Leading Education for Democracy in an Age of Accountability

Contextual changes and tensions in the case of Norway

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Summary

This PhD project investigated what leading education for democracy looks like in an age of accountability. The thesis reports on what I have coined the LED (Leading Education for Democracy) project. Focus was placed on how policy expectations of education for democracy in the wake of a national education reform are interpreted and translated by educational leaders in Norway. While current international research has investigated what it means to be a democratic professional in high-stakes accountability contexts in addition to researching educational leaders' democratic practices, less is known about how education policy for democracy is interpreted, translated, and legitimized in low-stakes accountability systems such as that in Norway.

The LED project demonstrated that there is a need to understand that educational leadership at the school level is embedded in wider structures of power, and hence the first sub-study reports on how professionalism and the democratic mandate in education are constructed and legitimized in key education policy documents. Moreover, the LED project revealed how democratic policy directives are interpreted, translated, and legitimized in low-stakes accountability systems. Accordingly, the LED project examined what characterizes professional discretion and professionals' stories of policy enactment (the second sub-study) as well as how teachers perceive the democratic character of their schools (the third sub-study). In this regard, I use the term "democratic enactment" to capture the idea and process behind the professionals' interpretations and translations of the democratic mandate that is expected of them at the policy level (part of the institutional primary task).

The LED project contributed theoretically by blending the three perspectives on democratic leadership, professionalism, and educational accountability and arguing that they are integrally linked. Also, the project provided an empirical contribution to the current body of literature by demonstrating how democratic enactment of an institutional primary task plays out in a low-stakes accountability system. The findings contrast with approaches to democracy in high-stakes contexts such as Chile and England. Democratic enactment suggests the existence of a viable alternative to *leading education for democracy* compared to the use of governance instruments aimed at reducing learning gaps in basic skills between groups of students in high-stakes systems of accountability. Specifically, the LED project points to the importance of democratic enactment as a process whereby educational professionals are given

leeway in interpreting and translating policy expectations by engaging meaning making of the democratic purpose by internalizing codes of ethics while showing awareness of the wider power structures in which schools are embedded.

Table of contents

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

1.1 Project overview 1

1.2 Rationale and positioning of the LED project 3

1.3 The case of Norway as a low-stakes accountability context 5

1.4 The structure of the thesis 7

Chapter 2: The LED project and the state of the field 9

Introduction 9

2.1 Method of review 9

2.2 Education for democracy, professionalism, and educational leadership 10

2.2.1 Education for democracy: A brief overview 11

2.2.2 Educational professionalism and accountability 12

2.2.3 Educational leadership and democracy 14

2.2.4 Educational leadership and democracy in the Norwegian context 18

2.3 Summary 20

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework on Leading Education for Democracy 22

Introduction 22

3.1 Defining democracy 22

3.2 Defining educational leadership and links to democratic enactment 25

3.3 The LED approach to educational leadership 26

3.4 Democratic enactment 27

3.5 Professionalism 29

3.6 Democratic accountability 30

3.7 Summary 31

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods 32

Introduction 32

4.1 Basic philosophical assumptions 32

4.2 The multi-phase, exploratory sequential design 33

4.3 The sub-studies 36

4.3.1 Sub-study 1: Examination of public policy documents 36

4.3.2 Sub-study 2: Semi-structured focus group interviews 38

4.3.3 Sub-study 3: Survey 41

4.3.4 Data integration across sub-studies 42

4.4 Research credibility 43

4.4.1 Validity and reliability in sub-studies 1 and 2 (discourse analysis and interviews) 44

4.4.2 Validity and reliability in sub-study 3 (survey) 46

4.4.3 Research credibility in the multi-phase, exploratory sequential design 48

4.4.4 Ethical considerations 49

4.5 The articles 50

4.6 Summary 51

Chapter 5: Summary of main research findings....53
Introduction....53
5.1 Article I....53
5.2 Article II....54
5.3 Article III....56
5.4 Looking across the three sub-studies....57
5.4.1 Leeway in professional discretion....57
5.4.2 Facing tensions between a language of performance indicators and dispersed leadership....58
5.4.3 Enabling and constraining factors in promoting education for democracy....59
Chapter 6: Discussion and Concluding Remarks....60
Introduction....60
6.1 Leeway in professional discretion as enabling democratic enactment....60
6.2 Tensions between promoting the democratic mandate and performativity?....64
6.3 Digital environments and the rise of individualism....66
6.4 Contributions and implications....68
6.5 Limitations and further research....69
References....71
Appendix 1: Letter of approval....78
Appendix 2: The coding process (sub-study 1)....82

Appendix 3: Interview guide 83

Appendix 4: Survey items and factors 85

Appendix 5: Letter of consent for interviews 87

Appendix 6: Information letter for interviews 91

Appendix 7: Information letter for survey 92

Appendix 8: Information to participants (survey) 93

The three publications

Article I

Larsen, E., Jensen, R., & Møller, J. (2020). Construction of professionalism and the democratic mandate in education: A discourse analysis of Norwegian public policy documents. *Journal of Education Policy.*
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Article II

Larsen, E. (2021). Mission and mandates: School leaders' and teachers' professional discretion in enacting education for democracy. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*.
https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2021.1893390
Status: Published

Article III

Larsen, E., & Mathé, N. E. H. (2021). Teachers' perceptions of their schools' democratic character. Manuscript submitted to *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research.*
Status: Under second review

List of tables and figures

Table 1. Overview of articles, data collection, and research questions
Figure 4.1. The multi-phase, exploratory sequential design
Table 4.1. Overview of schools and participants
Table 4.2. Overview of phases in the three articles

Part 1

Extended Abstract

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Project overview

This thesis reports on findings from the Leading Education for Democracy (LED) project in Norway. The purpose of the LED project was to investigate what leading education for democracy looks like in an age of accountability. Leading education for democracy means enacting democratic policy with an approach to educational leadership that is critical, educative, transformative, and ethical (Ball et al., 2012; Foster, 1989, Shields, 2010; Woods, 2006). Key concepts in LED are democratic enactment, professionalism, and democratic accountability, meaning that democratic education policy is interpreted and translated by educational professionals and that professionals should be held to account for their actions by the public and other stakeholders, such as parents, and not only to higher levels in an organization (cf. Ranson, 2003). Thus, a more specific aim of the LED project was to investigate what democratic enactment may look like in policy and practice in a low-stakes accountability context, one which is influenced by managerial accountability demands.

The LED project employs Norway as a case to illustrate how global policy trajectories intersect with an education system characterized by a long tradition of democratic values and by "low-stakes" accountability. The following overarching research question guided the study: *How is the democratic purpose constructed in policy, and interpreted and translated by educational leaders in a low-stakes accountability context?* Derived from this, I formulated the following research questions:

1. What characterizes educational leaders' professional discretion when enacting the democratic purpose?

2. What characterizes the emerging tensions when educational leaders enact the democratic purpose?

3. What factors enable or constrain educational leaders in enacting education for democracy?

In addressing the above research questions, I used a multi-phase research strategy consisting of three phases. These three phases comprised three sub-studies with separate methods of data collection. The first two phases constituted a qualitative design (discourse analysis and in-depth interviews). In particular, the interviews provided the opportunity to study a phenomenon in depth to explain the dynamics and workings of a particular local environment (Bryman, 2015). The third phase included a survey administered to teachers in one large region.

