectives within the social work educational system are suggested as an educational tool to counter these shortcomings of the Norwegian welfare state, to understand structural factors such as power and intersectionality, and the social complexities of a globalised world (Flem et al., 2017). Social workers are at the frontline in dealing with various forms of marginalisation and discrimination, and understanding the structures behind, as well as knowledge on how one might reproduce such oppressive practices are of high relevance to move beyond individualisation and culturisation of social problems (Sewpaul, 2013).

2.3 Conceptualising possible challenges of implementation

Reflecting on what could be the possible challenges to implementing global, emancipatory, post-colonial perspectives within existing educational frameworks, some possible challenges might be related to national and global demands, time constraints and deadlines, and the worldviews and epistemologies held by educators and other stakeholders involved in curricula development and course offerings. Some of the literature suggests that educators, passionate about transforming social work the curricula, face some challenges and frustrations connected to neoliberal policies and practices, which have been infused into welfare practice and academia, for example by creating a pressure to produce, and facilitating specialisation of courses (Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017). The impact of neoliberalism and new public management in welfare and academia facilitates a favorisation of efficiency and cost-reducing teaching methods (Flem et al., 2021).

Using criteria of economy, combined with discourses of efficiency and quantity in academia, it can challenge the flexibility of developing critical and global frameworks as it might create tension with other national criteria of a Norwegian welfare society (Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017). Furthermore, it also influences the "nature" of the universities, such as becoming a more government-and market controlled institution (Kamali & Jönnson, 2018). The neoliberal infiltration of research produces an uncritical appropriation to evidence-based practice, where quantitative outcomes as measurement for educational success (Reisch, 2013, as cited in Kamali & Jönnson, 2018). For example, the increased focus on research, and in particular funded research, creates a pressure to produce, which in turn creates narrow outcomes and specialisation of courses (Flem et al, 2021). Pressure to produce and favouring quantity can in turn challenge integration of multidisciplinary knowledge and the holistic development of social work students (Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the increased globalisation simultaneously happening with the neoliberal reorganisation of the welfare state makes the need to discuss the educational framework of social work education even more prominent (Flem et al., 2017). This is because neoliberal ideology creates a perception that people are responsible for their own societal struggles, and remain within these undesirable positions because of poor choices (Flem et al., 2021). It facilitates a discriminatory discourse and practice, as "culture" can be used to compensate for shortcomings of the welfare state in tackling the challenges of a globalised Scandinavian context (Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson, 2013). The neoliberal notion of making Nordic welfare "cheaper" has thus increased marginalisation and social problems (Kamali & Jönnson, 2018). It seems that strategies taken in the form of classroom exercises and reflections that can challenge these ideologies and thereby challenge the mindset could prompt awakening and make students become more socially conscious (Anish et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2021). However, the question still remains, how is this done in practice if demands, constraints and dominant ideologies could possibly cause tensions that make it hard to implement?

2.4 Global and critical perspectives in the syllabus

Global and critical perspectives can be implemented within a social work education syllabus to different degrees. Anish and colleagues (2021) illustrate three versions of the educational framework for international social work, 1) *infusion through regular courses* 2) *specialist options and degree-bearing programs*, and 3) *student and faculty exchange*. The first one refers to the general social work education having some international topics in the curriculum, although it might not be mentioned specifically or highlighted in course syllabus or in the module description (Anish et al., 2021). The second one focuses on international/intercultural social work as a specialised program, either by 1) focusing on how national problems have international dimensions (the glocal perspective), 2) by treating international social work as a discrete field of practice, or 3) by being highly specialised, in the way that students are being trained for leadership positions in a global setting with international organisations. The third one refers to international exchanges for both students and educators to have real life experiences with other cultures and in doing so enhance their global awareness (Anish et al., 2021).

Flem and colleagues (2017) takes a step further in describing the implementation of global and critical perspectives in Scandinavian social work curriculum, and in doing so, move beyond the usual division of classical social work programmes and the ones with a specific international/intercultural perspective. In practice, this would include emphasising more of the global laws and regulations in the teaching situation, in addition to the national ones. For example, the "Global statements of Ethical Principles of Social Work", "The universal declaration of human rights", et cetera would be a part of laws and legislation courses at the programme (Flem et al., 2017). Further on, this article emphasised how international information exchange for both students and educators can serve as a great tool in gaining global awareness as foreign educators and students could provide narratives and cases for national students to reflect on, and vice versa. It also includes introducing students to theoretical perspectives that address local and global circumstances, and how social problems can be seen through a postcolonial, intersectional and globalised lens (Flem et al., 2017). However, in contrast to Anish and colleagues' emphasis on international exchange, this article argues that it is not necessary (although still encouraged) to conduct international field training in order to gain a global mindset. Rather, bearing in mind the increased forced migration and globalisation happening, students should conduct local field training such as community work in marginalised

areas within the Norwegian context, to better understand and engage with the "glocal" issues that are emerging, and in doing so, taking on the properties of intercultural social work (Flem et al., 2017).

In sum, the articles argue that curricula containing global knowledge, skills, and attitudes together with multidisciplinary approaches such as international social work exposure, reflective dialogues during field placements as well as emancipatory classroom activities will facilitate global and critical awareness among students (Anish et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2022; Flem et al., 2017).

2.5 Global and critical perspectives in teaching

As already mentioned, teaching is not only for transferring knowledge, rather, a necessity for facilitating social development and upholding of global values and principles (Anish et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017; Jönsson & Flem, 2022). Emphasising a critical approach to social work could decolonise and globalise social work students' mindsets, and in doing so uphold the core of the global values and ethical principles of social work education (IASSW/IFSW, 2020; IASSW, 2018; Jönsson & Flem, 2022). Several of the articles argue in particular the educator's role in preparing social work students for their field training, as this could be their first encounter with ethical dilemmas in a glocal setting. Actions taken could be for the educator, together with the student, to critically reflect on motivations for the field placement, as this could surface hidden biases, power relations, and dominant worldviews (Jönnson & Flem, 2022). In Jönnson and Flem's (2022) study on Norwegian and Swedish social work students experience on international field training, it is argued that it is not merely enough to send students of to the Global South as an educational tool to learn about global social work, as this could reproduce colonial discourse and distorted truths that normalise of poverty when students are not challenged upon such beliefs and ideologies prior to the field placement.

Instead, it is argued that the social work educators must engage in promoting ethical awareness among students, and make them critically reflect on practices that reproduce West-centrism and

global power-relations, and to create spaces for partnership and transformative learning (Jönson & Flem, 2022). Conducting in total eight focus group interviews with in total 24 students, as well as obtaining data from field reports, Jönnson and Flem (2022) were able to find adequate evidence that there is a need to redefine educators obligations. These includes reflecting on motivations for field placement (to address hidden biases and notions that reproduce North/South power-relations), creates "space for critical reflexivity", create "partnership for transformative learning", and develop a critical curriculum reflecting global ethical principles (Jönnson & Flem, 2022, p. 47).

The critical reflexivity could for example be done through giving the students case studies in the classroom to work on prior to the field placement, and in this way create awareness of the complexities of ethical dilemmas that could be encountered. The critical reflections could be done in peer-groups with supervisors and educators as facilitators of the process (Jönnson & Flem, 2022). Eriksen and Gradovski (2020) also emphasise the importance of promoting ethical principles in the classroom setting, and the role the educator has in facilitating reflections and discussions with students to make them more aware of possible dilemmas prior to field placement. In doing so, educators prepare students better for field placements as well as for social work practice on completion of their university education (Eriksen & Gradovski, 2020).

Ethical difficulties can become ethical dilemmas because students don't feel prepared well enough to make informed choices and are uncertain of their skills to handle different ethical situations, which was the case in the study conducted by Eriksen and Gradovski (2020). In their study, interviewing six Norwegian social work students on their field placement experience, it became clear that there are some implications for social work education, in terms of the role of the field instructor, overall communication between the different parties, and how one prepares the students for field placements. The lack of critical awareness made the students unaware of their values, which in turn created a friction between respecting diversity among service users and having unrealistic goals for them in the field placement. The findings showing the dissonance of expectations prior to the field placement, and what actually met the students in the field in practice argue for some educational implications. These include the preparation of students but also addressing the role that the field instructor has in creating supporting and safe space for

critical thinking (Eriksen & Gradovski, 2020). In particular, it is argued from both of these studies that it is of high importance for the supervisor to create trusting relationships with the students, with sufficient support and supervision through dialogical approach and reflexive exercises, as well as creating good partnerships between educational establishment, the students, and the field instructors (Eriksen & Gradovski, 2020; Jönnson & Flem, 2022).

Another way of creating critical and global awareness among students is by addressing the diversity within the classroom (Flem et al., 2021). In a study conducted by Flem and colleagues (2021) exploring pedagogical opportunities for emancipatory praxis, around 80 Norwegian students, where about 20 students represented an ethnic minority, took part in seminars on critical reflexivity. In doing so, the educators were given the opportunity to address nationality, race, gender, religion, sexuality and so on, and make the students reflect on the privilege and disadvantages that come with it (Flem et al., 2021; Sewpaul, 2013). The exercises are meant to make students recognise the relationship between personal life and structural properties of life, to enhance critical awareness, and to prepare them for the major complexities of life and social work (Flem et al., 2021). The feedback gathered from students participating in the exercise showed an overweighting positive effect on students' awareness towards social justice, appreciation of hidden stories and increased open-mindedness (Flem et al., 2021). Furthermore, for the students to self-reflect on their position in the society, and thereby becoming more self-aware and politicised, different strategies can be of use, such as reflexive writing and dialogue, writing biographies, journaling, experiential teaching, and arts and drama (Flem et al., 2021; Sewpaul, 2013). Here, it is also argued that in order for this emancipatory teaching to take place, the educator holds great responsibility in creating safe and bold spaces for the students to express these realisations, and in doing so, experience transformative learning. Here, dialogue becomes an important tool to investigate taken-for-granted assumptions and societal challenges (Flem et al., 2021). Reflecting on privilege and taken-for-granted assumptions in a classroom setting is also viewed as an important tool for transformative learning in the curriculum review presented by Flem and colleagues (2017).

However, related to the neoliberal ideologies influencing education and welfare, an issue could be that these kinds of exercises are too time consuming and inefficient to implement; as it could

require intensive teaching in smaller groups and targeting multidisciplinary knowledge production (Flem et al., 2021; Jönsson & Flem, 2022). It is also worth mentioning that discrimination and prejudice is connected to strong emotions and taboos, and could therefore in a classroom-setting create discomfort and make it hard to practise in a successful manner (Flem et al., 2017). Practising openness and creating a safe space within the classroom is of high importance.

Chapter three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework and epistemic position guiding the study. It also includes methods used for data collection, as well as how it's been coded and analysed. This study has applied data-triangulation, using both document analysis as well as focus group discussion to achieve greater insight into the phenomena being investigated. The chapter also includes ethical considerations and a discussion concerning the design.

