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Constructions of professionalism and the democratic mandate in education A discourse analysis of Norwegian public policy documents

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ABSTRACT

Although previous research has contributed to the body of literature in education for democracy by addressing deficits in policies in equalizing students' life chances, less attention has been paid to how accomplishing a democratic mandate in education is constructed and legitimized by educational authorities in national policy documents. In this article, we report findings from a project that examined this issue. The aim is to provide insight into how professionalism is constructed and legitimized within and across key education policy documents in the wake of a major national educational reform in Norway. We identify possible discursive shifts and examine what tensions are at play via textual analysis of selected policy documents, with a methodology inspired by a critical approach to discourse analysis. Theories on professionalism and democratic leadership serve as an overarching framework. The findings suggest (1) there are tensions between the use of performance data and education for democracy; (2) little attention is given to professionalism as a deliberative activity; and (3) there is increased emphasis on fulfilling students' individual rights. We argue that introducing a language of performance expectations has permitted the reinterpretation of what it means to be a professional educator in a social democratic welfare state.

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Introduction

Studies of policy documents across Western countries demonstrate how neoliberal reform has internationally gained ground in education (Hall et al. 2015). Often, two conflicting messages about schools are presented in educational policies: schools reproduce inequality but can equalize life chances when they are effective (OECD 2012). New public management (NPM) has been introduced with the explicit intent to narrow achievement gaps and strengthen the equalizing function of schooling through deliberate performance management. In public debates, it is argued that the welfare state project has turned national and local authorities into unresponsive, bureaucratic organizations (Møller and Skedsmo 2013). By promoting NPM-related features such as local autonomy, devolution, horizontal specialization, and flattened municipal hierarchies, policy

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makers argue that a democratic mandate will be accomplished and disparities in educational outcomes among social groups will be reduced.

Simultaneously, policy makers argue for the need to establish external accountability regimes, more standardization, and competition among schools to accomplish an efficient public service delivery (Røvik 2007). As such, tensions exist between enhancing local freedom by awarding greater autonomy to lower levels and a strong focus on external accountability and control of test results related to basic skills. Substantial research has shown that professional educators work under increasing managerial demands in a decentralized system, implying increased monitoring from the central district and state levels (Apple 2006; Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012; Perry and McWilliam 2009; Thomson 2009).

Educators in Europe are also expected to abide by standards of national and European law and by the democratic mandate stated in a key policy recommendation for member states of the Council of Europe (CoE). CM/Rec (2010) 7, known as the 'Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) and Human Rights Education' (CoE 2010). These expectations reflect what Anderson and Cohen (2018) have chosen to label as 'a democratic form of professionalism', which involves collegiality, trust, and empowerment (Anderson and Cohen 2018), and democratic systems of leadership (Woods 2005). Less attention has been paid to how professionalism is constructed and legitimized within and across key education policy documents in national contexts. This article aims to fill that gap in order to provide insight into the policy-tensions resulting from the neoliberal reform agenda that continuously impacts education systems worldwide.

Norway reflects global tensions between NPM and hierarchical modes of managing education on the one hand, and an emphasis on a strong welfare state and democratic ideals on the other, which allows insight into tensions that may emerge in policies over time. We explore how professionalism is constructed and legitimized across 13 years of key education policy documents in the wake of a major national educational reform, Knowledge Promotion (K06). K06 represents a school-wide reform, affecting all levels of the education sector. It introduced external accountability policies at a systemic level reflected in new managerial tools, such as the National Quality Assessment System. We assume that the way professionalism is constructed in policy documents indicates underlying values. During the implementation of the reform, Norway was governed by multiple coalition governments, which may imply possible tensions and discursive shifts within and across policy documents.

The following research questions guided our analysis of the policy documents: (1) What kinds of competencies are emphasized in Norwegian policy documents? (2) How has professionalism been constructed and legitimized since the introduction of K06? (3) What tensions in constructing the democratic mandate can be identified over time?

Citizenship education stresses political aspects and the importance of positioning members equally in a democratic community (Kymlicka and Norman 1994; Rancière 2002; Ruitenberg 2015; Westheimer and Kahne 2004). Therefore, the reported study is situated in critical social studies that highlight how professionals' work is embedded in broader social structures of power and how educational leadership is connected to the ongoing development of democracy in schools and society (Anderson and Cohen 2018; Gunter 2016; Horsford and Anderson 2019). The study draws from textual analysis of

selected Norwegian policy documents and is inspired by critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992). In order to analyze how the above expectations of leaders and teachers are constructed and legitimized in policy documents, we drew on theories of professionalism and democratic leadership. The paper is structured as follows. First, we review the literature specifically on professionalism, regulation, leadership, and education for democracy. Next, we describe the Norwegian context, our theoretical approach, data sources and explain the methodology. Subsequently, we present and discuss our findings. The last section concludes.

A review of relevant studies

We started by searching databases for relevant academic articles and books published during the last two decades. We also used a version of ‘snowball sampling’: ‘carefully following citations and colleagues’ suggestions (Neumerski 2013).