I made three assumptions based on the broader literature. First, I assumed a critical standpoint (Smyth, 1989), one that considers both the context of research (Ball et al., 2012) and what it means for the analysis. This approach deals with power, including the empowerment of those being oppressed by structures of power. In understanding power structures, I drew on the work by Foster (1989), who argued that educational leadership is not only about refining fixed organizational structures but also about reconceptualizing life practices "where ideals of freedom and democracy stand important" (p. 52). Furthermore, I assumed that there should be cause for concern over how softer dimensions of education, such as the affective and humanistic dimensions, may be undermined by a search for instrumental effectiveness (e.g., Maroy, 2015).

Second, In the LED project, I used the term "educational leadership" as the overarching signifier of leadership as it connects to the "institutional primary task" (James et al., 2020). I assumed educational leadership to be a shared and dispersed practice in schools (Lingard et al., 2003) while also being critical, educative, transformative, and ethical in orientation (Foster, 1989; Shields, 2010; Woods, 2005). Educational leadership is a view of leadership and power that addresses the relationships between structure and human agency and goes beyond the lists of strategies and skills that leaders use. It also understands schools as sites of cultural and political struggle (cf. Shields, 2010).

Third, I constructed the term "democratic enactment" to capture how educational professionals enact, rather than implement, policies launched by the national government. Consequently, educational leaders[1] enact democratic policy. The terms "education for democracy," "the institutional primary task," and "the

[1] For the purpose of the LED project, the term 'educational leader' encompasses principals, deputy principals, team leaders, and teachers engaging in leadership activities.

democratic purpose" are used interchangeably. The democratic purpose in the Norwegian education system is anchored in a tripartite understanding of education for democracy—namely, education about democracy, for democracy, and through democratic participation. These topics correspond to knowledge, attitudes/values, and skills involved in democratic participation, respectively (MoER, 2016; Stray, 2010).

The LED project contributes to the current body of literature by exemplifying how democratic enactment of the institutional primary task in a low-stakes accountability system contrasts with approaches to democracy in high-stakes contexts. Based on the LED project, it is possible to argue for the existence of a viable alternative to approaches to democracy taken in high-stakes contexts in which the primary aim is to close achievement gaps in reading and mathematics to achieve the ideals of democracy and social justice. The LED project provides insight into some crucial conditions for leading education for democracy and underscores the importance of democratic enactment. It specifies how promoting democratic schools and practices of inclusion, advocacy, and activism takes on a particular form in a low-stakes accountability context and suggests that high-stakes contexts, such as England, the US, and Chile, can be informed by these practices.

The next section briefly situates the LED project in a global and national context, after which it identifies possible gaps in the research literature on leading education for democracy. This is followed by a description of how the thesis is structured.

1.2 Rationale and positioning of the LED project

In concomitance with the onset of accountability-based reforms, educational leaders are expected to be loyal toward organizational goals, often working in a hierarchy (Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Evetts, 2009). Still, they are, as professionals, also entrusted with discretionary powers in the promotion of democratic schools and in the facilitation of education for democracy in different local contexts (Molander, 2016). However, tensions have emerged as discretionary judgment, guided by codes of professional ethics and monitored by the profession itself, is losing ground due to a different way of talking about professionalism that is gaining prominence among policymakers and administrators: organizational professionalism (Evetts, 2009). This form of professionalism entails being held accountable to higher levels within the organization. As such, educational professionals are situated in a field of tension

between managerial mechanisms of accountability working in a hierarchy and answering to superiors regarding specific outcomes or results on the one hand, and professional accountability, guided by internalized codes of ethics, notions of collegiality, and large discretionary spaces that involve relinquishing democratic control, on the other (e.g., Evetts, 2009; Molander, 2016; Sinclair, 1995). Additionally, through the LED project, I argue that educational professionals also face democratic mechanisms of accountability that entail collective choice and public control over decisions (cf. Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Ranson, 2003). These three mechanisms of accountability (managerial, professional, democratic) may generate tensions when educational professionals enact democratic policy.

While studies have investigated what it means to be a democratic professional in high-stakes, accountability-based contexts (cf. Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Ryan & Rottmann, 2009; Ryan, 2016) and have researched school leaders' democratic practices (see Apple & Beane, 1995; Møller, 2006; Theoharis, 2007), there is a need to investigate how democratic policies are interpreted, translated, and legitimized in contexts characterized by soft regulatory governance and low-stakes accountability systems (cf. Maroy, 2015; Verger et al., 2019). By drawing from data collected in a low-stakes system, the LED project contributes to filling the knowledge gap concerning what democratic enactment looks like in such contexts. This is important, as it could also generate knowledge about what it means to be a professional educator in an age of accountability and shed light on the challenges accompanying that role.

There are numerous understandings and definitions of democracy (e.g., Apple & Beane, 1995; Dewey, 1916; Habermas, 2015; Woods, 2005). Dewey (1916) has inspired many contemporary works on democracy in education. He promoted the idea that democracy ought to be practiced and experienced by students. According to him, the success or failure of a democracy rests on education, and democracy presupposes faith in experience. In the LED project, I defined democracy as encompassing the following conditions for a functioning democratic school: Ideas must float freely, be they popular or not. These ideas include faith in the capacity of the individual and the collective in processes of decision making; enabling reflection and analysis in order to deliberate on ideas, problems, and goals; care for each other's welfare and for the community; and the security of the dignity and rights of individuals and minority groups (Apple & Beane, 1995; Scanlan & Theoharis, 2016). These conditions presuppose that educational professionals facilitate arrangements and opportunities: democratic

structures and processes, and a democratic curriculum. These will be explained in more depth in Chapter 2.

1.3 The case of Norway as a low-stakes accountability context

In the Norwegian educational context, democracy has been a fundamental value and a guide to citizenship (Møller, 2006, p. 57), one that informs both political and civil dimensions. The social democratic model resonates with a notion of the public constituting collective rules and purposes, public goods and services, and collective efficiency (cf. Ranson, 2003). Social democracy (Esping-Andersen, 1989) plays a key role in Norway, and it is guaranteed in education through a constitutional tenet.