3.2 Theoretical framework

The data gathered for this study has been analysed using the Ecological System Theory of Urie Bronfonbrenner and Critical theory. System theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) was originally described as a model to theorise a child's development as a result of social interactions on several levels, and how the levels interconnect. However, the systems described in this model hold analytical properties that can be used to describe how the different interactions also shape the way one sees the world, and what opportunities and limitations these systems provide for human and societal development. These levels of external influence can be described as micro, meso, exo, and macro systems (See figure 1) (Christensen, 2010).
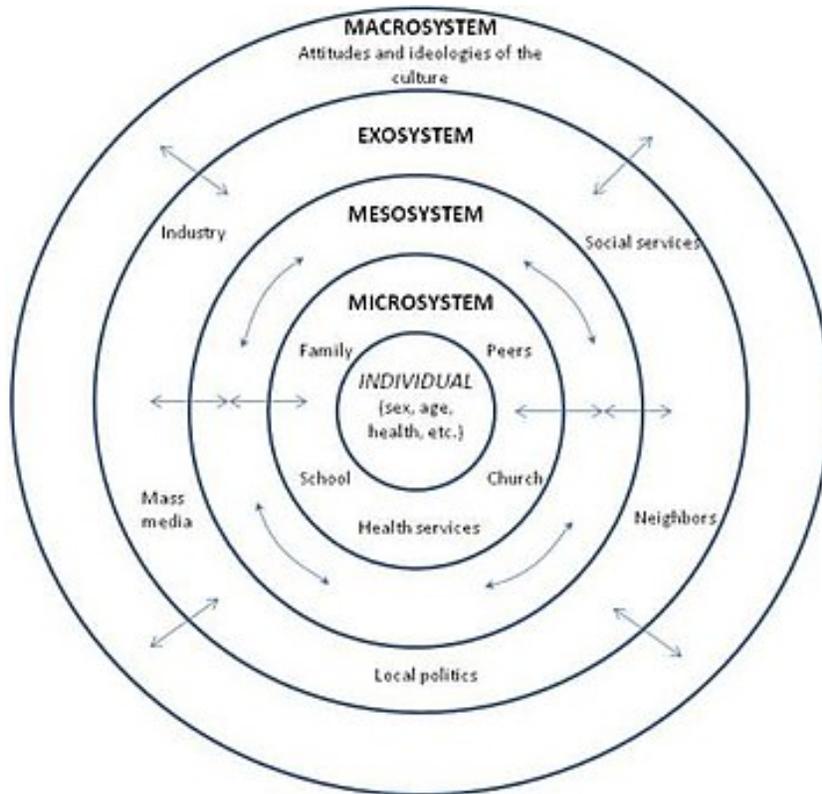
Figure 1: Model of Ecological System Theory of Urie Bronfonbrenner (1979).

Micro level describes the individual and its immediate environment, which in this case concerns social work students and how they interact with their immediate environment directly. Relationships are bi-directional, meaning that both the individual, as well as the others involved in the interaction can influence each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The meso level describes different contexts of the micro systems, and how they influence each other. For example, what the students learn in school can influence how they interact in a work situation, but the work situation or field placement, could also influence learning outcomes in a classroom setting. The exo level refers to systems that the individual are not actively involved in, but that has an indirect effect on them either way. One example of exo level for this study is described as lack of time and proper resources for educators, which is not influenced by the students, but which affects students' learning outcome nevertheless. On the macro level, it describes societies influences in terms of values and rules, ideologies and politics.

What is the dominant epistemology held by educators and students, and how does it influence social work practice and the way we talk about social work? The systems are separate, but they also interconnect (Darling, 2007). Interconnectedness can be seen for example with ideology, how it shapes the tradition of the institutions, and again how that shapes the way one talks about social work at the micro level. These are all different systems that influence each other. However, the discourse of such ecological theory could be argued to be rather descriptive in its analysis, without critically addressing the need to challenge the power-and oppressive structures within (Larsen & Sewpaul, 2014). Such a descriptive manufacture could in the worst case reinforce a normalisation of social inequality and poverty, and the individualistic discourse of social problems (Larsen & Sewpaul, 2014). Drawing on a radical ecological approach influenced by critical theory, which was first introduced by Larsen and Sewpaul (2014), one is able to facilitate understanding of the interconnectedness and address the need for agency; as the individual are influenced by the society, but where individual consciousness can also influence the societal consciousness (Larsen & Sewpaul, 2014). In doing so, one can address the ecological systems with a holistic awareness of the structures, as well as challenge ideological hegemony (Larsen & Sewpaul, 2014).

Critical theory is a theoretical approach associated with the Frankfurt school, which aims to understand society and culture, and in doing so, expose and challenge the power dynamics and social structures that shape our understanding of the world (Kellner, 1990). It draws from a large body of disciplines, including psychoanalysis, feminism, Marxism, and postmodernism (Deutscher & Lafont, 2017), and several perspectives, including political economy, sociology and history (Kellner, 1990). It situates itself with issues of dominations, inequality and oppression, and seeks to uncover the hidden assumptions and biases underlying these social realities. Overall, this theory seeks to understand the social, political, and cultural forces that shape our lives, and to strive for social change (Kellner, 1990). For this particular research, it is used to see to what extent national guidelines are promoting critical perspectives, such as *intersectionality* (Sewpaul, 2013). Intersectionality is a concept with roots in feminist and critical theory that describes the ways in which different connections to class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and gender intersect to produce complex forms of societal oppression (Giddens & Sutton, 2017). In acknowledging and examining the interconnectedness of social divisions one gains deeper understanding of what

power-relations creates social inequality (Sewpaul, 2013). For example, one can address an ethnic division in unemployment in Norwegian society, but one can also address a compounding pattern of intersecting forms of unemployment, such as related ethnicity and gender (Giddens & Sutton, 2017; Midtbøen, 2014). For this particular research then, the thematic notion of intersectionality should be found in guidelines and in turn facilitate critical perspectives addressed in the BSW curricula. Furthermore, critical theory compliments the ecological system theory as it puts words to the ideologies that interconnect the society and students' expectations of what social work ought to be, and how these structures could decrease students' opportunity to have a politicised and global mindset. It is also used to describe the Norwegian social work school tradition, and how this as well is situated in a societal and ideological context that could possibly hinder flexibility and a multidisciplinary knowledge approach.

3.3 Scientific position

My research lens holds pragmatic properties, where ontology and epistemology are welded together (Butler-Kisber, 2018). This means that there is no gap between knowledge and everyday experience; knowing is doing. In a practical sense, this means that the everyday actions taken by professors educating future social workers, and the reflections they create, are valuable data to investigate. Pragmatic philosophy also encourages the usage of data-triangulation, and in this case, both focus group discussion and document analysis have been used to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The pragmatic philosophy also emphasises the practical applications of research findings, which has guided the research questions, a careful and thought through selection of participants, as well as interview questions for this study (Butler-Kisber, 2018).

3.4 Research design

This study adopted a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is valued for providing researchers with a more in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of those

involved in a particular field. Qualitative research enables a more comprehensive interpretation of concepts and phenomena by exploring them in depth. Krumsvik (2014) describes the well known metaphor of the iceberg to illustrate the need for qualitative research, where quantitative research can be seen as the tip of the iceberg and qualitative research explores the submerged layers. Qualitative research can shed light on participants' lived experiences and ways of knowing, in an in-depth matter (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). For this particular research, a phenomenological, as well as action based design has been applied. *Phenomenological,* in the sense that the focus group represents several participants where the goal was to find some common/shared experience of a phenomenon, and that common patterns across experiences forms themes for the analysis (Butler-Kisber, 2018). *Action* based, in that sense that the design sought to identify and solve a practical problem, where the participants themself have been asked to reflect and discuss possible solutions and improvements for their own practice (Butler-Kisber, 2018). Using data-triangulation provided a deeper insight into the phenomena being investigated, as it gave me the opportunity to understand it from different angles.

The research design is illuminative, as the outer layer of the subject is already well known, but where my research has attempted for the subject to be articulated and understood in new and deeper ways. Looking forward, the findings could be used as a qualitative supplement for further developing educational frameworks with emancipatory, post-colonial, anti-oppressive properties and stimulate further research.

3.5 Sampling and recruitment

For deeper educational framework understanding and juxtaposition, a convenience sample of courses from the social work curricula at a bachelor level was gathered, looking into all courses briefly, and then selecting relevant course descriptions for analysis. The reason for choosing the bachelor level is that it is the bachelor education that gives the protected title "social worker" and is what's required to go out in the labour market as a social worker in Norway. Therefore, it is not necessary to investigate higher education in this field, as most people would enter the labour

market after a bachelor's degree. The reason for convenience sampling was to get an overview before selecting and investigating courses linked to the theme of this thesis, and furthermore investigate if they are benchmarked against the national and global standards. Bearing in mind that the literature states how different institutions emphasise global and critical perspectives differently, it is possible that the educational standards are being prioritised and implemented differently. Therefore, I accessed and read through the programme description and course descriptions from three universities. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are discussed in detail in "Curriculum review".

My second sample was educators (professors, associated professors or lecturers at other levels) in social work education. The sample constituted five educators representing three different educational institutions. The reason to sample from three different institutions was to be able to compare differences across institutions as well as address common issues that educators could experience across institutions. The group discussion was particularly focused on the second research question, however the focus group discussion sought to also capture the actual attitudes and use of national and global standards in the physical classroom teaching, compared to what is mentioned in the syllabus. For this sample, purposive and snowball sampling has been used.

3.6 Document analysis: Curriculum review

The review of the curriculum was done in several stages, and based on relevance to the study specific courses were investigated in depth. The stages were therefore 1) Reading through programme description, 2) reading through all the course descriptions, and 3) Document analysis of relevant course descriptions.

For step one, the aim was to see how and if the standards are mentioned in the program description. For step two the aim was to explore how the standards "manifest" themselves in course descriptions. Here, I acknowledge that the standards can be considered and implemented, even though not explicitly mentioned, thereby looking more into what the aims in the course description implies. Both Anish with colleges (2021) and Flem with colleagues (2017) emphasises how "latent" material of the syllabus could be the case, where some themes could be

mentioned very briefly or in a very general way, so that it is not clear to what extent it is being taught in the classroom. Understanding this potential limitation of reliance on document analysis only for this research, I chose to complement the data with a focus group discussion with educators. The aim was to fill the potential gaps of what might be missing in the course descriptions when it came to national and global standards.

Moving beyond the concept of cultural otherisation, it is not enough for this review that the course description solely mentions goals in terms of "knowledge of different cultures", as this could reinforce attitudes about the "other" (Jönsson, 2013; Østby, 2008). Instead, the courses should include goal-descriptions about critical reflections on either one's own attitudes and values, power relations and how they shape and influence people's life outcome, anti-discriminatory practice or global perspectives - moving in a direction of a more critical and emancipatory social work curriculum. This is also stated in point 3.2 of the global ethical principles, which states that "social workers recognize that constructing and dealing with socio-economic concerns as cultural issues often deny or minimise underlying structural factors that contribute to psychosocial challenges" (IASSW, 2018, p. 5).

As already mentioned, Flem and colleagues (2017) from three different Scandinavian schools theorised how the social work curricula could look when inspired by the global standards for social work education together with national guidelines, and in doing so facilitate the implementation of global and critical perspectives within the existing Scandinavian educational framework. The implementation points, stated in their study, were used as a guideline for selecting the relevant courses of the current social work curricula, and further analysed in terms of how the descriptions are in line with national and global standards (Flem et al., 2017). In doing so, this study explored how the national and global guidelines are presented in course descriptions, as well as if the guidelines promote a social work curriculum with global and critical perspectives. Important courses to investigate were therefore 1) courses that involve laws and regulations, and if they include global ones in addition to national ones (ref. "The Universal Declaration of human rights", "European Declaration of Human rights", "The convention of the Rights of the child", and the "Global Statement of Ethical Principles for Social Work" (Flem et al., 2017)), and 2) courses concerning theoretical perspectives on social problems (here referring

to international comparative perspectives, postcolonial theory, intersectionality and the glocal perspectives) (Flem et al., 2017). Their article also argues that implementation of global and critical perspectives are related to courses concerning professional skills training and field placement preparations. This has also been investigated, however, the implementation here is referred to as classroom exercises such as reflecting on power, privilege, oppression, and taken-for-granted assumptions, role-play, addressing diversity in the classroom, and candidate-supervisor dialogues. Therefore it could not be investigated by solely looking into the course descriptions or reading list, hence the inclusion of focus group discussion. The educational institutions will be referred to as school A, B and C.