While some researchers define educational leadership as particular tasks and behaviors that hold responsible parties accountable for learning outcomes and school improvement measures (Hopkins and Higham 2007; Hopkins et al. 2014; Leithwood and Seashore-Louis 2012), others emphasize how leadership is conceptualized as a social and political relationship visible within the lived contradictions of a particular educational context (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012; Blackmore 2011; Eacott 2010; Thomson 2009). As such, leadership is a contested concept.

Studies have demonstrated how European school leaders are increasingly experiencing a work environment in which contracting, outsourcing, public relations, benchmarking, and test scores have taken center stage in recent reforms. Since the 1980s, school leaders’ job descriptions have been characterized by high organizational demands, uncertainty, deregulation and managerial accountability, leading to an environment in which economic interests or efficiency demands often overshadow collective and public interests (Gunter et al. 2016; Thomson 2009). School leaders experience tension between accountability within bureaucratic organizations and the autonomy of professional norms and standards. Such findings can be linked to a broader trend in existing research, revealing tensions between teachers’ and leaders’ occupational work, connected to the public, democratic mission and education mandate, and the new, managerial-inspired, organizational approaches to professionalism. Accordingly, studies have shown that de-professionalization corresponds to the erosion of traditional values and trust in educators (Evetts 2009, 2011; Horsford, Scott, and Anderson 2019).

Critical studies have addressed policy deficits related to the professional work of leaders and teachers in the domain of education for democracy (Gunter 2009; Hall et al. 2015) and how a ‘democracy for consumers,’ which entails market ideas and principles, has entered the public discourse on education (Englund 1994; Evetts 2009; Woods 2005). Thus, democracy as a political notion has been translated into an economic concept; a focus on skills that produce good workers underpins the idea of a consumer democracy (Apple 2000; Møller 2006). In accordance with this political shift, research on educational leadership and governance indicates that one of the main tensions lies between discourses of competition and privatization, which underpin NPM on the one hand, and discourses rooted in socially democratic ideologies that are linked to notions of equity, participation and comprehensive public education, on the other

(Moos 2018; Rose 2016; Trujillo and Valladares 2016). The identified studies demonstrate how also the meaning of professionalism is contested.

Studies conducted in a Norwegian context illustrate how, as observed internationally, a discourse related to NPM competes with a social democratic discourse for prominence (Møller and Skedsmo 2013). These studies have connected education for democracy with equity education, and some have problematized the attempt to address achievement gaps across cultural groups (Lillejord and Tolo 2006) or have demonstrated ambiguous expectations regarding the role of school leadership in multicultural schools, leaving great leeway for principals and teachers to interpret policy expectations from above (Andersen, 2018; Vedøy 2008). It raises the question of how, after recent reform efforts, professionalism is construed and legitimated under the influences of policy-makers representing different ends of the political spectrum. Thus, we analyze key policy documents since the reform of Knowledge Promotion from 2006.

Another issue is related to legal standards that regulate the expectations of school leadership in regards to democratic education and psycho-social environments. In this respect, leaders are expected to ensure a healthy psycho-social environment, as constituted in the Norwegian Education Act (Education Act 1998). They must adhere to professional norms, which are in turn related to legal accountability (Elmore 2005; Firestone and Shipp 2007; Sinclair 1995). According to Education Act § 9-A and its later revisions, principals must bear the responsibility for the fulfilment of standards, which involves the duty to respond to student reports regarding bullying, harassment or other forms of mistreatment. Principals are held to account by the local educational authorities. However, we know little about what tensions arise when jurisdiction gains ground in schools as professionals work with education for democracy.

The review highlights tensions between NPM-discourses and socially democratic ideologies, between occupational and organizational professionalism, between economic interests and collective interests, and between accountability and autonomy.

The case of Norway

Norway has a strong welfare state legacy that emphasizes the role of educational institutions in creating a civic society, and the education of democratic citizens has long been a guiding principle. In addition to preparing children to become able employees, schools should prepare children to play constructive roles in a democratic society. Education for democracy is not embedded in a single subject in the Norwegian tradition. Rather, it is an interdisciplinary topic or theme that encompasses several subjects, such as language, religion and social science (Anker and Der Lippe 2015). In Norwegian policy documents, democratic citizenship education consists of three classifications (MoER 2017): education about, for and through democracy. Education about democracy implies education for democratic preparedness, which acts as a counter group enmities and racism. It concerns intellectual competencies and is anchored in the subjects' traditions. Education for democracy implies a competence based in values and attitudes; activating democratic preparedness and understanding of democratic processes in students. Finally, education through democratic participation involves developing students' participation in democratic actions and activities (Lenz, Nustad, and Geissert 2016; Stray 2014). Teaching and learning democracy entail practicing democracy through education and reasoned

deliberation to develop students' skills, values and citizenship. Emphasis has also been placed on the significance of critical thinking and on challenging wider power structures (Andersen 2014; Lihong et al. 2017; Stray 2010; Vedøy 2008).