The Norwegian education system, like many other education systems in the world, is facing increased pressure to reform in accordance with the demands generated by the global economy (Karlsen, 2006; Møller, 2009; Skedsmo & Møller, 2016). Still, the democratic purpose or the institutional primary task is clear from the Norwegian Constitution § 109 (1814, revised in 2014) (author's translation and emphasis):

> Everyone has the right to education. Children have the right to receive basic education. The education will develop the skills of every child and *take care of every child's needs, and promote respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights.*

In accordance with the Constitution, enacting democratic policies becomes an important mission for educational leaders. As such, the LED project makes the case for, and underscores the importance of, democratic enactment as well as democratic accountability and uses Norway as a possible case for illustrating these concepts. One of the main purposes of education specified in the Norwegian Education Act (1998) is the following: "Education shall provide insight into cultural diversity, show respect for the individual's convictions, and promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking." In accordance with this Act, it is expected that educational professionals enact democratic policies in their practices. Building on this, a New General Part of the Curriculum/General Curriculum, launched in 2017, represents the key policy document wherein the democratic purpose reflected in the Constitution § 109 is operationalized and concretized (Norwegian Directorate for Education & Training, 2017).

Despite democratic purpose in policy, research has indicated that professional work with the democratic purpose under managerial accountability pressures may pose numerous challenges in the social-democratic, Nordic tradition (Karlsen, 2006; Mausethagen et al., 2018; Møller, 2002; Telhaug et al., 2006). Specifically, the introduction of new assessment policies was accompanied by performative accountability measures in Norway, a country with a long tradition of egalitarian values, where teachers have traditionally enjoyed a high level of autonomy (Mausethagen et al., 2018). Ultimately, the onset of neoliberal policies clashed with the very different perspective on human life inherent in the social-democratic state. It has been argued that a key difference is that the social-democratic state regards humans as citizens rather than consumers (Telhaug et al., 2006). In educational policy, a strong focus on managerial aspects such as performativity could challenge values like equity in the Norwegian school system (Skedsmo & Møller, 2016), which understates the importance of researching leadership of education for democracy in a context of increasing accountability influences and performance pressures.

The Norwegian education system has not been without international, neoliberal influences (Wiborg, 2013), and the OECD has set the agenda by focusing on closing the achievement gap between student groups (Møller, 2017). After the major reform of Knowledge Promotion in 2006, which was largely in alignment with the OECD agenda, test-based accountability (TBA) with an increased focus on performance indicators gained a foothold (Camphuijsen et al., 2020), including merit pay for educational leaders in some urban areas (Møller & Rönnberg, 2021). Recent developments have largely followed this trajectory, and output-monitoring regarding subjects with a heavy orientation around core subjects and basic skills still dominates the educational narrative (e.g., Camphuijsen et al., 2021; Møller & Rönnberg, 2021). However, Norway has been reluctant to embrace marketization and privatization principles (Møller & Rönnberg, 2021), and the General Curriculum grants great leeway in interpreting a renewed democratic mandate (Norwegian Directorate for Education & Training, 2017). As such, it is reasonable to believe that educational leaders are granted considerable discretionary space in translating education for democracy, but it is an empirical question how this plays out in local educational settings.

1.4 The structure of the thesis

The extended abstract is structured as follows. In the following chapter, I illustrate and summarize what we know based on previous research on leading education for democracy and related fields. This review is followed by an outline of the theoretical framework and key concepts used in addressing leading education for democracy across the three sub-studies. The key concepts explained in this chapter are (1) democratic enactment, (2) professionalism, and (3) democratic accountability. Subsequently, the next chapter is a presentation of the methodological approach, explaining the multi-phase, exploratory-sequential design and the process of research. This is followed by a summary of the findings from the analysis conducted across the three sub-studies using the outlined framework. Finally, I discuss these findings before presenting the conclusion.

The findings were published in three journal articles. The first sub-study shed light on policy demands and expectations related to professionalism and the broader democratic purpose through a discourse analysis of key education policy documents derived from recent education reforms. The second sub-study examined school leaders' and teachers' stories of enacting the democratic purpose through semi-structured, qualitative interviews with a selection of school leaders and teachers in schools that promoted a commitment to working on education for democracy on their web-sites. The third sub-study discussed factors associated with how teachers perceive the state of democracy in their schools.

In Table 1, an overview of the three articles is provided, including data collection methods and research questions covered in each article. The research questions explored in each article contributed to answering the overarching research questions addressed in the LED project (see section 1.1).

Table 1. Overview of articles, data collection, and research questions

Research questions	Data collection methods	Related publications
(1) Examines how professionalism and the democratic mandate in education are constructed and legitimized in key education policy documents	Document Analysis – Discourse Analysis of Key Policy Documents: White Paper No. 31, White Paper No. 28, White Paper No. 21. *Level: National*	Article 1. Construction of professionalism and the democratic mandate in education: A discourse analysis of Norwegian public policy documents
(2) Examines what characterizes professional discretion in enacting education for democracy in a low-stakes, “soft-regulation” system.	Focus group interviews with selected school leaders and teachers at the school level. • Number of school leaders: 7 • Number of teachers: 14 • Number of schools: 4 *Level of Analysis: School level*	Article 2. Mission and mandates: School leaders’ and teachers’ professional discretion in enacting education for democracy
(3) Explores factors associated with how teachers perceive the state of democracy in their schools in a low-stakes accountability context	Survey among all teachers in five selected schools • Sample size: 206 • Number of schools: 5 *Level of Analysis: Teachers at school level*	Article 3. Teachers’ perceptions of their schools’ democratic character

Chapter 2: The LED project and the state of the field

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the literature in the fields relevant for the LED project. The aim of the LED project was to investigate what democratic enactment looks like in policy and practice in a low-stakes accountability context, which is incrementally influenced by managerial accountability demands. Accordingly, I identified the following four fields of research as relevant for my doctoral thesis: educational governance (see, for example, Ball et al., 2012; Camphuijsen et al., 2020; Maroy, 2015; Ranson, 2003; Verger et al., 2019), professionalism (e.g., Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Evetts, 2009, 2011; Molander, 2016), leadership in education (e.g., English, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2012; Spillane, 2006; Woods, 2005), and democracy and social justice in education (e.g., Arthur et al., 2008; Bogotch & Shields, 2014; Furman & Shields, 2005). Initially, I briefly introduce the method of review. By presenting the review, I outline the gaps in the literature that the LED project addressed. In this process, I sought to map existing research of relevance for my thesis rather than simply providing "coverage," i.e., covering the extent of previous research in the field (Maxwell, 2006).

2.1 Method of review

The review of relevant literature followed the method for qualitative literature review proposed by Randolph (2009). The initial stage of searching for literature served as a point of departure for deciding what to include and exclude in the extended abstract, as well as for classifying the documents based on what they represent. In this initial stage, it became clear that academic books, book chapters, and academic articles were of particular interest in the search. The inclusion criteria were whether the studies addressed the phenomenon in focus, leadership of education for democracy, expectations associated with leading education for democracy, and/or leadership of education for democracy or its associated expectations at the level of secondary school. Conversely, if the studies did not address leadership or education for democracy but instead only related concepts (e.g., inclusive education), these studies were excluded. However, if a study addressed leadership of a related concept (e.g.,

inclusive education) or vice versa, this study was deemed relevant and was thus included. This procedure was performed to reduce the material to a manageable level.