3.7 Focus group discussion with educators

To complement the curriculum review, as well as answering the second research question, a focus group discussion (FGD) was undertaken on Teams, with the help of a topic guide (See Appendix A). The FGD allows for investigation of knowledge and experience that several of the same profession have in common of possessing, and thereby having the potential of being a great source of data collection (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Discussing the themes together might be of help to further articulate what one believes to be the properties of shortcomings and difficulties, and to come to some kind of common understanding as a group. For this study, the group dialogue became a stimulus for generating new paths of thinking and talking about challenges in the educational system (Krumsvik, 2014). The informants share some common language and experience, due to their common field of work. Therefore, the usage of FGD had a great potential of being fruitful in the sense that the participants could give input and complement each other's reflections and concepts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Prior to the study, the researcher was in contact by mail and phone to the potential participants, providing them with the topic guide (Appendix A) and informed consent (Appendix B). This allowed for some reflection prior to the discussion. The group discussion was conversational in nature, with the researcher having the role as the facilitator of the discussion. One possible limitation to the FGD is the necessity to balance between the somewhat informal style where informants can speak freely and introduce additional themes, and the researcher as a moderator of

the discussion - to keep the discussion relevant to the theme (Krumsvik, 2014; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). One consideration I had to reflect upon prior to the FGD was therefore to not interfere too much, as the researcher, or moderator, can have great influence on the process, and the information being shared (Krumsvik, 2014). Other considerations involved making the discussion context comfortable and safe, encouraging the participants to share as much as possible, allowing for reflective pauses without interrupting, allowing exploration of thoughts and intuitions that could be revealing, and remaining ethically responsive to all of the participants throughout the process (Butler-Kisber, 2018). The ethical considerations of the FGD is discussed further below in the ethics section. The introduction part of the topic guide (Appendix A) demonstrates the researcher's interest and encouragement of the participants to share and explore thoughts, as well as giving room for others' utterances. The topic guide was provided prior to the study and also read out loud by the researcher at the start of the FGD. In developing the topic guide, consideration was given to the potential biases in the discussion. These include the notion that people might not voice their opinion freely if the topic is too sensitive, and that some participants might be overrun by other participants' utterances (Butler-Kisber, 2018). However, seeing as they are educators, they hold great experience in speaking in front of a bigger group of people, and were therefore considered to not be too shy in voicing their opinions on the matter. In this sense, staying ethically responsive, and not including invasive questions was considered sufficient for the process (Butler-Kisber, 2018).

3.8 Data analysis

Thematic content analysis has been used for the FGD to generate codes, finding overall themes, reviewing them, and searching for linkages between them, simultaneously with taking notes of the thought processes and ideas emerging before and during the coding (Wilkison, 2016). For this study, the units were viewed in terms of participants' utterances. Furthermore, the recurring items in terms of quotations, discourses and larger units of "meaning" were organised using a category scheme and analysed systematically with the addition of relevant theories (Wilkison, 2016). For the document analysis, which constitutes course descriptions and its relation to national and global standards, the thematic properties have also been analysed, with consideration to phenomenology, as common patterns across the documents can be both implicit and explicitly

shown in course descriptions (Anish et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017). Furthermore, these thematic properties of course descriptions related to guidelines are chosen and discussed using theory, as well as seen in relation to the utterance of participants in the FGD.

3.9 Ethical considerations

When discussing the "value" of research, one often considers to what degree the findings are useful and serve society (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). However, in this search for valuable findings, there can be a tension between the aspiration for new knowledge, and ethical considerations. In qualitative research, the exploration of human thoughts and life-experience constitutes ethical issues that influence the entire research process, as the final results involve publication of those reflections. Therefore, it is of high importance to stay ethically aware throughout the entire process, from planning, the creation of interview questions, considerations of participants wellbeing and maintaining confidentiality throughout (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

There are several ethical considerations that informed this study. Firstly, written informed consent was obtained from the participants (See Appendix B). The participants were also informed that they could withdraw at any time, so that they would not feel coerced in any way. Throughout this process it has also been important for me to be as transparent as possible, so that the participants don't feel misled or deceived in any way. By providing them with the topic guide in advance, as well as communicating with them in advance to talk about the study, this was achieved. Prior to the FGD the informants were asked to sit in a quiet room, and to sit alone, so that there would not be any physical discomfort or worry connected to the risk of not maintaining confidentiality. Furthermore, they were asked to not share information about the FGD outside of the group. When transcribing the data, anonymity was maintained by using different codes for each of the universities and the participants. A sheet that describes which participants represent what code has been locked in a safe archive and will be shredded after submission. Likewise with the written consent. This gave the educators a chance to withdraw later in the research process as

well (Butler-Kisber, 2018). Before conducting the FGD, the study was granted ethical approval form the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (See Appendix C).

3.10 Limitations and reflections concerning the research design

As the group discussion was conducted via an online Teams meeting, an obvious point to be made is to what degree the conversational elements felt natural and comfortable, or forced, as it took place behind a screen and no one met in person. However, the use of online meetings gave me the opportunity to include educators from various locations in Norway, instead of focusing on one educational institution. In fact, it was the original plan to only investigate one institution as a "case". However, after discussing with my supervisor, potential informants as well as other advisors in my programme, it was decided that for ethical considerations and to enhance the credibility of the study to include several institutions that would increase the data set for the research. From an ethical point of view, the concern was that focussing on one institution only might compromise confidentiality and anonymity. Changing the design from the researcher being the interviewer and the educator the interviewee, to the researcher primarily being the facilitator of a group discussion among educators also relieved some of the tension related to asymmetrical power dynamics that sometimes appear between students and educators. Prior to changing the data collection method, the power dynamics was a concern, as being a student, interviewing an educator about their job brought some doubt about whether or not I was well placed to do so. However, the communication with educators has been a positive experience, and they were interested in participating in a FGD. The measure taken to secure the best possible experience of the team's meeting was to have good communication prior to and during the FGD. Prior to the interview it was possible for the participants to reach out to me about any concerns.

3.11 Trustworthiness of the study

In contrast to quantitative research which is assessed through validity, generalisability and reliability of the study, qualitative research assesses its trustworthiness by considering *credibility*, *plausibility*, *transparency* (Butler-Kisber, 2018). Credibility is assessed by showing how the study relates to the data collected. For this particular study, citations of educational standards,

course descriptions as well as utterances of the educators (which represents the data) are frequently used as examples to show the connections to the reflections and findings presented in the analysis and discussion. Gathering data from three different educational institutions also provides the chance to enhance credibility. It is also demonstrated by describing in detail how the data is gathered, what position I as a researcher hold, and what previous research shows. Plausibility is gained by showing that the interpretation demonstrates a plausible explanation for what has been studied (Butler-Kisber, 2018). In this study the findings are described using thick descriptions, analysed using relevant theory, as well as its connections to previous research on the subject. When all put together, and considered, it demonstrates plausible explanations of the phenomena that has been studied. Transparency refers to what degree the process is clear from start to finish, which both affects to what degree the reader is being persuaded, but also to what degree other researchers can reproduce or adapt the methodology from this study (Butler-Kisber, 2018). By speaking in detail of all the parts of the design, from the data gathering method, the positionality, reflections and other considerations, to the analysis-method being used, this is obtained. Furthermore, the trustworthiness of this study is demonstrated by using multiple sources of data, inclusion of participants' voices in the research process and staying ethically responsive throughout the study (Butler-Kisber, 2018).

Chapter four: Data analysis and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter starts off by introducing the documents used for the document analysis, and discusses the findings related to global and national guidelines, as well as the presence of critical and global perspectives. Further on, some comments extracted from the FGD are used to provide greater insights into the connection between institutional curricula and global and national guidelines, and to what degree the curricula facilitates critical and structural perspectives. Moving onwards, the analysed content of the FGD is presented by applying system theory and critical theory, and where and the findings are discussed in relation to the second research

question: *What are the challenges to implementing global and critical perspectives within the existing educational framework of the bachelor in social work?*

4.2 Curriculum review

4.2.1 Document presentation

Norwegian social work education is expected to be in line with the national guideline for social work education (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019, my translation*)* and the common framework-plan for health and social professional education (Forskrift om felles rammeplan for helse-og sosialfagutanninger, 2017, my translation). In terms of global standards, Norway is not bound by law to follow the "Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training*"* that was first adopted by the IASSW and IFSW in 2004 (Sewpaul and Jones, 2004) with a revised version adopted in 2020 (IASSW/IFSW, 2020). However, the Norwegian labour union for social workers (Fellesorganisasjonen) is a member of IFSW, and therefore holds responsibility to follow international ethical principles, in addition to Norwegian ones (Fellesorganisasjonen, 2019). In addition, the common framework-plan states underneath "scope of application and purpose" (my translation) that the common framework-plan together with the guidelines are supposed to reflect both national and international regulations, as well as give international perspectives (Forskrift om felles rammeplan for helse-og sosialfagutanninger, 2017, §1). Furthermore, the Global standards have been an important tool in developing international/intercultural social work curriculum in Norway, and some Norwegian educational institutions are also members of IASSW. As has been shown in this study, it is argued that with increased globalisation, forced migration, war and the climate crisis, there is a need to bridge the classical social work education with the international/intercultural social work education curriculum, in order for future social workers to be able to tackle the complex social problems that come with (Flem et al., 2017). Therefore, benchmarking against global standards seems to be of high relevance, also in traditional Norwegian social work education.

Looking at the common Norwegian framework plan, which holds 12 learning outcomes, number two states that the the candidate should "Hold knowledge about inclusion, equality, and

anti-discrimination, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion and philosophy, disability, sexual orientation, gender-identity, gender-expression and age, in a way that the candidate can contribute to equal services for all groups in society" (Forskrift om felles rammeplan for helse-og sosialfagutanninger, 2017, §2, my translation). The same statement can be found in the national guidelines, in paragraph 7§ concerning knowledge of social problems. In the national guidelines, it also states that the candidate must understand how individual problems connect with structures of society, and to be able to work against those structures that create social inequality. Here, also possessing knowledge and competence that promotes equal services for all groups in society is highlighted (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019, §2). In terms of expected knowledge on perspectives, it also states that the candidate should hold knowledge about how "social class, exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination affects public health and life outcomes*"* (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019, §4:d). Regulation §9 of the national guidelines for Norwegian social work education states underneath "Knowledge of and work with social problems" (my translation) that the student should possess knowledge about humans' diverse origins and vulnerability, values, and ways of living. Simultaneously, they are expected to possess professional knowledge that will prompt non-discriminatory praxis, equality and social inclusion *(*Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019, §9: h & i*)*.