One of the main responsibilities of school principals, teachers and staff is to promote democracy, equity and social justice in both schools and the wider community. Since the end of the 1980 s, however, neo-liberal thinking with an inherent technical focus and economic rationality has gained ground. The results of an international, large-scale student assessments, e.g. the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), have increasingly been used to legitimate education policy (MoER 2004, 2008).

Managerial elements in a Norwegian context include a combination of performance measurement, quality indicators, target setting, accountability and the use of incentives and sanctions. Interpretations of central policy differ across local educational authorities. For example, many municipalities have developed systems of detailed performance indicators, contracts, publication of national test scores, which have consequences for the schools' reputation among parents. Some superintendents also use merit-based pay during local salary negotiations in some urban areas to reward principals who can prove successful results on national tests at their school (Camphuijsen, Møller, and Skedsmo 2020).

Results from national tests are also used locally for benchmarking (Skedsmo 2011). To some extent, a market approach to educational reforms has been adopted, but marketization as a principle has been less embraced in the Norwegian context, probably because a market of school choice for students and parents is only possible in larger cities, and private providers are by law not allowed to operate as 'for-profit' entities. Moreover, there has been cross-party consensus to defend the traditional welfare state and a comprehensive school system (Wiborg 2013). Nevertheless, the use of new evaluation technologies to monitor student outcomes by principals can be read as a shift toward what Evetts (2009) has termed 'organizational professionalism', which relies on external regulation and accountability measures. Although the government looks to standardized test results as a measure of effectiveness and quality, heavy-handed consequences for low test performance are not imposed on schools and principals.

Moreover, the education system remains strongly rooted in ideologies and norms emphasizing equity, which are linked to social-democratic values. Teachers are also committed to an ethical platform that includes professional values supporting human rights, the respect, and integrity of every individual, and ethical responsibility when interacting with stakeholders (Union of Education Norway 2018). Research has indicated that schools based on democratic values may face numerous challenges when confronted with a neoliberal agenda and accountability-based policies (Karlsen 2006; Mausethagen, Prøitz, and Skedsmo 2018; Telhaug 2006). In this article, the Norwegian case serves as an example of how professionalism is constructed and legitimized over time, as well as an example of tensions that arise between professionalism with a democratic mandate and organizational forms of professionalism.

Theoretical perspectives and analytical concepts

There are multiple definitions of education for democracy. Anderson and Cohen (2018) focus on how democratic professionals can advocate for community empowerment and work for a common good, while Hill and Jochim (2014) problematize how the price of

democracy can come at the expense of efficiency. In this article, we draw on Anderson and Cohen's emphasis on work for a common good with the aim of securing equal opportunities.

Internationally, there has been continual debate about the professional role of educators, while professionalism, which entails a range of ideologies, remains a contested concept (Evetts 2009, 2011; Mausethagen 2013; Poulson 1998; Sugrue and Solbrekke 2011).

A well-known distinction exists between the two 'ideal-types' of professionalism as developed by Evetts (2009); organizational and occupational, though they should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Organizational professionalism is manifested by a 'discourse of control' and incorporates rational-legal forms of authority and hierarchical structures of responsibility and decision making, as well as standardized work procedures linked to organization objectives, external regulation and accountability based on performance reviews. Occupational professionalism is characterized by collegial authority and relationships based on trust, with latitude for discretionary judgement. This form of professionalism is largely based on strong identities and cultures assigned to professional workflows. Additionally, controls are enacted by the practitioners (an 'inside out' approach), and internalized codes of ethics accord with fixed standards in the field. According to Evetts, the focus on output measures and standardized practices are expanding the organizational professionalism, but it is an empirical question how this happens in different national educational contexts.

Anderson and Cohen (2018) argue that the task ahead is not just to reassert occupational professionalism, because claims to professionalism by teachers in the past have often marginalized the voices of low-income parents. Therefore, they suggest a notion of democratic professionalism arising from resistance to the emerging focus on performance audits. This form of professionalism involves inclusion, advocacy, and activism. It also involves culturally responsive, democratic teaching, as well as a view of the principal as a facilitator and advocate allied with the community (Horsford, Scott, and Anderson 2019). This democratic form of professionalism likely involves notions of democratic leadership (Apple and Beane 1999; Woods 2005) which means that accomplishing a democratic mandate in education includes encouraging dialogue, enabling contributors by distributing authority, institutional empowerment, respecting diversity, fostering democratic values and truths, and enabling the free flow of ideas. Hence, their perspectives complement Anderson and Cohen's framework.