The search sources included primarily Oria (a search tool at the University of Oslo) and Google Scholar. The search terms consisted of both English and Norwegian concepts to ensure that all relevant studies were included in the search.

At an early stage of the research process, the search terms were “democratic leadership,” “education for democracy,” and “educational leadership.” At later stages, “professionalism,” “professional discretion,” “accountability,” and “democratic accountability” became key concepts in my search for relevant literature.

In reading the literature, I analyzed, evaluated, and synthesized ideas based on the approach by Hart (2018). This approach involves critical evaluations and interpretative work (Hart, 2018, p. 4), which involves an awareness of the moral and ethical standpoints of the reviewed material as well as the political and ideological perspectives used in the identified relevant material. In practical terms, I first created an overview of the relevant studies that emerged from the search (see above for details on the search). This overview consisted of author/year, purpose of the study, key concepts, methodology, and main findings. Second, and in accordance with the critical evaluation proposed by Hart (2018), I classified the concept of leading in studies according to three approaches: functional, critical, and socially critical (Gunter & Grimaldi, 2021). Leading in the functional approach means a person who demonstrates effective behaviors, while leading in the critical approach means people who have valid experiences and ways of working that demonstrate spontaneity and enable change (Gunter & Grimaldi, 2021, p. 144). Finally, leading in the socially critical approach means people are activists in challenging power structures through questions that bring about equitable change (Gunter & Grimaldi, 2021, p. 144). Below, I present the literature that emerged from the search.

2.2 Education for democracy, professionalism, and educational leadership

I start by providing a brief overview of and defining democracy and education for democracy and then move on to a review of educational professionalism and accountability in education policy. Afterward, I review studies on educational leadership and democracy at the international level followed by a review of relevant research in the Norwegian context. Finally, the section concludes with possible

contributions of the LED project to the field. The primary focus of the review are policy and practices of leading education for democracy.

2.2.1 Education for democracy: A brief overview

Researchers have extensively researched education based on democratic values (e.g., Arthur & Cremin, 2011; Biesta, 2006; Dewey, 1916), the relationship between society and education (e.g., Apple, 2014; Bates, 1983; Englund, 1994), the interlinkages between democracy and educational leadership (e.g., Foster, 1989; Møller, 2006; Shields, 2010; Trujillo et al., 2021; Woods, 2005), what constitutes democratic schools (Apple & Beane, 1995; López-Roca & Traver-Martí, 2020), and the role of education in creating robust democratic communities (e.g., Apple, 2014; Dewey, 1916). This literature has contributed insights into what democracy means in educational practices.

There are also numerous perspectives underlying the notion of education for democracy and related fields and concepts, such as citizenship education. There is a large knowledge base in these fields (Arthur & Cremin, 2011), but it would be too wide-ranging to map them all for the purpose of my thesis. For my purpose, it was important to identify a comprehensive definition of education for democracy. Accordingly, I understand education for democracy in a way that is both broad and anchored in a tripartite understanding: education about democracy (intellectual knowledge), education for democracy (attitudes and values), and education through democratic participation, representing skills (Stray, 2010). This operationalization interprets leadership as not only inculcating intellectual knowledge in students but also promoting attitudes and values as features of a democratic school (i.e., Apple & Beane, 1995). Furthermore, I supply this perspective with an understanding of education as a public good, where the key aim is inclusion in a pluralistic community rather than focusing too much on supporting one's individual rights (Englund, 1994). I now turn to situating education for democracy in the literature on educational professionalism and accountability. By doing this, I identify the main knowledge gaps that the LED project addressed.

2.2.2 Educational professionalism and accountability

In the aftermath of the Second World War, professional accountability was the dominant governing regime in education (Ranson, 2003). In this governing regime, the primary purposes of education were to address students' needs and advance their scholastic progress. This regime was later downplayed by the advancing age of neo-liberalism, characterized by external regimes of accountability, that gained ground from the early 1980s—particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries, where the primal aims of neo-liberalism were strengthening consumer responsiveness and promoting efficient service delivery, as well as bolstering the quality and control of educational spheres (Ranson, 2003). As a result, education systems are facing increased pressure to reform in order to meet demands in a global economy. In this "neo-liberal imaginary," reforms push market influences on state regulation and self-interest prevails over the common good. Thus, we have seen the emergence of a new kind of individualism wherein social concerns are given less attention and market involvement in state matters is prevalent (Ball, 2012). This reform pressure seems to have initiated new forms of regulatory governance in education in which demands for accountability increasingly dominate educational narratives worldwide (Verger et al., 2019). Common regulatory measures instantiated by nation states are market-oriented policies such as performance-based management, privatization, and decentralization (Wiborg, 2013). External regimes of accountability, which relate closely to new public management (NPM) policies, were promoted, emphasizing increased competition as well as stronger accountability for school results and student outcomes (Møller & Skedsmo, 2013). The onset of the age of neo-liberalism was closely related to human capital theory, which encompasses principles of standard economic theory and instrumentalism. In human capital theory, the aim is to create the ideal worker, i.e., one who contributes to economic effectiveness (Robeyns, 2006). Thus, education is reduced to a form of investment, potentially undermining democratic ideals. National responses to this ideology led to the use of policy instruments and tools, such as standardized tests and the reporting of test results, among others (Maroy, 2015; Verger et al., 2019). I will refer to these national responses as "accountability-based reforms," which may consist of high-stakes accountability measures, meaning severe sanctions for not fulfilling educational objectives, or low-stakes accountability measures, meaning that the severity of sanctions is low (Maroy, 2015).

Consequently, tensions between understanding education as a form of investment versus promoting the common good (e.g., Ball, 2012; Englund, 1994) appear in the process of education for democracy. For example, professionals are entrusted with the important task of educating democratic citizens while simultaneously being expected to educate workers on the “assets” of a competitive global economy. Accordingly, the softer humanistic and affective dimensions of education intersect with instrumental demands (cf. Maroy, 2015; Woods, 2005).

Previous research has, in general, highlighted tensions between discourses of competition and privatization on the one hand, and socially democratic ideologies linked to equity and comprehensive public education on the other (e.g., Englund, 1994; Moos, 2018; Stray, 2013; Trujillo & Valladares, 2016). Tensions between external accountability and professional autonomy have also been emphasized in the literature (Gunter et al., 2016; Thomson, 2009). Moreover, many studies on education for democracy have been based on large-scale assessments, such as the International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) (Schulz, 2019) or other survey data (Arthur, 2011; Mathé, 2019). These large-scale assessments (LSAs) have, for the most part, been aimed at uncovering students’ perceptions of democracy and politics. Research has also been performed among school leaders in the domain of democracy (see Apple & Beane, 1995; Møller, 2002, 2006; Theoharis, 2007). These studies have primarily focused on what constitutes a justice-oriented, well-functioning democracy in local schools through interviews with school leaders, teachers, and students. Moreover, research has investigated what it means to be a democratic professional in high-stakes, accountability-based contexts (cf. Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Ryan, 2016; Ryan & Rottmann, 2009).