The IASSW and IFSW (2020) also have global standards for social work education and training with the agenda of having educational standards for social work that are globally applicable. These standards take it to another level in terms of valuing diversity, developing self awareness and reducing group stereotypes and prejudice (Anish et al., 2021). Already with the first edition by Sewpaul and Jones it was a comprehensive document, highlighting the importance of how social work education should aspire towards a critical understanding of the ways discrimination, oppression, and social injustice, impacts human functioning at all levels, also the global one (Flem et al., 2017; Sewpaul and Jones, 2004). For standards regarding programme objectives it states in 2.7 that "As social work does not operate in a vacuum, the programme should reflect consideration of the impact of interacting cultural, economic, communication, social, political and psychological global features" and in doing so, arguing for a broader perspective on the interconnectedness of global impacts in local social issues (Sewpaul and Jones, 2004, p. 496).

In the updated version, valuing diversity is taken another step further, where nine realities initially presented about social work in a global context were considered in developing the updated version. Specified underneath the *social work curriculum* section, it says that schools should aspire to have curricula that helps "social work students to develop skills of critical thinking and scholarly attitudes of reasoning, openness to new experiences and paradigms and commitment to lifelong learning" (IASSW/IFSW, 2020). At the same time, professors should also facilitate thinking that makes students reflect on needs, values, and cultures of the relevant populations, as well as facilitate learning situations for the student to *"develop self-awareness regarding their personal and cultural values, beliefs, traditions and biases and how these might influence the ability to develop relationships with people and to work with diverse population groups"* (IASSW/IFSW, 2020). The standards also have its own *core curriculum* section, which states that even though social work happens in different contexts across the globe in terms of population, politics, economic and social issues, a certain core curriculum is globally applicable (IASSW/IFSW, 2020). Here as well, the skills of critical thinking about how discrimination, oppression and socio-structural inadequacies impact human development is highlighted, and here as well, at all levels, including the global one. In terms of *Social Work in Practice*, two points state how the educators are also expected to prepare the candidates to "Develop as critically self-reflective practitioners" and "Apply national, regional and/or international social work codes of ethics and their applicability to context-specific realities" (IASSW/IFSW, 2020).

In relation to code of ethics, the IASSW *Global Social work statement of Ethical Principles* argues for a fundamental conceptual shift from individualisation to understanding the constructs of socio-political, economic and cultural components embedded in society, and how it affects the human beings within (IASSW, 2018). In doing so, the statements seek to enhance students' self awareness and ways of thinking, and critically analyse "distorted truths" (Jönsson & Flem, 2022). Two statements being explicit about this is 4.7: "Social workers recognize that dominant socio-political and cultural discourses and practices contribute to many taken-for-granted assumptions and entrapments of thinking, which manifest in the normalization and naturalization of a range of prejudices, oppressions, marginalization, exploitation, violence and exclusions.", and 4.8: "Social workers recognize that developing strategies to heighten critical

consciousness that challenge and change taken-for-granted assumptions for ourselves and the people whom we engage with, forms the basis of everyday ethical, anti-oppressive practice" (IASSW, 2018, p. 6).

4.2.2 The guidelines in the curriculum

1. Programme description

The programme descriptions were gathered from the educational institutions home web-page, and all based on the full-time version of the education programme. Reading through these descriptions, I noted that the national guidelines are mentioned. For school A, it is mentioned beneath a "course plan"-headline that the programme description is based on both the national guideline for social work education (2019), as well as the common framework plan for health and social work education in Norway (2017). Both represent the national guidelines for Norwegian social work education. For school B, it is mentioned beneath a headline of "learning outcome", and how the student is expected to hold knowledge and skills according to the expectations mentioned in the national guidelines. Some of the expectations are written exactly as they are mentioned in the guidelines, but others are somewhat re-written or merged together. It is also mentioned beneath a headline of the "study lay-up", here also referring to national guidelines for social work education, as well as the common framework plan for health and social work education in Norway (2017). For school C, a similar presentation is found, with the Norwegian guidelines mentioned underneath a headline of "learning outcome". Here, it says that the programme's learning outcome is based on the national guidelines, followed by a re-written and shortened list of expected knowledge, skills and competence acquired by completing the study.

2. Course descriptions

School A, B and C hold together course descriptions of 27 courses, when the bachelor thesis, research methods and field placement are excluded. After reading through all of the course descriptions, eight were selected for inclusion in this study, as they seemingly represented global and critical perspectives in the social work curriculum, relevant to this study. I acknowledge that

these perspectives can also exist in several other courses of the different institutions, however these eight courses were selected for their transparency in the course descriptions. As the literature of this study has already stated, the way of implementing global and critical perspectives are not homogeneous. This is also the case for this selection of schools, with the perspectives coming through both infusion through regular courses, but also through specific courses meant for field placement preparations, as well as elective courses with an international focus. Looking into course descriptions, it is clear that national guidelines are facilitating learning outcomes and influence the content of the different courses. In addition, the courses also include rewritten or more context-specific versions of the national guidelines. Interestingly, the same national guidelines manifest themselves differently, meaning that the same national guideline highlighted in a theoretical course at one school, can be the same highlighted in a course concerning practical skill training in another school.

One example is through a theoretical and law-based course at School B. Here, sociological perspectives on power, class, roles and stigma are highlighted, together with social anthropological perspectives on culture, integration, as well as perspectives on the minority-majority relations. Looking at national guidelines, the insight in "relations that contribute to discrimination and how to promote non-discriminatory practice" (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019, §9: c) and "knowledge on how social class, exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination affects public health and life outcome" (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019, §4: d) is present, and also reflects a critical awareness and intersectional perspective included in theory-based courses. Looking into the global standards, it is also in line with the standard concerning equality and diversity, with knowledge of how to ensure equal opportunities regardless of socioeconomic background and other forms of diversity (IASSW/IFSW, 2020). While in other courses, such as professional skill development courses at School A, guideline §9 is also used as focus for critical reflection on their future professional role, based on experience at the bachelor level (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019). The course revisits relevant dilemmas from earlier and asks for the student to critically reflect on these dilemmas, and to tie them to their own future field of social work practice. Reflecting on dilemmas that can occur in the work field was also an

important critical component mentioned in previous literature presented in this study (Eriksen & Gradovski, 2020; Flem & Jönsson, 2022)

Another theoretical and law-based course can be found at school C, which has included several international conventions in the course description, such as "European Declaration of Human rights", "The Convention of the Rights of the Child", and also highlights the importance of reflecting on how national and international sources of legislations are to be used in making justified choices. In doing so, the programme reflects both national guidelines and global standards regarding knowledge on relevant conventions (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019, §4; IASSW/IFSW, 2020). The connectedness, difference and comparison of national and international legislations allows for great reflections and can strengthen the students professional value-base and global perspectives (Flem et al., 2017). Further on, the same course emphasises skills in reflecting on their professional roles, their own attitudes and understanding in meeting with others. Reflection on one's professional role is mentioned several times in the national guidelines. This reflection on one's own attitudes, together with the infusion of international perspectives thereby opens up for critical as well as global awareness.

School C also provides critical and global perspectives in terms of elective courses. One elective course, related to social work in a multicultural and international perspective, has the aim of introducing how social work and welfare practice is done in other cultural and institutional contexts. The aim of the course is also to understand how social changes in the Norwegian context can be rooted in global issues, and in doing so, introducing the "glocal" perspective. Further on, the course description states, in terms of expected skills, that the student should be able to reflect on how their own values, norms and attitudes influences the understanding and interactions in a multicultural setting, as well as critically reflect on how ethical demands and regulations can be challenged in an international perspective. The national guideline 10§ concerning challenging one's own attitudes, and §4 regarding knowledge on relevant international development-work and research is thereby present (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019). The course-description also includes sociological terms such as the construct of "us" and "them" and racialisation, and in doing so promoting a broader critical

awareness, which relates to the global standards (IASSW/IFSW, 2020). Knowledge regarding structural and individual power-relations are also mentioned in the course description, which is also reflected in national guideline 10§, to critically reflect on power in the professional role (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019).

In a small preparation-for-practice course at School C, meant to prepare for the main practice, the Norwegian guideline, which states that the candidate should "Hold knowledge about inclusion, equality, and anti-discrimination, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion and philosophy, disability, sexual orientation, gender-identity, gender-expression and age, in a way that the candidate can contribute to equal services for all groups in society" is present in the description (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019, §7: j, my translation). Furthermore, it also says to hold broad knowledge about the relations contributing to such practice, which relates to guideline §9, stating that the student should hold knowledge on how to promote non-discriminatory practice (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019). The practice course is situated around regular meetings with children of minority background, where the students practise on building relations, promote participation, and increase one's own cultural understanding. Here as well, it is highlighted that the students need to reflect on their own role, values and attitudes when working with children and families in a diverse society, and in doing so, the national guideline 10§ concerning challenging one's own attitudes is present (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019). The course also holds learning activities like handing in reflective notes, guided group discussions on understandings and attitudes, which previous literature has argued are classroom activities that heighten critical awareness (Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017; Sewpaul, 2013). In relation to the global guidelines, the course description seems very familiar to the point 2.f, stating that the schools need to

> Ensure that social work students are provided with opportunities to develop self-awareness regarding their personal and cultural values, beliefs, traditions and biases and how these might influence the ability to develop relationships with people and to work with diverse population groups. (IASSW/IFSW, 2020)

One course at school B related to thematizing community work as a method shows a clear focus on structural perspectives, and how global actors can both create and solve problems, and how global relations affect social work in Norway. In this sense, the "glocal" perspective is present, as well as knowledge on structural factors in both a national and international sense. The national guideline §4 concerning knowledge on development work in a national and international context is present, as well as several guidelines concerning power, equal services for all, and non-discriminatory practice (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019). Putting the different guidelines mentioned together, with the overall international and structural focus of this course, it reflects the global guideline where the programme must ensure "Critical understanding of how socio-structural inadequacies, discrimination, oppression, and social, political, environmental and economic injustices impact human development at all levels, including the global must be considered" (IASSW/IFSW, 2020).

Another course concerning structural factors of marginalisation can be found at school A. Here several of the different national guidelines concerning inclusion, non-discriminatory practice, and equal services for all are listed (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019). The aim of the course is to understand why some groups in the society are being marginalised, and how the social worker can contribute to social inclusion. In doing so, it seems like this course aims on producing some politicisation of the students, as well as critically reflect on causes of marginalisation in terms of structural factors. In relation to global standards, "an emphasis on structural issues affecting marginalised, vulnerable and minority populations" seem to be present (IASSW/IFSW, 2020).

Lastly, school A has a theoretical course for introducing the social works knowledge foundation. Just as with the two other schools' theoretical courses, this one also holds intersectional perspectives, as reflected in the national guideline §4, stating that the student should "hold knowledge on how class, exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination affects public health and life outcome", as well as several other national guidelines concerning inclusion, non-discriminatory practice, and equal services for all (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019). Here as well, it is highlighted that the student should be aware of

one's own values and attitudes, and to be able to promote social justice, thereby also upholding global guidelines on the matter.

4.2.3 Document analysis summary and discussion

In terms of transparency, the national guidelines are well represented in both programme and course descriptions. This made the connection to learning outcomes in the course descriptions easy to reflect on, and to compare with global guidelines. Some of the global guidelines can also seem to be reflected in a more implicit way, although none of the programmes made a direct referral to them. In addition, some of the Norwegian and global statements are somewhat similar in their wording and purpose, which is probably partially due to affiliation with the IASSW and the IFSW. Although not explicitly stated, it is possible that the Norwegian national frameworks were benchmarked against the "Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training", by Jones and Sewpaul (2004). It was, however, disappointing to note that only one-third of the 27 courses that were analysed made explicit reference to critical, emancipatory and anti-discriminatory perspectives, despite their importance being underscored in the current Norwegian national framework, which the educators in the FGD, as discussed below, felt did not go far enough in endorsing the political mandate of social work.