The analytical distinction between different forms of professionalism is related to different forms of accountability. While some distinguish between bureaucratic/managerial and professional accountability (O'Day 2002), others offer a more fine-grained conceptualization (Sinclair 1995). There is no consensus on the meaning of accountability, although one definition proposed is a relationship 'in which people are required to explain and take responsibility for their actions' while 'giving and demanding reasons for conduct' (Sinclair 1995, 220–221). For the purposes of this article, we distinguish between professional and managerial accountability. Professional accountability involves adhering to the standards of the profession, seeing teaching as a moral endeavor, integrating codes of ethics into schools, developing norms that foreground students' needs, and engaging in collaboration, knowledge-sharing and improvement of practice. Managerial accountability, on the other hand, means that a subject is responsible for specific units within a hierarchical system. It involves task delegation, schools becoming

collective entities accountable to higher levels of the system, and a focus on monitoring (Møller 2009, 40).

In analyzing how educational professionalism is constructed and legitimated in policy documents, we also distinguish between two different forms of discourse: a professional and democratic discourse and a performative discourse (Horsford, Scott, and Anderson 2019). In relation to the performative approach, we view both competitive individualism and social welfare as relevant analytical concepts.

Data and methodologies

K06, which was launched in 2006, is regarded as a major education reform because it included both primary and secondary education and introduced a new governance regime that can be described as a shift from the use of input-oriented policy instruments to a more output-oriented policy. This article examines three White Papers (WP) published in wake of this reform: WP 30, ‘Culture for Learning’ (2003–2004) (MoER¹ 2004); WP 31, ‘Quality in Schools’ (2007–2008) (MoER 2008); and WP 28, ‘Subjects – In-Depth-Learning – Understanding – A Renewal of the Knowledge Promotion’ (2015–2016) (MoER 2016). These documents were selected because they display developmental trends over time and/or possible policy shifts since K06 was launched. To better contextualize these findings, we supply extracts from WP 19 and WP 20 (MoER 2010, 2013), which followed WP 31, and WP 21 (MoER 2017), which followed WP 28, issued about a year earlier. Table 1 provides an overview of the main White Papers and their content, in addition to the follow-up documents analyzed.

Table 1. Overview of White Papers.

Year	Government Name of White Paper	Follow-up document(s)
2004	Conservative-led coalition government <i>Culture for Learning WP 30</i> Introduced a new model of governance and a new education reform, K06. A focus on deregulation, efficiency, competition, learning outcomes and accountability, legitimised by the problematic PISA findings.	
2008	Red-green coalition government <i>Quality in Schools WP 31</i> A focus on quality, a need for recentralisation and better support to local educational authorities. The policy was still legitimised by PISA findings and the OECD report, ‘Improving School Leadership’.	WP 19 focuses on leadership and teachers’ time for learning in professional work. WP 20 Followed up by WP 20, ‘On the Right Track’ (2012–2013), which celebrated better results on PISA, focused on developing an inclusive and common school for all, requirements for competences in future working life and society, and the need for more flexibility and relevance in upper secondary schools.
2016	Conservative-led coalition government <i>Subjects – In-Depth-Learning – Understanding – A Renewal of the Knowledge Promotion WP 28</i> Aims at establishing the premises for a new general curriculum providing children and youth with the values, knowledge and attitudes necessary for participating in the work force and civic engagement in the wider society.	WP 21 ‘Eager to Learn’ (2016–2017). Focus on early intervention to counter the reproduction of social differences in learning outcomes that exist between districts and schools.

The methodological approach was inspired by critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 1992), which explores the relationships between texts, discursive practices and wider social and cultural structures. Policy texts use rhetoric and metaphor to influence the reader (Mausethagen and Granlund 2012; Taylor 2004), and CDA combines linguistic analysis with social analysis. It implies a three-dimensional analysis, an understanding of the text as a unique action, an instance of discursive practice that specifies the nature of text production and interpretation, and a representation of a certain ideological position. We assumed that policy texts reflect instances of unique actions by the Ministry of Education. These three dimensions of reading are specified in the following manner in order to correspond with our research questions: The first reading aimed to obtain a holistic overview of the themes of the text, to determine which terms were prominent, and to gauge how problems and solutions were constructed and legitimated. It involved coding of pieces of relevant texts according to the theoretical concepts outlined in the analytical framework and inspired by other studies mentioned in the review. NVivo software was used as a tool in this process. The second reading aimed to identify the construction of professionalism and democracy. The focus of the analysis was on the choice of words and word clusters. The third reading aimed to document multiple and competing discourses in policy texts and to identify possible discursive shifts.

In the presentation of the findings, extracts of the selected education policy documents illustrate how texts construct representations of the world, social relationships and the social identities of educators. All quotes were translated and emphasized by the authors.

Findings

This section is structured around the main findings: First, there are tensions between the use of performance data and education for democracy. Second, little attention is given to professionalism as a deliberative activity. The third finding indicates that there is increased emphasis on fulfilling students' individual rights.

Tensions between the use of performance data and education for democracy

In general, the three policy documents emphasize learning and basic skills as the main mission for schools. Our analysis suggests a heavy emphasis on the effectuation of learning basic skills. Hence, a focus on performance as an expectation of leaders.