While the studies mentioned above have pointed out tensions between high-stakes, accountability-based policies and education for democracy and have additionally contributed insights into school leaders’ democratic practices, they overlooked how policies are adopted in “soft-regulated” and low-stakes accountability systems (cf. Maroy, 2015; Verger et al., 2019). In general, there is also sparse research on how educational professionals enact democratic education policy. Thus, the LED project aimed to investigate what democratic enactment looks like in policy and practice in a low-stakes accountability context, one which is influenced by managerial accountability demands (see Camphuijsen et al., 2020). Gathering knowledge on this topic is important in order to generate insights into what it means to be a professional

educator in an age of accountability and to shed light on the challenges that accompany that role.

Norway is used as an example to illustrate a low-stakes accountability context with the intent of contributing to the knowledge base on how global policy trajectories intersect with an education system characterized by a long tradition of democratic values, where promoting democracy remains, according to the Norwegian Education Act, one of the key institutional tasks of primary and secondary education. In the Norwegian context, managerial accountability intersects with both professional and democratic mechanisms of accountability. Although managerial mechanisms of accountability are contested in Norway, it is argued that in a democracy, transparency should be expected in ensuring collective control over discretionary work (cf. Molander, 2016). Public or democratic accountability is expected with regard to how well schools can accomplish the primary purpose of education, which involves the institutional primary task and includes education for democracy. It is problematic if accountability is only related to learning outcomes in subjects with a major emphasis on performativity in basic skills, as is often the case in many countries.

2.2.3 Educational leadership and democracy

The current section provides an overview of the field of educational leadership and presents some key contributions to the field of educational leadership in a democratic perspective. Leadership has been studied from many different perspectives over the years (Jensen, 2018). In the literature on leadership in education, it is possible to identify a myriad of "adjectival" forms of leadership, each having a distinct historical trajectory. Examples of such adjectival forms of leadership are "passionate," "transactional," and "transformational" (Macbeath & Townsend, 2011), and "social justice" "distributed," and "democratic" (e.g., Spillane, 2006; Woods, 2004). Until the mid-1970s, leadership was mainly understood as individual traits or the "great man" theories of leadership. During the 1980s and 1990s, school effectiveness research gained ground and, among the five "correlates" of effectiveness at the school level, featured strong principal leadership with an emphasis on basic skills acquisition and the monitoring of student progress by principals (Edmonds, 1979, Reynolds et al., 2014). Simultaneously, the OECD argued strongly for the importance of "evidence-based education" (Gorard & Cook, 2007), and this corresponded greatly with school

effectiveness research. However, there has also been an orientation toward the quality of interactions between leaders and subordinates (Gronn, 1996) and a shift from studying leadership as behaviors toward including practices that are dispersed across the organization (Spillane, 2006).

Consequently, two broad positions can be identified in the field of leadership and are related to different understandings of leadership in education (Gunter, 2016b). First, leadership may be defined as particular tasks and behaviors that hold responsible parties accountable for educational outputs (Hopkins & Higham, 2007; Leithwood, 2001; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011). This strand of literature often uses the term "school leadership." The second position relates to what may be coined "educational leadership," connecting education to the institutional primary task (James et al., 2020). Scholars have emphasized that leadership is a notion of shared practice and cannot being confined only to formal positions (Foster, 1989; Spillane, 2006; Woods, 2005). Yet, other researchers have emphasized how leadership is conceptualized as a social and political relationship (Blackmore, 2011; Eacott, 2010; Thomson, 2009) and schools are viewed as sites in which policies are negotiated, mediated, and struggled over (Ball et al., 2012).

Connecting educational leadership with democracy, contemporary research has highlighted how principals, deputy principals, team leaders, and teachers lead by cultivating education about, for, and through democracy when working under the various influences of accountability-based policies (Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Blackmore, 2011; Ryan & Rottmann, 2009; Thomson, 2009), and how educational leaders promote social justice and democracy (e.g., Apple & Beane, 1995; Brown, 2004; Woods, 2005). This strand of research is of a normative character in the sense that it focuses on what conditions exist for educational leaders in promoting social justice and democracy. These studies also highlight the importance of granting the professionals who work in schools some degree of authority and discretionary powers.

It is thus possible to observe both contextual changes and tensions, as studies have demonstrated how the profession of school leaders has been influenced by high organizational demands, uncertainty, deregulation, and managerial accountability. This leads to a work climate in which instrumentalism, efficiency, and economic interests take center stage, thereby risking downplaying the role of collective and democratic interests (Blackmore, 2011; Thomson, 2009). Accordingly, educational leaders experience tension between accountability within bureaucratic organizations

on the one hand, and the autonomy of professional norms and standards on the other (Anderson & Cohen, 2018) These tensions are reflected within research examining the interconnection between policy contexts and leadership aimed at social justice and democracy in educational settings (e.g., Møller, 2006; Trujillo et al., 2021).

A related body of research focuses on how educational leaders promote social justice and democracy within schools as hierarchical organizations (e.g., Ryan, 2016; Ryan & Rottmann, 2009; Wong et al., 2020). This research has generated some important insights. For example, Ryan and Rottman (2009) argued that administrators seek to establish relationships with community members, foster democratic practices, and dismantle hierarchies that exclude members of the community. In the end, however, Ryan and Rottman found that administrators in a US context tend to bypass democratic options and draw on the hierarchical power associated with the bureaucratic system to ensure that their schools will be able to attract students in a quasi-market.

Studies of educational leadership in a democratic perspective have also raised concerns over the risk of reconfiguring the meaning of democracy, where democracy is transformed from a political to an economic concept (Møller, 2002). A main argument made is that a "democracy for consumers," which entails a market-oriented and individualist approach to education, has entered the public discourse (cf. Englund, 1994; Evetts, 2009; Woods, 2005). Consequently, it may be observed how tensions between collective and private interests influence educational spheres. These tensions are reflected in a study by Furman and Shields (2005), who established a research agenda focusing on the link between educational leadership practices and concepts of social justice and community in schools. They distinguished between "thin" and "deep" democracy. The former refers to notions of democracy based on classical liberalism that are strongly tied to understanding democracy as an individual project, promoting rights based on self-interest. The latter means partaking in a community that values principles such as participation, inclusiveness, friendship, and solidarity. Furman and Shields argued that the former, individual understanding of democracy has gained ground at the expense of understanding democracy as a collective value.

Philip Woods (2006) argued, through a theoretical inquiry, for the importance of educational leaders understanding and taking ownership of the historical roots of modern democracy. Woods promoted the argument that the instrumental rationality dominating our time leads to a life associated with "purely mundane passions" (p. 322).