The national guidelines concerning knowledge of anti-discriminatory practice, marginalisation, social justice, and "knowledge on how social problems are created and developed in a societal context" seems to promote learning outcomes of critical awareness, and promotes notions of intersectionality (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019). Still, one could argue that the phrasing of "holding knowledge of" does not necessarily indicate classroom activities where the students have been actively challenged on their own attitudes. Based on this assessment, its seems that not a lot of global perspectives can be found in the guidelines. However, for this selection of courses, the guideline referring to "knowledge of central conventions" as well as "knowledge on research and developmental work relevant for social work, nationally and internationally" seems to have promoted some global perspectives in the course descriptions (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019, §4: h & k). However, it does not seem to mutually inspire to include global perspectives. It is also worth

mentioning that the course on structural perspectives from school B and the elective, international course from school C had several learning-outcomes that stated "in an international perspective" added on at the end of the original sentence found in national guidelines. In this sense, the course demonstrates its own initiative to include the global perspective, beyond what the national guidelines stated.

In terms of critical perspectives, all three schools hold critical and sociological perspectives concerning intersectionality and marginalisation in their theory-based courses. In addition, school C provided a selection of international conventions, emphasising a global awareness. Both school A and B have courses concerning structural perspectives on discrimination and marginalisation, however school B also tied it to international structures, and in doing so, including the "glocal" perspective, as well as reflecting the global guidelines in terms of the the *global level* (IASSW/IFSW, 2020). For school C one sees a critical and global perspective in the form of an elective course with an international focus, and critical perspectives in a course meant to prepare for the field placement. Lastly, school A has a course right at the end of the study, to critically reflect on dilemmas and one's future professional role.

4.2.4 Comments from the FGD concerning the guidelines

Because of relatively renewed national guidelines (2019), and a recent national quality assessment of Norwegian social work education (NOKUT, 2022), the educators held great awareness of the national guidelines, and how they should produce learning outcomes in the curriculum. In terms of the national guidelines relatedness to global writings, the educators drew links to the global definition of social work (IFSW, 2014), and ethical principles (IFSW, 2018), but argued how the global standards (IASSW/IFSW, 2020) came later. However, the "Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training" were first adopted by the IASSW and IFSW in 2004. One of the educators was pondering about a possible international collaboration in relation to the global standards, as she could see many similarities between the global and national guidelines subsequently. While conceptualising the relatedness to the global standards, another educator also came with an example from the national guidelines:

I think you can maybe see it in the national guidelines, because of this constant repetition of the phrase "on individual,-group and societal level", right? Because traditionally in Norway, social work is quite individual-oriented. It shows in the services, and it's also what the students expect to a large degree when they come to us. So that's something that we have been working on… To include all three levels.

- Educator at School C

Including the societal level seems to challenge the traditional individual-oriented notion of what social work is in a Norwegian context, and it could also be used as a learning outcome to include the importance of understanding structural factors. However, some of the educators did not necessarily agree that the national guidelines were promoting global and critical perspectives, and expressed the view that some of the language in the guidelines were deficient in relation to this. Both educators at school B shared some thoughts concerning the guidelines:

I think it [critical and global perspectives] was clearer before the new national guideline. Like, when you go in and look at it [the guidelines], it says something about marginalisation and critical perspectives, and it says "non-discriminatory", but it does not say "anti-oppressive" , which we would like it to include, and which we think makes a difference. So when you ask about the implementation of these perspectives, I believe it's not very clear in the national guideline… We have also been talking about how "sustainability" , "green social work" does not exist there for example. There are quite few international perspectives in the national guidelines. So I'm not too sure that following the national guidelines is what makes us teach critical perspectives, to put it like that.

- Educator at school B

We noticed when the new guidelines where under development that the clear political mandate from the old version, stating that social workers should inform about what causes social problems to the government and the politicians, and to give clear statements on what could prevent and treat social problems to the government and the politicians was "washed out" in the first editions of the new guidelines. We worked hard to get it

"in", delivered recommendations several times, and we spoke loudly to the politicians. We were worried.[...] It is still there, but it's somewhat weaker than before.

- Co-educator at school B

It seems that even though some of the national guidelines could connect to, and produce learning outcomes of global and critical perspectives, the wording is not always fulfilling enough to state a clear structural and anti-oppressive mandate, and to politicise the students to work and strive for social change. The educators also shared the same reflection as drawn from the document analysis, that not many global perspectives are reflected in the national guidelines.

Considering when some of the gathered literature for this study is dated from, and the recent reorganisation of Norwegian social work education to fit the new guidelines, the social work curriculums do not look the same as for three-four years ago, and it can imply that a lot has already been done in relation to implementing more critical and global perspectives in the curricula. For example, the critical reflexive course at school A was presented as a relatively new course, meant to secure a greater critical awareness for the student's professional role. Based on the document analysis, one can state that the perspectives are in fact being taught to some degree in the schools, however educators did express some possible difficulties with implementation, as well as questioning the actual learning outcome of these courses as a result of the students' expectations, the society's expectation, resources, and institutional factors. The different issues are introduced and analysed in depth in the following "FGD" section.

4.3 FGD

4.3.1 Short presentation of the participants

Five educators were involved in the FGD. Following is a short presentation using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

Stine was an associate professor at school A. She taught communication, and has throughout the years supervised students writing their bachelor research and in field placements. She has also overseen courses related to the social work master degree.

Heidi was also an associate professor at school A. She has been teaching several different courses related to social work, but has recently become head of one course related to critical reflections at the bachelor level.

Klara was an assistant professor at school B, and has over the years had different responsibilities related to the bachelor, such as field placements, both national and international, supervision, and teaching knowledge production as well as the introduction course to social work.

Janne was also an assistant professor at school B, and has over the years had responsibility for courses connected to international and structural perspectives in social work. She has also overseen courses related to the social work master.

Trine was an associate professor at school C. She was the head of the programme of social work at the institution. She has previously been teaching courses meant to prepare the student for field placement, been head of the field placement course, and did supervision for field placements and bachelor thesis assessments.

4.3.2 Analysis of the FGD

Even though critical and global perspectives are being taught, this is not happening in a homogeneous way, and the educators also stressed some concerns about the implementation, as well as limitations to the actual learning outcome of these courses due to 1) students' expectations, 2) expectations from the work field, 3) lack of relevant literature, 4) the institutional constraints of academic teaching and 5) addressing diversity in a correct matter. These five aspects are presented and analysed using system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and Critical theory (Kellner, 1990; Jones & Sewpaul, 2014) and thick description of the data (Kvale, 2014), drawing on the voices of the participants.

Students' expectation of social work

The students' expectations discussed by the educators are connected to individual-oriented and casework-based practice. Several of the educators stated that this mindset is what they meet for most of the first-year students, and that concepts of challenging structures, community work and "social workers as advocates for change" are hard to introduce because of the lack of relatedness to what the students expect social work to contain. The expectation of individual-oriented and casework-based practice demonstrates ties to the neoliberal ideology at the macro level, which creates a certain welfare regime and work practice on the meso level, which in turn seems to create specific beliefs of what social work ought to be for students on the micro level. Students seem to be "locked-in" on the individual level of social work, where the structural aspects of social work have to be conveyed and demonstrated several times, because it does not appear oblivious and applicable. One example from one of the educators was given from a small field placement during the first year, where the practice was related to community work, and to promote low threshold participation for the community involved.

> *And then a lot of the students struggle with, like.. "But what is the relevance here? These children aren't struggling?". You know? Because they come there, and think they will help a child, the child will be grateful, and then, that's not happening. So it's a lot of work, to get them to see the relevance.*
>   - Educator at school C

It shows how the attitudes connect on the meso level, as both classroom teaching as well as field placement struggles to provide new perspectives to the student in terms of social work in a broader sense. Students' expectations are mostly situated around one-to-one conversations, and the phrase "mini-psychologist" emerged during this discussion. The individual-oriented expectations also have to be seen connected to greater societal effects, such as what the work field signals to the students, which can be seen at the micro, meso, and macro level.

Expectations from the work field

On the macro level, one has to understand how social work in Norway was developed simultaneously with the development of a welfare state, which makes social work in a Norwegian

context closely tied to welfare practice and welfare professionals (Henriksen, 2016). With the reorganisation of the welfare regime to imply neoliberal and New Public Management ideologies that affect students on the meso level, because they meet field placements with strict, normative and categorical guidance and tight time schedules. When placed in such an environment, this can reinforce previous beliefs of what students think social work is about, and can reduce the relevance of global and critical perspectives.

> *You know, they arrive at systems that have strong categorical,- but also strictly normative rules, for example what good parenthood ought to be. And maybe we have had some critical reflections concerning this, and we try to prepare them as good as we can, but they meet some severe challenges, structures and normative rules I think.*
> - Educator at school B

Several of the educators argue how the "social" words in social services are replaced with efficient and task-oriented discourses, and that those kinds of signals in return do something with how one views oneself as a professional. If the social perspectives are reduced in favour of individual-oriented and task-orientated discourse in the services, then global and societal perspectives might not seem too prominent. On a micro level, the student can experience either a dissonance, or a reinforcement of what was previously learned in school, based on the office-culture that one meets. It also depends on the students ability to apply the knowledge learned in meeting a service user on the micro level, or if the strong normative constraints puts one outside of their "tolerance window". Meaning that even though one has learned critical perspectives in school, it becomes difficult to apply in practice.

Lack of relevant literature

One specific challenge to implementing critical and global perspectives was the lack of relevant literature in Norwegian, and that to find this relevant literature was highly dependent on having a colleague with special interest, and thereby knowledge of relevant literature. All the educators could recall a college that had either provided them with relevant literature, made them reflect on the amount of western perspectives in the syllabus, or who themself taught structural and global

perspectives because of their "special" interest. It seems like the combination of deficient literature and narrow research field makes this knowledge somewhat unavailable, where the presence or lack of colleagues within this discipline affects to what degree it is being taught. This in turn affects the students on the micro and meso levels, because it limits to what degree these perspectives are being taught in a sufficient way. When relevant literature is not available in Norwegian, educators tend to go for British or American literature, however this has to be balanced out with the amount of Norwegian literature. Some issues that then can arise, is that the complex and complicated themes that critical and global perspectives sometimes represent becomes more difficult because it's presented in a different language. Furthermore, the contexts described in the foreign literature might be quite different, or not relatable to the Norwegian context. In this sense, both literature on critical and global perspectives in Norwegian, as well as literature representing the Norwegian context is deficient.

> *We have recently looked into Norwegian literature, and seen how little criticism there is of social work practice in Norway. I go in to look, and I think, where is the critic? Criticism of the assimilation of Sami people has begun to surface, but what about social workers' role with the Romani people? The assimilation and placing them in foster care, forced sterilisation and the church's role? I can't find any criticism of social work practice in this sense. If it did, we could have used these new words "decolonisation" and intersectionality, and related it to Norwegian social work practice. That is missing in today's literature.*
>   - Educator at school B

Relatedness to the Norwegian context seems to be an educational tool that several of the educators miss in the current syllabus. This information is important for students' learning outcomes on the meso level, as stories of structural oppression in other contexts might reinforce a "blindness" for Norway's own colonial past and postcolonial present, as Scandinavian countries on the macro level are traditionally not seen as linked with the global history of colonialism (Flem et al., 2017; Keskinen et al., 2019).