The notion of basic skills – oral, reading, writing, digital and numerical – was introduced in WP 30, which inspired K06. A continual emphasis on these basic skills through time, beginning in 2006, can be observed. Across the three policy documents, we also observe a strong emphasis on 'competence goals', 'learning outcomes', and effectiveness, signifying a focus on 'what works' (WP 31, 42; WP 28, 30–34; WP 21, 19, 33). WP 30 states: 'within the frames of clear competence goals it should be a *professional responsibility* to decide how the goals will be achieved' (25). The same is emphasized in WP 28, 43. In other words, we see indications of discretion granted to professionals. There is also an emphasis on increasing performance in the sphere of basic skills among groups at risk, such as minority students, immigrants and pupils who have parents who did not attend higher education. This means there are tensions both within and across documents.

A key issue is equal access to, and completion of, upper-secondary education regardless of socio-economic and ethnic background, which points to governing based on social-democratic, egalitarian principles. Politicians do not seek to tear down the welfare state, but rather to make what is good, even better. Still, the main focus of the three documents is on effective practices to improve learning. Less attention is paid to the broader democratic mandate of schools, which involves educating critically thinking citizens, as well as fostering social cohesion and inclusion of all groups through community participation and other inclusive practices, such as methods for assuming others' perspectives or resolving conflicts.

There are also references to developing students' skills, attitudes, values and perceptions to help them participate in democratic society. For example, several references are made throughout the documents to the level of democratic competence displayed by Norwegian pupils in lower-secondary schools in the International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) (WP 31, 18). Moreover, the importance of democratic competency and participation in a representative democracy, which involves trust in public institutions, is particularly emphasized in WP 31. By referring to the ICCS, Norwegian students displayed a high level of democratic competence compared with students from other countries and scored high with regard to supporting the rights of women and minority groups (WP 31, 18).

Preparing students for a future which will involve radical change and numerous challenges, both socially and environmentally, is underscored in WP 28, 'Subject, In-Depth Learning and Understanding', which was published by the conservative-led coalition government. Two years before this White Paper was published, there was a change in government, whereby a Commission was appointed with the aim of assessing competency and renewing subjects in basic education according to estimated requirements for participating in a future society. This Commission submitted a report in 2015, the recommendations from which are addressed in WP 28. The strong focus on learning, basic skills and foundational literacies still remains, but three additional interdisciplinary themes are presented in order to address challenges emerging in society: 'Democracy and Citizenship', 'Peoples' Health and Life Mastery', and 'Sustainable Development'. Below is a key quotation that exemplifies emphasis on democratic citizenship education: 'students shall have a voice in decision-making. Democracy and citizenship in the school shall promote learning that strengthens students' understanding of democracy and capability to participate in democratic processes and community' (WP 28, 38, authors' translation). This argument is strengthened by WP 21, which followed WP 28, wherein the principle of equity is translated into a focus on raising students' achievements:

We know that weak student achievements in the school have large consequences for further educational opportunities and work life. *There is a clear relationship between high levels of basic skills and participation in democratic processes in society in general. To lift these students is therefore a decisive factor to counter alienation* (WP 21, 23).

The interdisciplinary theme of democracy and citizenship appears to be anchored in values such as voting and human rights: 'Democracy is a governing form that grants rights and demands duties, for example Human Rights and the right to vote during an election' (WP 28, 38). Furthermore, key tenets of education for democracy are

mentioned: ‘Democratic citizenship revolves around how citizens live together in a stable political community and participate and contribute on different social arenas’ (WP 28, 38, authors’ translation). However, the discourse of equity and promoting democracy is mainly connected to the framework of increasing excellence in literacy and numeracy. This strong focus on performance in basic skills may erode a broader discussion about education for citizenship over the long term.

Little attention paid to professionalism as a deliberative activity

WP 30 was issued based on the preceding Green Papers, or Norwegian Official Reports, NOU 2002:10 and NOU 2003:16, and was the foundation for the major educational reform, K06. The first of the issued Green Papers, NOU 2002:10, is central in outlining the National Quality Assessment System (NQAS) and a web-based platform for public access to schools’ results.² A key characteristic of the NQAS is national standardized testing with increased responsibility put on local education authorities and schools to monitor assessment results. A focus on basic skills, which supports continuous monitoring of each school’s performance from the district and municipal level, gives input to the web-based platform publishing the results.

Throughout the policy documents, we observe an emphasis on the need to develop teachers’ and leaders’ competences in order to fulfil the mandate of schooling (e.g., WP 28, 67–75; WP 21, 25–40). A national program for principal preparation is introduced in WP 31 (66–67), while a main argument in WP 19 is the lack of support structures for leadership (WP 19, 13). Still, increasing the competence of educational professionals is a goal that is highly connected to an organizational form of professionalism and to the discourse on learning outcomes throughout the documents.