What is at stake, he argued, is cultural loss associated with the highest spiritual and cultural values. Consequently, educational leaders are in danger of being confined to a technical-rational discourse of education. Woods asserted that the challenge for educational leaders of our time is to re-orient education to serve more than the bureaucracy and to infuse shared and dispersed leadership. Hence, educational leaders should promote an ethical rationality whereby understanding the human potential is valued, an open approach to knowledge is supported, the capacity for constructive dissent is provided, and authority backed by democratic legitimacy is endorsed (see Woods, 2006, p. 334).

Other studies took empirical approaches to developing frameworks of social justice. For example, Theoharis (2007) used an empirical approach in studying how leaders enact social justice by (a) raising student achievement, (b) improving school structures, (c) recentering and enhancing staff capacity, and (d) strengthening school culture and community. The study demonstrated how a selection of principals displayed a remarkable commitment to equity and justice, and their leadership led to better educational environments. In a similar vein, López-Roca and Traver-Martí (2020) found that a community that participates in decision making and teamwork advances distributed forms of leadership. They argued that a democratic and inclusive school model entails values such as freedom, equality, dialogue, and respect, and that these values constitute social justice as a key principle in a democratic school.

The studies reported above show how knowledge is located in cultural and political contexts and highlight how important it is to carefully consider organizational contexts as part of leading education for democracy (cf. Ball et al., 2012). This is also emphasized in a study by Trujillo et al. (2021) that examined and compared how school leaders make sense of social justice and democracy in high-stakes testing and low-stakes testing contexts. The analysis showed how policies interact with on-the-ground socioeconomic and cultural realities and demonstrated the significance of contextual conditions in developing what leading education for democracy means in practice. High-stakes testing represented an obstacle to enabling democratic schools. Consequently, a divergence appeared in how social justice and democracy were interpreted in distinct policy contexts.

The above studies demonstrate the tensions that educational leaders face in education for democracy. These tensions have been highlighted between accountability within bureaucratic organizations and autonomy of professional norms,

as well as between collective and private interests. Moreover, the importance of values in leading education for democracy has been demonstrated, particularly the importance of a democratic and inclusive school model that enables the community to partake in decision making. Finally, the significance of contextual conditions as an enabling or constraining factor has been emphasized. Tensions and contextual changes raise questions regarding the meaning of leading education for democracy in an educational setting and additionally highlight the importance of investigating how it is practiced in a low-stakes system of accountability. In the coming section, I will demonstrate that it is also possible to observe these tensions in a low-stakes accountability system, not only in high-stakes systems.

2.2.4 Educational leadership and democracy in the Norwegian context

Norway illustrates a thought-provoking case where tensions emerge between accountability-based governance and professional autonomy, as well as between collective and individual interests. This is arguably the case, as equity, the welfare state, and equal distribution of goods have been recognized as distinguishing features. In Norway, social democracy has had a crucial impact both politically and economically. This model has instantiated a form of institutionalized trust relationships between leaders and employees. However, Norway has also been influenced by neoliberal policies, including elements of managerial accountability, such as leadership contracts based on performance indicators, the publication of national test scores, an outcome-based curriculum, teacher monitoring, and test-based accountability, especially since the beginning of the millennium (Møller & Rönnberg, 2021). Although performance measurement has become a key part of Norwegian educational reform practices, professional autonomy remains emphasized in policy documents, thereby creating ambiguities in governing processes. However, trust in the profession appears to have been replaced, to some extent, by trust in the results (Uljens et al., 2013), highlighting the influence of structural and managerial accountability demands. Having introduced the changes in the governing context, I now present two identified strands of research in the field of educational leadership and democracy in Norway.

One strand of studies conducted in a Norwegian context illustrates how, as observed internationally, a discourse related to NPM, standardized testing, and evaluation competes with a social democratic discourse for prominence (Camphuijsen

et al., 2020; Møller & Skedsmo, 2013). Some of these studies have problematized the attempt to address achievement gaps across cultural groups (Lillejord & Tolo, 2006) Based on these studies, it is possible to argue that managerial accountability has become more dominant in Norway, and consequently that the context for democratic forms of leadership is undergoing changes. Traditional norms of democratic accountability are being questioned, and the values inherent in the new understanding of accountability are cost effectiveness and efficiency. In contrast, Møller's (2006) inquiry into one "beacon school" has demonstrated how educational professionals lead and uphold democratic standards under tensions generated by NPM policies at the school level. The study highlighted the value of granting students a voice in the process of decision making, of enabling dialogues, of encouraging an ethic of care and concern for the common good, of equity and social justice as personal commitment, as well as of establishing arenas for collaboration and negotiations. Møller emphasized school leaders' crucial role in counteracting the inherent instrumental rationality represented by NPM policies.

A second strand of studies has been concerned with what leading education for democracy means in practice (Andersen & Ottesen, 2011; Huang et al., 2017; Møller, 2006; Stray, 2010; Vedøy, 2008). A study by Andersen and Ottesen (2011) based on ethnographic data and interviews with school leaders raised critical questions regarding the inclusion of minority groups, an issue which closely relates to education for democracy. Results from this study suggest that in leading multicultural schools, school leaders need to initiate and direct strategies aimed at cultivating social justice. Additionally, Andersen and Ottesen (2011) proposed that school leaders and teachers should explore inclusive school practices in a critical manner, thereby adopting collaborative approaches to professional learning. A more recent empirical study in the field is the ICCS report (Huang et al., 2017), which includes a questionnaire regarding school leaders' perceptions of education for democracy. The Norwegian ICCS report stated that the majority of school leaders hold the opinion that all or nearly all teachers (88 percent) have a positive attitude toward their school, and that they feel they belong to a community (Huang et al., 2017, p. 117). Moreover, the school leaders' perceptions of students' relation to their own school showed that 78 percent of school leaders believe that all or nearly all students feel they belong to their school communities (Huang et al., 2017, p. 118). Finally, school leaders are of the opinion that the most

important factor in education for democracy is increasing students' capabilities for critical and independent thinking.

In sum, research from the Norwegian context illustrates and exemplifies tensions, as does research on what leading democratic education looks like in practice. However, most of these studies were conducted more than 10 years ago, and it seems like the managerial pressure has become stronger.

2.3 Summary

Although the critique has been made that much of the research on leading democratically is conceptual rather than empirical (Szeto, 2020), the studies included in this review highlight important contributions to leading education for democracy. The review noted how previous studies have contributed both theoretically and empirically to what promoting democracy and social justice means in practice (e.g., Apple & Beane, 1995; Brown, 2004; Woods, 2005), as well as the interconnection between the policy context and leadership aimed at social justice and democracy (e.g., Trujillo et al., 2021). In addition, the reviewed studies clarified the role of organizational contexts in enabling education for democracy (e.g., Ryan & Rottman, 2009).

First, the review of the literature showed that there is a need to understand that educational leadership at the school level is embedded in wider structures of power (e.g., Ryan, 2016; Ryan & Rottman, 2009; Szeto, 2020; Trujillo et al., 2021). Accordingly, in the first sub-study of the LED project, the purpose was to examine how professionalism and the democratic mandate in education are constructed and legitimized in key education policy documents. In correspondence with this purpose, I identified discourse analysis as the relevant method of data collection in the first sub-study (see Chapter 4).