We have been given some knowledge on decolonization of indigenous people, but in other parts of society, we have adopted more from the USA, from other European countries which context we don't relate to. I think that with literature where we recognized the Norwegian system, the Norwegian structures, it would be easier to enter this way of understanding.

- Educator at school B

Relatedness to the Norwegian context seems to be of importance if the students are to gain deeper understanding to the themes of structural oppression, the importance and influence of history, and to place oneself in a historical and cultural context. One can see this on the learning outcome at the micro level, as an educator from school A described a conversation with students where the students talked about the need for cultural-sensitive practice, and at the same time dismissed their own historical and cultural heritage, and talked about "culture" as something someone "else" has [read: the other]. And she continued to say:

We all have different experiences, traditions, religions… Different markers you know? You are a unique human, I am a unique human. You can understand me as a part of some bigger group, but we also have to kind of peel that away. It's only the person in the situation who holds the primary knowledge of themself, and how it is to be that person in the bigger world. That we talk quite a lot about in this subject.

- Educator at school A

The educators were of the view that critical and global perspectives are not taught adequately, nor in a way that is understandable and relatable to the students, which reduced the learning outcome of these perspectives. The example from school A was from the last course in the third year, and was also used as an example to discuss the lack of a central thread throughout the course of the bachelor, which leads us to the next limitation.

Institutional constraints of academic teaching

As already mentioned, educators felt it was highly dependent on colleagues with the special expertise or relevant academic path to what degree the resources were available, and to what extent it was being taught. On the macro level, it relates to the neoliberal educational policy, which on the meso level creates an academia of highly specialised courses, where the educators are in charge of "their" course, with "their" academic path influencing the course, and where the overall content has to be negotiated between different disciplines of social work. On the meso level this means that there are limitations to what degree students are being taught multidisciplinary approaches (Flem et al., 2021). During the course of three years, students are expected to learn a lot, and it is the traditions and disciplines that the head of the course brings with, that will influence the course of teaching. The educators further argued that in terms of implementing critical and global perspectives, it is not enough to have "this" course for critical perspectives, or "that" course for global perspectives, as they are complex themes that should be deliberated throughout the course of the study – a central threads that they felt were missing in the Bachelor programme.

> *It's a long tradition, in academia, to have "mine" and "yours" 'subjects. Even the administrative systems and everything around facilitates this. So I think there is a large potential there, in subjects such as global and critical perspectives. You can't just learn from one subject and then be done with it. It's something longitudinal, which becomes qualitative so much better if you know what the students have been taught, and what comes next, so that it's continuous.*
>   - Educator at school C

The lack of the "central thread" in the transition of courses was a recurring theme for this discussion, as educators expressed concern about the fragmented and individualised nature of the Bachelor programme. One of the educators at school B argued that even though structural perspectives had been taught the first year, the recurrence of the anti-oppressive topics was not too familiar for the students in the third year, as they had had field placement, "communication" , "relation" and other courses in-between. A similar experience could also be found at School A, as already presented [ref. Cultural-sensitive practice]. The lack of a central thread can also be seen related to the macro level, the idea of what Norwegian social work traditionally is believed

to be about, with its individualistic traditions and welfare-related discourses. This again influences the different traditions of the institutions on the meso level, what academic approaches the educators believe social work ought to represent, which again at the micro level influences the content of classroom experience and teaching of students.

This means that even though there is an intention to teach structural and anti-oppressive perspectives, some things get lost along the way, because there is a lack of continuity, and constant negotiation and emphasis of different subjects and their content. To what extent the educators were given the resources to sit down and talk about the central thread was not equal across the different institutions. One educator stated that for the first time ever since she started working at the institution, they started to do a systematic overview of the study layout, while another school had plans to meet twice a year to look at the content. Even so, the educator argued that to what extent they are able to work through the content is limited with only two meetings.

Time-constraints were mentioned as contributing to the lack of a central thread, but also the notion that the head of the programme is solely responsible for the programme overview. The educators argued that this was highly unfortunate, as it reinforces the neoliberal educational idea of "mine" and "yours" 'subject, where there is a potential to have a greater institutional community, to secure the central thread, and to prevent educational overlaps or holes. Several of the educators argued that it could be of great value to have more in-depth knowledge of the social work education as a whole, and that the notion of "mine" and "yours" 'subject, together with the head of the programme being solely responsible for the overview is harmful to a more holistic teaching. The fragmentation of the Bachelor programme was of deep concern for them. This because, critical and global perspectives are not just something to fit one subject, as the educators argued. It represents a great interconnectedness of several understandings of social problems that need to be conveyed in several courses, using different methods.

Addressing diversity in the classroom

As already mentioned, addressing diversity in the classroom can be a great educational tool for emancipatory learning, where students identify structural and sociocultural factors for oppression

and privilege by taking a look inwards on oneself (Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017). Some of the educators spoke about similar classroom exercises when teaching intersectionality and anti-oppressive social work, and how this facilitated classroom discussions on the micro level, such as "think of a moment where your skin colour had a significant meaning for you" and similar topics. However, some of the educators argued that the balance of lifting up visible and invisible experiences of discrimination, at the same time preserving these experiences in a way that does not increase the feeling of "otherness" in the classroom is a complex matter that demands time, and competence. The educators also addressed how this comes with a certain expectation towards the students with minority background to share their experience of prejudice, stereotypes and microaggression, which might be an unfair responsibility to hand out. Therefore, there needs to be a balance between what one expects and demands from a student group, and how one conveys and addresses these themes in a classroom setting, as well as having the time to create a safe, yet bold space for facilitating such learning. Furthermore, one educator spoke of an example from a classroom setting:

I see a student with a minority background trying to explain the feeling of microaggression, but this word is not used, because he has not learned it. I see the white student does not understand, and I see the student with a minority background gives up. The white student tries to understand, but does not have the language to understand either. And then I have to go in as a facilitator to create a dialogue, so that the ones who are afraid to say something about their vulnerability does so, so that the one who does not have to worry because they never get that "look", as a consequence of being a white majority will open up their eyes and understand. It demands understanding, caution, and a safe group.[...] It demands time and continuous consciousness.
- Educator at school B

On the one hand, one has the opportunity to enhance critical awareness of a white majority, but on the other hand, it creates a responsibility for the students of minority background to share experiences, which the educators are conflicted about is the correct way of teaching. As the educator said, it depends on continuous consciousness from the educator facilitating such emancipatory praxis in group sessions. In addition, time is again mentioned as a factor.

Therefore, one can see once again the connection to neoliberal educational policy on the macro level creating time constraints, favouring bigger groups of students, and lack of the central thread of the programme's learning outcomes on a meso, which on the micro level can result in a group session where the safe environment is yet to be created, with unfortunate and misunderstood communication when addressing diversity among students can occur.

The interconnectedness

When the student starts their study, the majority has an individual-oriented expectation of what social work is about. It is influenced by Norwegian social work tradition on the meso and macro levels, and neoliberal education and welfare policies on the macro level. During the course of the study, students are taught structural and global perspectives on social work, but then the reality of field placement can decrease the students' politicised and global mindset once again, as these concepts do not seem to relate to the Norwegian social work context, or the student is unable to apply these perspectives within strict normative and categorical settings. In addition, there is not sufficient literature to position Norwegian social work students in a historical and cultural context in a way that could decolonise their minds and make them become more critically self-aware. The lack of relevant resources creates insufficient teaching on the meso level, which together with the lack of a central thread throughout the course of the study can create poor learning outcomes. The specialised courses and unfortunate, fragmented academic discourse of "mine" and "yours" has to be seen in relation to neoliberal and new public management ideology on the macro level, thus creating restraints for a more holistic educational community, and for multidisciplinary learning for students attending the social work programme on the meso and micro levels.

As already mentioned, the neoliberal ideology reinforces the notion that people are to blame for their own marginalised position, due to poor choices and bad behaviours (Flem et al., 2021). An important aspect to question then is, to what degree are students being given the right tools to act more politically, and to challenge such ideologies? How can one make them see the relevance when the current social work education has its strings in history, tradition and ideology? Considering all the factors just discussed, facilitating this kind of teaching has not one simple

answer. It is complex, and so is changing social work curriculums within the constraints of neoliberal and new public management regimes. Moving towards a more multidisciplinary approach that could decolonise students' minds and enhance critical awareness, it is at least clear that a central thread needs to take place, creating more critical and global perspectives throughout the course of the education.

Many would argue that social work is radical in its heart. However, the neoliberal reorganisation has over the decades created a shift in social work tradition, facilitating a notion of individual responsibility, leading one away from the critical discipline, and created a segregated micro and macro practice (Kamali & Jönnson, 2018). When social work in Norway is well situated around welfare administration, and community work becomes somewhat of a secondary discipline (Larsen & Sewpaul, 2014), it can be hard to separate the social worker from the welfare professional, and further challenge social work students' mindsets about what social work contains. The concerns for addressing diversity in the classroom are valid. However, when done correctly, within a safe environment, it creates emancipatory learning that could be of great value for social work students in broadening their critical awareness (Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017). As several critical theorists suggest, it is our lived experiences that create the basis for critical reflections and change (Sewpaul, 2013).

Chapter five: Recommendations and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

For the final chapter, we return to the research questions to further debate the findings, and to present what recommendations can be done. Recommendations are related to both national guidelines, as well as for social work education. Following are also some final remarks.

5.2 First research question, where do we go from here?

Returning to the first research question, *"To what extent are the BSW curriculum at Norwegian educational institutions benchmarked against Norwegian national educational standards and the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training?"*, it is clear that the quality assessment together with newly developed national guidelines makes the phrasing of learning outcomes in the course descriptions quite similar, as well as sometimes stating the exact same guideline, word-for-word. Therefore, one can conclude that the curriculum is benchmarked against national guidelines, at least in terms of what is written. Comparing the national and the global guidelines, as well as interpreting the content of course descriptions, some of the global guidelines also seem to be reflected in the learning outcomes of the course descriptions. The educators also reflected on, and confirmed some similarities of the Norwegian and global guidelines. Tying it in with the theme of global and critical perspectives, one sees that the national guidelines concerning knowledge of how anti-discriminatory practice can take place independent of different intersections, marginalisation, social justice, and "knowledge on how social problems are created and developed in a societal context" seems to promote learning outcomes of critical awareness (Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning, 2019), at least for this selection of schools.

However, not many global perspectives are reflected in the national guidelines, which the educators also confirmed in the FGD. Furthermore, the educators were missing the wording "anti-oppressive"/"non-oppressive", as well as a clearer political mandate in the guidelines. Considering the weakened political mandate in the new national guidelines, as well as lack of some critical and global perspectives, some recommendations can be made, turning the lens on to the guidelines listed in the global standards. After all, there is a clear institutional devotion to reflect national guidelines in the Norwegian curriculum, so adding on guidelines with a clear political mandate, as well as reflecting critical and global perspectives could in turn create new possibilities for classroom teaching and learning outcomes. In terms of implementing the wording of "anti-oppressive"/" non-oppressive", the global guidelines address this for example by stating that the programme should prepare students to "promote healthy, cohesive, non-oppressive relationships among people and between people and organisations at all levels –individuals, families, groups, programs, organisations, communities" (IASSW/IFSW, 2020).