WP 31 largely follows in the footsteps of the preceding WP 30. It maintains the NQAS and the yearly report as tools for quality insurance. Overall, the rationale for White Paper 31 is an emphasis on increased local autonomy for the district and school level, while simultaneously increasing quality through output monitoring and following up on Norwegian students’ low results on international tests, as illustrated below:

There should be sufficient latitude for professional judgement and local adaptations, and a shorter distance between teachers, parents and students to those who make decisions about the schools. There is, however, also a need to strengthen the national governance of school politics (WP 31, 11).

As shown, the paper outlines policies that appear to be largely in accordance with an international, competitive-based policy wherein assessments of students’ test scores emerge as key features. Moreover, the weight on test scores is argued to be important in terms of providing students with the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to the nation’s work force. School leadership is given a key role in developing the school in WP 31, and the government acknowledges the need for national support to accomplish this task. However, the relationship to democratic professionalism is not explicit. The emphasis on leadership is more about how general expectations of democratic leadership as part of professionalism are constructed through the notion of institutional empowerment of all individuals, which involves the creation of healthy and inclusive learning environments, as well as emphasis on a sense of community amongst the students. Such

expectations are required by both teachers and principals: ‘Successful work within the learning environment requires that leaders and teachers agree upon what rules for behavior that are present in the school and that these should be enforced consequently’ (MoER 2008, 76, authors’ translation). Furthermore, cooperation between leaders and teachers in a community are tenets stated in WP 31:

The teacher does not stand alone in his/her work but is part of a school community led by the principal. The challenges in the school cannot be faced by skilled individuals alone. It demands a common engagement from the whole school anchored in the school leadership to succeed (WP 31, 44).

As evidenced from the extracts above, the analysis of WP 31 suggests that leadership is framed through the provision of latitude for professional judgement and local adaptations, as well as working through a common engagement with the whole school. Furthermore, a key framing within WP31 is the delegation of responsibility to teachers, enabling them to function as central actors in the betterment of the class environment. This represents a change in the discourse of leadership compared to WP 30, in which strong and visible leadership by the principal is highlighted.

Although expectations of leadership are vaguely connected to the emphasis on skills in WP 31, as it is argued that the improvement of learning environments leads to increased learning outcomes on student achievement tests, there are some key differences between WP 30 and WP 31. The inclusive learning environment, which creates a social climate that stimulates active participation and distributed leadership practices within the local schools, is given stronger emphasis in WP 31. The construction of leadership is also explicitly connected to teachers’ leadership practices in the classroom. As such, the construction of professionalism grants more room for local professional actors and is less hierarchical, but is only indirectly connected to democratic professionalism.

Compared to WP 31, WP 28 strongly emphasizes education for democracy, but democratic professionalism is not explicitly mentioned. Perhaps it is taken for granted that professional leadership involves democratic professionalism. According to the tenets of WP 28, principals are expected to cooperate with teachers in ensuring learning and development for each student: ‘It is the school leaders’ and teachers’ professional work and co-operation with the students that ensures good learning and development for each student’ (WP 28, 7). In WP 28, the construction of leadership expectations is linked to respect, acceptance, citizens’ and refugees’ rights, education about and for democratic citizenship, and the interdisciplinary theme, ‘democracy and citizenship’, which stresses all aspects of citizenship. Furthermore, the discourse is anchored in a need for change in an unpredictable society.

In WP 21, the need for solid leadership competences is highlighted. The expectations are connected to school leaders’ responsibility to secure healthy learning environments through ‘professional communities’. Such an argument was also promoted in WP 31 and WP 20, and as such, demonstrates consensus across political parties. Leadership is important, but the way leadership is constructed has changed over time. In sum, the main discourse of professionalism in WP 21 is characterized by expectations of school leaders to secure healthy learning environments through ‘professional communities’, while highlighting the importance of educating school leaders in this work. However, we observe no explicit expectations of leadership connected to democratic professionalism.

The notions of school leadership and accountability are given a strong focus in order to improve quality in the wake of K06. Leadership is described as a key factor for increasing students' learning outcomes (e.g., MoER 2008, 10). In WP 30, it is argued that 'strong leadership' is required to make schools learning organizations:

In learning organizations, the expectations and feedbacks are clear. Learning organizations therefore set high demands to a *clear and strong leadership* that are conscious of the learning goals for the school (WP 30, 26-27).

This statement illustrates a hierarchical approach to leadership in which learning goals emerge as a performance factor and performance-based work demands clear and strong leadership. In much the same way, 'good pedagogical and organizational leadership' is highlighted in WP 31 (10). Democratic practices, such as ensuring healthy learning environments, are emphasized, pointing to a discursive struggle. This arguably raises some challenges in reconciling an instrumental approach with aims involved in democratic professionalism, such as enabling conditions for empowerment and the free flow of ideas.