Second, the literature review revealed that there is a lack of research on how democratic policy directives are interpreted, translated, and legitimized in "soft-regulated" or low-stakes accountability systems (cf. Maroy, 2015; Verger et al., 2019). Hence, in the second sub-study, the purpose was to examine what characterizes professional discretion in enacting education for democracy in a low-stakes, "soft-regulation" system. To provide insights into this topic, I identified semi-structured focus group interviews as the most relevant data collection method (see Chapter 4).

To provide a more discerning account of the identified gaps in the literature in a wider range of schools not involved in prioritizing education for democracy on their websites, the purpose of the third sub-study was to explore factors associated with how teachers perceive the state of democracy in their schools in a low-stakes accountability context. Thus, a survey was distributed to a larger sample of teachers. The three sub-studies outlined in this section were constituents of a specific design, which I present and explain in Chapter 4 on methodology and methods. I now turn toward presenting the theoretical and conceptual framing of the LED project.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework on Leading Education for Democracy

Introduction

The LED project was anchored in a combination of three theoretical perspectives: theories on policy studies and accountability in education (Ball et al., 2012; Camphuijsen et al., 2020; Gunter et al., 2016; Sinclair, 1995; Verger et al., 2019), theories on professionalism (see, for example, Anderson & Cohen, 2018, Evetts, 2011), and theories on leadership and education aimed at democracy and social justice (e.g., Arthur et al., 2008; Bogotch & Shields, 2014; Furman & Shields, 2005; Woods, 2005). By drawing from these perspectives, in the current chapter, I present and explain the key concepts of the framework guiding the LED project.

As already mentioned in Chapter 1, leading education for democracy means enacting democratic policy with an approach to educational leadership that is critical, educative, transformative, and ethical (Foster, 1989, Gunter & Courtney, 2020; Shields, 2010; Woods, 2006). This approach encompasses the following elements: (1) democratic enactment, which entails the interpretation, translation, and legitimization of democratic policy directives (cf. Ball et al., 2012); (2) professionalism aimed at inclusion, advocacy, and activism (Anderson & Cohen, 2018); and (3) democratic accountability, which takes the form of public transparency of the institutional primary task.

I now turn toward defining democracy. What follows is a definition of educational leadership, one linked to democratic enactment. This is followed by a description of the LED approach to educational leadership and relevant key concepts, such as democratic enactment, professionalism, and democratic accountability.

3.1 Defining democracy

I utilized theories by John Dewey (1916) as well as theories on democratic and transformative educational leadership to inform my conceptual understanding of democracy and education. I also drew upon the works of Foster (1989) and Shields

(2010), both of whom have pursued a critical and transformative approach to democracy.

Dewey (1916) proposed that democracy should be practiced and experienced by students, and that the success of democracy depended on education. Connecting the ideas of democracy, experience, and education, Dewey explained:

> Democracy is the faith that the process of experience is more important than any special result attained, so that special results achieved are of ultimate value only as they are used to enrich and order the ongoing process. Since the process of experience is capable of being educative, faith in democracy is all one with faith in experience and education. (Dewey, 2021, p. 64)

The above quote speaks to a participatory notion of democracy. According to Dewey, the notion of democracy embraces much more than a form of government, and it encompasses individuals reconstructing and reorganizing experiences, which subsequently adds to the meaning of experience as negotiated in the life of the community (Dewey, 1916; Hildebrand, 2018). It is commonly agreed that democracy is a system of government in which people choose their governing representatives and thereby decide on legislation and matters of politics. Aside from this, there is no consensus regarding the meaning and content of what constitutes a democracy. It has been defined as “a political form of governance with a common right to vote, where those who govern are held to account by the voters in free elections” (Østerud, 2015, p. 578, author’s translation). Numerous understandings and definitions of democracy have been proposed regarding its meaning in relation to the political system (e.g., Habermas, 2015; Mouffe, 2005) as well as its meaning in education (e.g., Apple & Beane, 1995; Dewey, 1916; Woods, 2005).

Regarding the meaning of democracy in the political system, researchers have argued that there are demands of democratic participation in large-scale democracies, where a key issue is how citizens should govern large, complex societies (Christiano & Bajaj, 2021). In an attempt to overcome this problem, “the self-interest assumption” has been proposed, where a considerable amount of literature in political science assumes that individuals act primarily out of self-interest as a key point of departure (Christiano & Bajaj, 2021). Seen from this perspective, it is the state’s role to safeguard the rights of individuals rather than focusing on the common good. Yet other researchers have argued for a participative perspective of democracy, where state policy is a public concern and the notion of the public good trumps individual rights

(Dewey, 1916; Hildebrand, 2018). This encompasses individuals reconstructing and reorganizing their experience of what democracy means in communal practice. Second, a strand of deliberative understandings of democracy has been developed (Habermas, 2015) that focuses on opinion- and will-formation through deliberation, aiming for the common good between the members of the polity, community, or group. In essence, Habermas linked his discourse theory with an analysis of modern legal systems seen in the context of modernization (Bohman & Rehg, 2017). Habermas (2015) made the key argument that modernization engenders pluralism and functional differentiation, which makes it less likely that all citizens accept society as legitimate. Thus, in the LED project, I assumed that tensions between democracy could be understood as a self-centered project on the one hand, and the common good on the other (cf. Apple & Beane, 1995; Furman & Shields, 2005). In understanding democracy, I primarily drew from a developmental conception of democratic practice (Woods, 2005), which implies that individuals should be free from constraints and have the freedom to act while also feeling belonging and interdependence within a larger community. They should also have the freedom to belong to a particular group or culture, as well as freedom and enablement to realize human potentiality (Woods, 2005, p. 11).

In the LED project, I defined democracy in relation to education to encompass conditions for a functioning democratic school (see Chapter 1.2). This includes democratic arrangements and opportunities (Apple & Beane, 1995). First, educational professionals should facilitate democratic structures and processes, meaning that all who are directly involved in the school, including students, are included in the decision-making process. Meeting arenas may be committees, school councils, or other school-wide decision-making groups (Apple & Beane, 1995, p. 10). Enabling democratic processes also includes involving people in diverse learning communities rather than segregating based on factors such as ethnicity or socioeconomic class or abilities. It is an arena in which the common good enables collaboration and cooperation rather than competition. Second, educational professionals should arrange for a democratic curriculum. This means that they should not only reproduce knowledge society values but acknowledge that different perspectives need to be discussed and negotiated.