Other notions of oppression is also reflected in the global guideline, where the programme must include "Critical understanding of how socio-structural inadequacies, discrimination, oppression, and social, political, environmental and economic injustices impact human development at all levels, including the global must be considered" (IASSW/IFSW, 2020).

The latter has already been mentioned in this study before, as it shows a clear critical, as well as political agenda and includes all the structural factors, also on the global level. Critical understanding/reflection is a phrase used several times in both the national and global guidelines. However, in the Norwegian one, critical thinking is mostly related to the students' own professional role, while in the global standards, it refers to several structural factors, including global ones. Therefore, it can also complement the Norwegian guidelines in terms of moving towards more global mindsets. To create a clearer political agenda for the national guidelines, the global guidelines can also here be complementary, for example, it states that the programme should "Facilitate and advocate for the inclusion of different voices, especially those of groups that have experienced marginalisation and exclusion" (IASSW/IFSW, 2020). Related to human rights and environmental justice among others, the school is expected to "Ensure that their students understand the importance of social, economic, political and environmental justice and develop relevant intervention, knowledge and skills" (IASSW/IFSW, 2020).

Implementing such guidelines within the Norwegian one could signal a stronger political agenda, emphasise global and critical perspectives, which in turn could create new course descriptions and learning outcomes. The signals it sends are also important for further discussion on what to include in the curriculum, what needs to be emphasised, as well as the greater notion of what one believes social work to be about in the Norwegian context. Moving beyond individualisation and otherisation, emphasising structural perspectives could increase politicisation of social work students' minds, and global perspectives can broaden the perspectives of what possible ways there are to understanding and working with social problems, beyond Norwegian and west-centric ideas and traditions (Henriksen, 2016).

5.3 Second research question, where do we go from here?

Returning to the second research question, "*What can be the challenges to implementing global and critical perspectives within the existing educational framework of the bachelor's in social work?*", it is clear that although some critical and global perspectives are represented in the curriculum, some issues in terms of implementation and learning outcome are still present in the Norwegian context. This is due to the Norwegian social work tradition, with its emphasis on individual-oriented services with strong ties to welfare management in a neoliberal context. This influences students' expectations of what social work is about, which is reinforced by the work field. Furthermore, the lack of a central thread due to institutional traditions and specific courses hinders qualitative learning outcomes. The lack of relevant literature, as well as Norwegian literature has also been emphasised as a challenge for implementation, both because it can be hard for the students to relate to, but also for practical reasons, such as the need to balance the English and Norwegian literature in the syllabus, and to what degree one can teach and test students in the subjects being taught when the literature is not available.

Based on the topics of the FGD, the educators were asked if they saw any possible recommendations for future development of the Norwegian social work curriculum. All agreed that in terms of achieving a central thread of global and critical perspectives, there is a need to develop more of an institutional community, instead of highly specified courses with single responsible educators. Instead, the educational institutions should strive for a shared responsibility, where the educators have greater insight into what is being taught over the course of the study. In doing so, one moves beyond the neoliberal educational constraints of "mine" and "yours" subject, and aims for a more holistic approach to teaching. This can ensure that global and critical perspectives become recurring topics throughout, which could enhance the learning outcome for the students. Furthermore, it would secure progression and hinder possible educational holes. Flem and colleagues (2021) also emphasised the importance of transformative learning happening at an early stage of the course of the study. In addition, one has to revisit these themes several times. As several of the educators gave examples of coming to the third year, some of the perspectives had been lost along the way. It was argued that is not, however, entirely up to the educators, as there are also structures further up that creates a pressure for production, and time limits. The institution, as a whole, has to open up and give time and resources for the different educators in the social work programme to come together and see the

possibilities across their own courses. Time and resources to develop and discuss the subjects seems to also be of high relevance in terms of topics where one addresses diversity within the classroom, as this requires time to create safe space, and time for the educator to gain insight and knowledge on how to do this in a correct manner.

Building further on these reflections concerning addressing diversity in the classroom, Boler and Zembylas (2003) talks of the *pedagogy of discomfort.* This is an educational approach to engage in critical thinking and to understand the multidimensional notion of power, habits and difference. It is implied in the words, that includes both educators and students to move outside of their comfort zone. This because, it is within the comfort zone that hegemony is reproduced, and not challenged due to hidden or unknown social consensus (Boler & Zembylas, 2003). The pedagogy of discomfort does not merely challenge and minimise the notions held by the dominant group, the marginalised group is also challenged on the internalised hegemonic values that comes from media, education, and socialisation (Boler & Zembylas, 2003).

When one actively challenges one's viewpoint and internalised values beyond what "truths" are served in media, education and socialisation, the authors refer to this as *emotional labour*. The emotional labour can result in distressing emotions such as anger, guilt and vulnerability. However, the emotional labour can also provide positive results, such as re-discovery of self, increased sense of community, and hope (Boler & Zembylas, 2003). When conducted in an open and safe space, with mutual exploration of the feelings that can occur, such as guilt and anger, it is important to further meet these feelings with compassion, to nurture a sense of hope and to create some kind of mutual understanding (Boler & Zembylas, 2003). Thus, it is not the goal to merely address vulnerability, but facilitate these notions to create politicised and self-critical minds and to treat people as whole persons. Both students and educators must be willing to listen to experiences without judgement, in safe and bold "spaces" created by the educator in the classroom (Boler & Zembylas, 2003).

One of the educators also argued that to counter unfortunate communication between students and service users in field placements, as well as ensuring students ability to apply critical thinking, the field placement supervisors could also be educated in lifting up the critical thinking

when they supervise students. The supervisors are currently given some guidance on some different pedagogical matters. However, one could expand these courses to include deeper introduction to critical thinking, and how to apply these perspectives in the supervision. In this sense, there is an unused potential of implementation of critical perspectives, where the field placement supervisors can have great influence on the outcome. This also relates to some of the previous literature mentioned in this study regarding what role the field placement supervisor has in facilitating critical awareness for the students about to enter field placements (Eriksen & Gradovski, 2020; Flem & Jönsson, 2022). Furthermore, it was argued by the educators that the collaboration and communication between the educational institution and the work fields needs to become better, and to have some mutual agreement of what is expected form both parties, as well as the student. A greater collaborative relationship could also in turn reduce the gap between what is learned in school and what meets the students in field placements (Eriksen & Gradovski, 2020; Flem & Jönsson, 2022).

Based on what was discussed in the focus group, it also seems of relevance to call upon Norwegian academia to publish more relevant literature on critical and global perspectives. This includes literature on Norway's colonial past, critical literature on Norwegian social work practice and its history, oppression and racism in a Norwegian context, and on "glocal" social issues - how local social problems can be understood in a global context (Flem et al., 2017). Relatedness to the Norwegian context seems to be an important educational tool if the students are to gain deeper understanding to the themes of structural oppression, the importance and influence of history, and to place oneself in a historical and cultural context. The implementation of literature in Norwegian could also make the complexities of these perspectives easier to discuss and understand, as it would be read in one's mother tongue, and related to Norwegian structures. However, if the aim is to decolonise the mind, the criticism has to be told in a way that does not overlook or reproduce other forms of oppression, as it is also a colonial mindset that the "white West" holds the "correct" knowledge for others to learn from (Tiostanova et al., 2019). In this sense, if there is to be a strict focus on Norwegian literature, this has to go hand in hand with correct perspectives, focus, wording, and great consideration of whose stories are being told (Henriksen, 2016).

As a student of an international social work education, I too agree that being provided relevant literature, as well as taking part in lectures where the educators hold great knowledge of critical and structural factors can be inspirational and spark new ways of thinking about the world. Those kinds of lectures were indeed a part of the motivation behind this study. This is not to state that I myself have completely emancipated myself of the notions discussed in this study, nor do I claim to hold some kind of greater awareness than social work students from the classical approach. However, it demonstrates the power that critical literature and educators hold in politicising students' minds, when being introduced to such resources.

5.4 Final remarks

This study illustrates an explorative way of investigating the use of global and critical perspectives in Norwegian social work education, based on Norwegian and global standards for social work education, and previous research theorising how these manifest in the social work curriculum. Complementing the document analysis, a FGD with educators themselves reflecting on guidelines and possible difficulties of implementation of critical and global perspectives was also conducted. The findings on possible difficulties of implementation do to some degree agree with previous research on the topic, with neoliberal educational notions such as time constraints and highly specialised courses (Flem et al., 2021; Flem et al., 2017). However important issues such as the lack of relevant literature, individual-oriented tradition influencing several levels, and lack of a central thread were also recurring themes in the FGD. Hopefully this study provides a fruitful discussion among educators involved in educating social work students and important stakeholders who are involved in developing social work curriculums, as well as those involved in developing national guidelines. After all, the overall impression from both previous research and the FGD is that critical and global perspectives are important to broaden the students' awareness, but the Norwegian social work tradition, interwoven in neoliberal ideology, creates restraints to multilevel approaches of understanding. With the study's small sample in mind, it was an aim of this study that it produce in-depth qualitative understanding that could serve as a starting point for further dialogue and frameworks that reviews social work curricula in the Norwegian and Scandinavian contexts that could be complimentary for already existing quality assessments for higher education.

Bibliography

- Anish, K.R., Borrmann, S., Nguyen-Meyer, N., Zhao, Y., Moen, H. B., & Liu, W. (2021). The art of not-knowing: Valuing diversity and intercultural competences in international social work education. *International Social Work*. https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728211065708

- Boler, M. & Zembylas, M. (2003) Discomforting Truths: The Emotional Terrain of Understanding Difference In Trifonas, P. P. (Eds.), *Pedagogies of Difference : Rethinking Education for Social Justice.* RoutledgeFalmer.

- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology* (pp. XIV, 332). Polity Press.

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. (pp. xv, 330). Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv26071r6

- Butler-Kisber, L. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry: thematic, narrative and arts-based perspectives* (2. edition.). SAGE.

- Christensen, J. (2010). Proposed Enhancement of Bronfenbrenner's Development Ecology Model. *Education Inquiry*, *1*(2), 117–126. https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v1i2.21936

- Darling, N. (2007). Ecological Systems Theory: The Person in the Center of the Circles. *Research in Human Development*, *4*(3-4), 203–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/15427600701663023

- Deutscher, P., & Lafont, C. (2017). Introduction: Critical Theory in Critical Times in *Critical theory in critical times : transforming the global political and economic order*. Columbia University Press.

- Eriksen, H.L., & Gradovski, M. (2020). Ethical dilemmas in field placements: The experiences of social work students in Norway and possible implications for social

work education. *Dialogic Pedagogy*, *8*, 85–111. https://doi.org/10.5195/dpj.2020.322

- Fellesorganisasjonen (2019). *Yrkesetisk grunnlagsdokument [Founding document of work-ethics] [Brochure]* *https://www.fo.no/yrkesetisk-grunnlagsdokument/fo-yrkesetisk-grunnlagsdokument-2019-2023-article6951-3644.html*

- Flem A.L., Jönsson, J. H., & Alseth, A. K. (2017). Revitalizing social work education through global and critical awareness. *European Journal of Social Work*, *20*(1), 76–87. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2016.1185703

- Flem, A.L, Sewpaul, V., Juberg, A, and Viggen, K. (2021). Creating spaces for emancipatory praxis with social work students in a diverse classroom context. *Social Work Education*, 42(4) 577-594. https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2021.1982888

- Forskrift om felles rammeplan for helse -og sosialfagutdanninger [Regulations for a common framework-plan for health and social work education] (2017) (FOR-2017-09-06-1353). Lovdata. https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2017-09-06-1353

- Forskrift om nasjonal retningslinje for sosionomutdanning [Regulations for national social work education] (2019) (FOR-2019-03-15-409). Lovdata. https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/forskrift/2019-03-15-409

- Giddens, A., & Sutton, P. W. (2017). *Sociology* (8. ed.). Polity.