Increased emphasis on fulfilling students' individual rights

Our analysis further suggests that securing students' rights is given attention throughout all three policy documents. However, we find some indications that school leaders are held more explicitly responsible for the fulfilment of student rights in the recent policy documents from 2015 (WP 28 and 21) than in earlier policy documents (WP 30 and 31). In the earlier policy documents, the fulfilment of students' rights was placed on the shoulders of the local educational authority and the 'schools' (e.g., WP 31, 50, 76). WP 31 states that there is a need for increased state governance in order to 'adjust the balance between the local latitude and the governance by the state' (MoER 2008, 30). By contrast, WP 21 explicitly defines the fulfilment of students' rights as a responsibility of the principal:

[...] *the principal is the one who bears the practical responsibility for students' rights being fulfilled.* At the same time, the principal shall be responsible for personnel, both for the administrative and the professional community (WP 21, 35).

So, there is a tendency toward decentralized responsibility for the local principal, but the principal is strongly held accountable for student outcomes. Both WP 31 and WP 21 argue for similar governing strategy, although in WP 31 governance and control by the state is combined with the need for distribution of authority to teachers.

Discussion

The aim of this paper has been to provide insight into how professionalism is constructed and legitimized within and across key education policy documents in the wake of a major national educational reform in Norway. The main findings presented in the previous section will be discussed in the context of relevant research.

Our analysis suggests there are tensions between the use of performance data and education for democracy. Seen in a broader perspective, this reliance on performance data represents an instrumental view of education. The weight on the ranking of test scores may pave the way for 'consumer choice' in education and education as a commodity to be

delivered (Gunter et al. 2016). Our findings reflect the neoliberal discourse of creating good future workers through a strong focus on learning and basic skills (Apple 2000).

Although Norwegian education policy is influenced by the NPM discourse, including its focus on strong leaders as vehicles for the modernization of education, politicians defend the principle of a comprehensive and public organization of education. Marketization has been less embraced. A disproportionate focus on basic skills is consistent with previous research. This focus signifies expectations of educational leaders, specifically their responsibilities regarding learning outcomes and school improvement measures (Hopkins and Higham 2007; Hopkins et al. 2014; Leithwood and Seashore-Louis 2012). This contrasts leadership being conceptualized as either a social or a political relationship visible within the lived contradictions of a particular educational context (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012; Blackmore 2011; Eacott 2010; Thomson 2009). Accordingly, considerable tensions emerge in determining what kinds of competences are given elevated importance. The tensions emerge between a social-democratic discourse where social and political relationships take center stage and an instrumental discourse. This is so even after the introduction of the interdisciplinary topics focusing on democracy and citizenship (MoER 2016). In alignment with previous studies, we suggest that there is a continual risk of reconfiguring democracy as an economic concept in Norwegian policy documents. This new conceptualization may erode or displace a broader discussion about education for citizenship over the long term (Aasen, Prøitz, and Sandberg 2014). This ideation might also explain why democratic professionalism is ambiguously constructed through a diverse range of democratic leadership notions.

Throughout the policy documents, a heavy emphasis on decentralization and increased local autonomy is made explicit and is confirmed by earlier research (Aasen, Prøitz, and Sandberg 2014). The policy documents also place strong emphasis on monitoring school performance, pointing to managerial mechanisms of accountability. It appears that leaders and teachers are increasingly held accountable on the district level. In this respect, professional accountability, which is important in enacting democratic leadership and enabling democratic citizens, is backgrounded. Little attention is given to aspiring to higher causes or inspiring values such as honesty (Sinclair 1995), all of which relate to democratic leadership (Woods 2005). Professional accountability is also emphasized, as school leaders and teachers are expected to adhere to the standards of the profession throughout the documents. Managerial accountability mechanisms, however, are granted the most attention. Schools and school leaders are held accountable to the state and district, respectively, to ensure a healthy psycho-social environment for all students (MoER 2008, 2017).

There is also little attention given to professionalism as a deliberative activity. Professionalism tends to be paraphrased in an instrumental way over time, which is reflected both in earlier and in later policy documentation and is also legitimated via a performative approach, considering that basic skills are weighed as a primary concern and premise for participation in democratic processes in concomitance with the emphasis on clear and strong leadership (WP 21). Such an approach to leadership aligns well with a focus on performance, results, and effective behaviors, all inherent in the instrumental approach to leadership (Gunter 2009). Based on the increased responsibility of educators for the fulfilment of students' rights, it can be argued that the instrumental

approach is dominant and is subtly supported by indications that educational professionals are responsible for the fulfilment of students' rights to an increased extent.

In Norway, education as a public and social good has been taken for granted in the policy rhetoric, but the overall policy direction seems to take steps to promote the idea of education as a private good (Aasen, Prøitz, and Sandberg 2014; Englund 1994). A focus on individual rights provides fertile ground for supporting the instrumental approach to leadership, which leads to a focus on performativity (Englund 1994; Gunter 2009). An increased emphasis on performativity results in increasing pupils' visible skills, which speaks to our finding that leadership expectations appear to support the notion of a society for consumers rather than democratic citizens (Biesta 2017). Though leaders and teachers are expected to include all students by enabling them to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner and challenge wider power structures in which the schools are embedded (Council of Europe 2010), teaching skills and 'visible' competences are foregrounded in all documents. Such an approach resembles the technical and instrumental characteristics inherent in the neoliberal perspective (Gunter 2009; Hall et al. 2015).

By contrast, WP 28, laying the groundwork for the most recent Renewal of the General Curriculum, emphasized the importance of democracy and citizenship, sustainable development, and life mastery more than previous White Papers, while at the same time reflecting an organizational form of professionalism and leadership with an overly technical and instrumental discourse. Consequently, tensions between the instrumental approach and the social democratic approaches to professionalism have been exacerbated and rendered more visible over time. This raises further questions regarding how values are expected to be negotiated amongst education professionals in a policy climate characterized by explicit discursive tensions; what are the implications of a professional's interpretation and translation of explicit conflicting values reflected in policy and curriculum expectations? What remains unknown, from our perspective, is how professionals at different levels interpret and translate policy expectations and tensions as they have developed in the more recent documents. Thus, professionalism is constructed and legitimated on instrumental grounds that are coupled with an explicit democratic mandate, and accordingly, it remains a contested concept as exemplified through the Norwegian case.

There are also indications of an increased emphasis on fulfilling students' individual rights through increased judicial influence over time. This supports findings from previous research in the Norwegian context (Ottesen and Møller 2016). When individual rights are given prominence over collective rights and duties, there is a risk of changing the discourse of a democracy for citizens to a discourse of democracy for *consumers*. It is difficult to determine whether Norwegian public policies meet the expectations set out in 13 Council of Europe (2010)7 § 13. Evidence suggests that Norwegian public policy documents are predominantly weighted on the instrumental and performative approach as a way of legitimizing professionalism. Accordingly, awareness should be raised amongst policy makers and practitioners concerning the motivation for educating future democratic citizens. As Horsford, Scott and Anderson (2019) have argued, it is the responsibility of each educator to advocate against competitive individualism and educate for the common good, as envisioned in democratic professionalism.

An emphasis on both managerial and professional policy expectations appears as a reasonable explanation for the discursive struggle observed in WP 31. Due to the

constraints in terms of institutional arrangements (i.e., time constraints) resulting from decentralization, a noticeable stress on developing skills emerges, while an emphasis on including minority students in a democratic school society is possibly silenced.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to provide insight into how professionalism is constructed and legitimized within and across key education policy documents in the wake of a major national educational reform in Norway, by asking 1) What kinds of competencies are emphasized in Norwegian policy documents? 2) How has professionalism been constructed and legitimized since the introduction of K06? 3) What tensions in constructing the democratic mandate can be identified over time? The findings suggest that (1) there are tensions between the use of performance data and education for democracy; (2) little attention is given to professionalism as a deliberative activity; and (3) there is increased emphasis on fulfilling students' individual rights.

Our conclusions reinforce findings from earlier empirical studies based on interviews and observations (Andersen 2014; Lillejord and Tolo 2006; Vedøy 2008). A somewhat surprising finding in our study is that, despite the emphasis on visible skills, strong emphasis was placed on professional collaboration in the later policy documentation from 2015 (WP 28), indicating a continuous emphasis on institutional empowerment through the focus on professional learning communities. This finding suggests a consensus across political parties when it comes to certain dimensions of professionalism, at least in the education rhetoric.

Moreover, our analysis shows tensions between social democratic values and instrumental values competing for prominence. Introducing a language of performance expectations has permitted the reinterpretation of what it means to be a professional educator in a Social Democratic welfare state. Our main contribution is elaboration of more explicit discursive tensions over time, which we argue have become more visible in recent policy documentation. On the one hand, recent documents have increasingly brought the democratic mandate to the forefront; on the other, our analysis shows that professionals' work tends to be legitimized primarily by managerial means, even in a Social Democratic policy context.

A limitation of our study was our choice of materials for analysis. As public policy documents reflect policy intentions, they do not reflect the cumbersome and often contradictory process characterized by disagreements and misunderstandings that may be involved in the formation. In fact, various interests and stakeholders may be considered in the formation of a policy document, which leads to the involvement of numerous actors and levels of administration in the process of policy formulation.

Although there are references to professionals promoting active citizenship and professional communities, the discourse of the learning society is defined in terms of globalization. While policy documents are written using democratic discourses, our research has highlighted the importance of continually questioning the aim behind the framing of professionalism with an inherent democratic mandate. As seen in recent policy documents, the underlying instrumental discourse enables tensions to become explicit. As such, concerns should be raised amongst academics and policymakers with regards to consequences for professionals working with the democratic mandate under increasingly conflicting

expectations. In this respect, professionals are expected and required to ensure education for democracy in a contested policy climate. Expectations of professional work tend to be legitimized primarily by an instrumental and performative discourse in a context of tensions between managerial demands and a social democratic tradition. Future research should explore how such policy tensions play out in educational professionals' work.

Notes

1. Ministry of Education and Research.
2. www.skoleporten.no. The school portal contains data of test results, learning environment, completion rates of Upper Secondary School, resources and facts about schools.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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