- Henriksen, J. E. (2016). From housing campaign to multicultural understanding: The development of professional social work in Sámi areas in Norway. *International Social Work*, 59(5), 587–599. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872816648203

- Holmes, A.D.G. (2020). Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide. *Journal of Education*. 8(4), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232

- IASSW. (2018, April 24). Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles. https://www.iassw-aiets.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Global-Social-Work-Statement-of-Ethical-Principles-IASSW-27-April-2018-1.pdf

- IASSW/IFSW. (2020, August 1). Global standards for social work education and training. https://www.ifsw.org/global-standards-for-social-work-education-and-training/
- IFSW (2014, July). Global definition of social work https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/
- Jönsson J.H. & Flem, A. (2022). Global social work ethics and international field training: The experiences and practice dilemmas of Norwegian and Swedish social work students. *International Social Work*, *65*(1), 38–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872819889398
- Jönsson, J.H. (2013). Social work beyond cultural otherisation. *Nordic Social Work Research*, *3*(2), 159–167. https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2013.834510
- Kamali, M., & Jönsson, J. H. (2018). *Neoliberalism, Nordic Welfare States and Social Work* (1st ed., Vol. 1). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315111834
- Kellner, D. (1990). Critical Theory and the Crisis of Social Theory. *Sociological Perspectives*, *33*(1), 11–33. https://doi.org/10.2307/1388975
- Keskinen, S., Skaptadóttir, U. D., & Toivanen, M. (2019). Narrations of homogeneity, waning welfare states, and the politics of solidarity. In *Undoing Homogeneity in the Nordic Region* (1st ed., pp. 1–17). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315122328-1
- Križ, K., & Skivenes, M. (2010). 'Knowing Our Society' and 'Fighting Against Prejudices': How Child Welfare Workers in Norway and England Perceive the Challenges of Minority Parents. *The British Journal of Social Work, 40(8)*, 2634–2651. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcq026
- Krumsvik, R. J. (2014). *Forskingsdesign og kvalitativ metode: ei innføring* [*Research design and qualitative method: an introduction*] (p. 187). Fagbokforlaget.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju* [*The qualitative research interview*] (3. utg., p. 381). Gyldendal akademisk.
- Larsen, A. K. & Sewpaul, V. (2014). Community development: towards an integrated emancipatory framework. In Larsen, A. K., Sewpaul, V., & Hole, G. O.

(Eds.) *Participation in Community Work* (pp. 248–264). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203075968-30

- Midtbøen, A. (2014). Etnisk diskriminering i det kjønnsdelte arbeidsmarkedet [Ethnic discrimination in the gender-segregated labour market] in Reisel, L. & Teigen, M. (Eds.) *Kjønnsdeling og etniske skiller på arbeidsmarkedet [Gender-segregation and ethnic divisions in the labour market]* [(p. 240). Gyldendal akademisk.

- Midtbøen, A.H., & Lidén, H. (2015). *Diskriminering av samer, nasjonale minoriteter og innvandrere i Norge : En kunnskapsgjennomgang* [Discrimination of Sami people, national minorities and immigrants in Norway: a knowledge review]. http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2440432

- Mik-Meyer, N., & Villardsen, K. (2013). Neo-institutional theory: Myths and legitimacy. In *Power and Welfare* (pp. 99–118). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203113370-10

- NOKUT (2022). *Evaluering av implementeringen av RETHOS for studieprogrammene i sosialt arbeid* [Evalutation of the implementation of RETHOS for social work programmes]. https://www.nokut.no/globalassets/nokut/rapporter/ua/2022/evaluering-av-implementeringen-av-rethos-for-studieprogrammene-i-sosialt-arbeid_10-2022.pdf

- Østby, L. (2008). Rasisme eller kultur? Perspektiver i utdanning av sosialarbeidere i Norge og England [Rasism or culture? Perspectives on education of social workers in Norway and England]. *Fontene forskning 1(1)*, 49-62. http://hdl.handle.net/11250/98855

- Sewpaul, V. (2013). Inscribed in Our Blood: Challenging the Ideology of Sexism and Racism. *Affilia*, *28*(2), 116–125. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109913485680

- Sewpaul, V. and Jones, D. (2004). Global standards for social work education and training. *Social Work Education.* 23 (5), 493-513.

- Silverman. D. (2016). *Qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. XVII, 457). Sage.

- Skivenes, M. (2015). How the Norwegian child welfare system approaches migrant children. In Skivenes, M., Barn, R., Kris, K., & Poso, T. (Eds.), *Child*

welfare systems and migrant children: A cross country study of policies and practce. (pp. 39-61) Oxford Univeristy Press

- Tembo, M. J. (2022). Navigating emotions in child welfare: Immigrant parents' experiences and perceptions of involvement with child welfare services in Norway. *International Social Work*, 65(2), 254–267. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872819897770

- Tlostanova, M., Thapar-Björkert, S., & Knobblock, I. (2019). Do We Need Decolonial Feminism in Sweden? *NORA : Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 27(4), 290–295. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2019.1641552

- Wilkison, S. (2016). Analysing Focus Group Data in Silverman, D. (Eds.), *Qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. XVII, 457). Sage.

- Ylvisaker, S., Rugkåsa, M., & Eide, K. (2015). Silenced stories of social work with minority ethnic families in Norway. *Critical and Radical Social Work,* 3(2), 221–236. https://doi.org/10.1332/204986015X14331614908951

Appendix

A. Topic guide for focus group discussion

Topic guide for focus group discussion

Everyone introduces themselves, ms, Sunniva starts. It is desirable that you say something about how long you have been involved in educating social workers, what you teach / have taught.

As you are all from the same field of work, there are probably several of you who share the same experiences and thoughts. Remember to express it you agree with, or have similar reflections during the course of this discussion. Thoughts and attitudes that are different are of course also welcome, and of interest. Please show respect for one another and give each other space to finish different reflections. The group discussion will be audio-recorded. This is <u>only</u> to secure correct transcription, and the recording will be deleted after handing in the thesis project. You can withdraw from this study at any time, and your answers will be anonymised during, as well as in the finished report.

First topic: Global and national guidelines

- *To what extent do you think the bachelor's in social work at your institution is aligned with the Norwegian national standards regarding social work education and training?*

- *Do you have any opinion as to what degree the national guidelines reflect the global guidelines? Here, referring to IASSW's and IFSW's Global Standards for Social Work Education*

- *Do you have any opinion if IFSW's SW Statement of Ethical Principles are reflected in the social work education?*

Second topic: Global and critical perspectives

- *To what degree are global and critical perspectives currently being taught at your institution? Specific examples of classroom teaching, or if it does not relate to your subject, reflect on the implementation in terms of the bachelor on a general level.*

- *There is research and literature reflecting that social workers entering the labour market are poorly equipped to work with ethnic minorities and to deal with diversities competently. What do you think contributes to this?*

- *What do you think are the challenges to incorporating emancipatory, post-colonial and anti-oppressive perspectives in social work education and training? e.g., meeting multiple demands; time constraints and deadlines; worldviews of educators; something else?*

- *Based on what has been discussed during this group session, what can be possible improvements for the bachelor's in social work?*

B. Informed consent

Are you interested in taking part in the research project
"Global and critical perspectives in Norwegian social work education"?

Purpose of the project

You are invited to participate in a research project where the main purpose is to investigate possible challenges to implementing emancipatory, post-colonial perspectives within existing educational frameworks, and to what extent bachelor's in social work (BSW) curriculum reflects global and critical perspectives. Previous research suggests that to what degree Nordic educational institutions have chosen to adapt critical and global perspectives in the curriculum varies across the institutions, at the same time, reports show that newly educated social workers feel ill equipped to work within different cultural settings. Although some existing literature emphasised the importance of global and critical perspectives, as well as investigated how these perspectives can be addressed in both theoretical courses and professional training, little is still known of why educational institutions include the perspectives to different degrees. With social worker being a protected profession in Norway, one would hope that the education social workers receive are of high standard, benchmarked against Norwegian national requirements and the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training that was first adopted by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) with a revised version adopted in 2020. This is a part of a master thesis project, related to the *Nordic master's in social work and Welfare* programme at the University of Stavanger. The research questions facilitating this project are:

1) *To what extent are the BSW curricula at Norwegian educational institutions benchmarked against Norwegian national educational standards and the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training?*

2) *What are the challenges to implementing global and critical perspectives within the existing educational framework of the bachelor in social work?*

Who is responsible for the research project?

Master student Sunniva Sleire at the University of Stavanger is responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

To complement the curriculum review done for the first research question, as well as further on answering the second question, it is desired to do a focus group interview with six educators representing three different Norwegian educational institutions in social work education at the bachelor level. The reason for choosing the bachelor level is that it is the bachelor education that gives the protected title "social worker" and is what's required to go out in the labour market as a social worker.

What does participation involve for you?

If you take part in this project, this involves you participating in a focus group interview on Teams, scheduled to take approximately two hours, with a 15 min. break in the middle if necessary. The group discussion includes questions about national and global standards for social work education, as well as challenges to incorporating emancipatory, post-colonial and anti-oppressive perspectives within the educational framework. The group discussion will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in the capturing and reporting of the data**.**

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how your personal data will be stored and used

Your personal data will only be used for the purpose specified here and I will process your personal data in accordance with data protection legislation (the GDPR).

- Name: for signature on the consent form.
- Phone number and/or email: For communicating and agreeing upon a suitable time for the interview.
- Audio-recording of group discussion: To ensure accuracy in the capturing and reporting of the data.

When transcribing the interview, your name will be anonymised with a code. The code description, as well as the consent form will be locked away separately from the data collected. Your name will not be mentioned in the analysis and research report.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?
The planned end date of the project is 12.06.23, and the audio-recordings together with other personal data will be deleted after the end of the project.

Your rights
So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives the right to process your personal data for this project?
Based on your written consent the personal data will be processed.

Based on an agreement with Master student Sunniva Sleire at the University of Stavanger, The Data Protection Services of Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and

Research has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project meets requirements in data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Sunniva Sleire (Master student) by telephone: 95149392, and mail: se.sleire@stud.uis.no
- Dr. Vishanthie Sewpaul (Supervisor) by mail: sewpaulv@ukzn.ac.za

If you have questions about how data protection has been assessed in this project by Sikt, contact:

- email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,

Sunniva Sleire, master student at University of Stavanger.

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project *"Global and critical perspectives in Norwegian social work education"* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in a focus group interview for the master thesis project

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end of the project.

(Signed by participant, date)

C. Ethical approval

Sikt

Notification form / Masteroppgåve - Bruk av globale og kritiske perspektiv i underv… / Assessment

Assessment of processing of personal data

Reference number	**Assessment type**	**Date**
677608	Standard	23.01.2023

Project title
Masteroppgåve - Bruk av globale og kritiske perspektiv i undervisninga

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)
Universitetet i Stavanger / Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet / Institutt for sosialfag

Project leader
Dr. Vishanthie Sewpaul

Student
Sunniva Sleire

Project period
30.01.2023 - 12.06.2023

Categories of personal data
General

Legal basis
Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, so long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 12.06.2023.