3.2 Defining educational leadership and links to democratic enactment

As already mentioned in the introduction, the aim of the LED project was to investigate what democratic enactment looks like in policy and practice in a low-stakes accountability context, one which is incrementally influenced by managerial accountability demands. This focus directed me to a definition of educational leadership practice as "legitimate interaction in an educational institution intended to enhance engagement with the institutional primary task" (James et al., 2020, p. 619). Promoting democratic values and attitudes in school and preparing students to become responsible citizens in society are underscored as two of the primary tasks pursued in Norwegian schools (see also Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2017). In accordance with these primary tasks, I understand educational leadership as a shared and dispersed practice in schools (Lingard et al., 2003) while also being critical, educative, transformative, and ethical in orientation (Foster, 1989; Shields, 2010; Woods, 2006). Educational leadership is thus a view of leadership and power that addresses the relationships between structure and human agency and goes beyond tasks and behaviors that hold responsible parties accountable for educational outputs (cf. Hopkins & Higham, 2007; Leithwood, 2001; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011). It also understands schools as sites of cultural and political struggle (cf. Shields, 2010). This means that leadership practices should free individuals from technical instrumentalism, which generates habits and desires that subdue them to the forces of the market. It also implies a form of emancipation, which lies at the core of practicing educational leadership (cf. Shields, 2010). In a similar vein, Woods (2006) has argued that educational leaders should take ownership of the historical roots of modern democracy and thereby counter the instrumental rationality associated with "purely mundane passions" (p. 322). They should value human potential and enable self-transcendence through a rich narrative of democracy. Resonating with these arguments, Dewey asserted:

> The democratic belief in the principle of leadership is a generous one. It is universal. It is belief in the capacity of every person to lead his own life free from coercion and imposition by others provided right conditions are supplied. (Dewey, 2021, p. 62)

Accordingly, when leading education for democracy, educational leaders are expected to cultivate not only knowledge about democratic institutions but, in the

Deweyian spirit, also skills, attitudes, and values in order to enable students' experiences of what democracy means in practice (see Stray, 2010). Cultivating such skills also demands that educational leaders raise awareness that what happens in schools "is embedded and subsumed in wider social structures of power" (Møller, 2006, p. 67).

Interpreting and translating policy directives while also cultivating skills such as the above illustrate the tensions at play when educational professionals enact education for democracy: Tensions emerge as professionals are being situated in a hierarchical setting, one which involves reporting on performance data and learning outcomes on the one hand, and cultivating self-transcendence and emancipation outside of particular tasks and behaviors that hold responsible parties accountable for educational outputs on the other (cf. Shields, 2010; Woods, 2005). Concerning the points above, professionals must also balance between individual rights and the common good (cf. Englund, 1994). These ideas of tensions relate to the concept of struggle in policy enactment, which will be elaborated on in the coming section.

3.3 The LED approach to educational leadership

In the LED project, I argued against understanding leadership as "school leadership," i.e., as being confined to particular tasks and behaviors that seek to enhance educational outputs in the form of test results. Thus, I understand leadership as "educational leadership," as it encompasses the institutional primary task, grounded in a democratic purpose. This entails a democratic and transformative understanding of leadership. Several theories are involved in this understanding and framework (Ball et al., 2012; Lingard et al., 2003; Molander, 2016; Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; Woods, 2006).

Woods argued that "the aims of democratic leadership are to share power (by dispersing leadership), share hope (by extending opportunities to realize human potential) and share the fruits of society (through fair distribution of resources and cultural respect)" (2005, p. 139). Moreover, he emphasized that democracy "pervades the structures, relationships and learning of educational institutions in ways that distributed leadership does not" (Woods, 2004, p. 4), and that democratic leadership should not be divorced from deeper philosophical and political questions. In a similar way, Gunter (2016a) linked *educational leadership* to educational purposes and

practices, and furthermore argued for the moral and ethical legitimacy of educational institutions as fundamental in all settings. Woods contended that a rich narrative of democracy should be espoused insofar as it would lend to education a self-conscious orientation toward the world. Woods also noted that learning is not confined to students but encompasses everyone in the learning community. Educational leaders are tasked with enabling self-transcendence, but achieving this goal necessitates taking everyone into account as truth seekers in an active democracy. I also drew inspiration from researchers who hold a democratic leadership perspective, although via different concepts, and who do not necessarily refer to their approach as democratic but instead as, for example, transformative leadership (Foster, 1989; Shields, 2010). In conceptualizing educational leadership, I used Carolyn Shields' way of framing transformative leadership (as distinct from transformational leadership[2]). In particular, I found it relevant how she linked education and educational leadership to the wider social context in which they are embedded and how she emphasized both individual and collective dimensions of leadership. Shields cited Weiner (2003): "Transformative leadership is an exercise of power and authority that begins with questions of justice, democracy, and the dialectic between individual accountability and social responsibility" (p. 89). These principles were important constituents of democratic enactment in the LED project.

3.4 Democratic enactment

I assumed that educational leaders engage in leadership practices by enacting policies related to the democratic purpose while presuming that there is some leeway in how they interpret and translate this democratic purpose. This perspective implies policy work in which democratic policy directives are "made sense of, mediated and struggled over, and sometimes ignored, or, in another word, enacted in schools" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 3). Policy making in schools is "a complex set of processes of interpretation and translation, which are contextually mediated and institutionally rendered" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 142). Moreover, new policies may be integrated into older ones, and they will be struggled over and struggled with by those to whom the policies pertain. Hence, the LED project investigated how democratic policy directives in the recent General

[2] Shields (2010) emphasized the difference by explaining that transformational leadership is functional in orientation, seeking to enhance organizational capacity, while transformative leadership is educative, shared, and critical in orientation.

Curriculum in Norway are being interpreted and translated by actors in schools. There are several factors that mediate policy enactment in schools. These are history, intake, and values (Ball et al., 2012). Policy, policy contexts, and discourses are mediated through such factors.

Policy directives are mediated and struggled over, and related to this is understanding educational leadership as a field of tensions. Tensions emerge as professionals are being situated between particular tasks and behaviors that hold responsible parties accountable for educational outputs and for refining organizational structures on the one hand, and for striving for ideals of freedom and democracy, while addressing the relationships between structure and human agency, on the other (e.g., Berkovich, 2014; Foster, 1989; Shields, 2010). The latter involves cultivating self-transcendence and emancipation (cf. Shields, 2010; Woods, 2005). Interpreting and translating policy directives while also cultivating skills such as the above reside at the center of the tensions at play when educational professionals enact education for democracy. Working under such tensions, educational leaders may face the challenge of interpreting and translating policy expectations from above. While reporting on performance data and answering to local educational authorities, they may struggle with both the "how to" and the degree to which they may interpret a cross-curricular theme like democracy and citizenship and translate it into sub-elements. Studies have shown that there is leeway and space for discretionary work in the Norwegian context (cf. Karseth & Møller, 2018; Molander, 2016). At the same time, I understand professional discretion as entailing accountability (Molander, 2016, p. 60), which includes being accountable to students, parents, educational authorities, and the public. Structural and managerial mechanisms of accountability may constrain discretionary spaces through specifying rules and procedures (Molander, 2016). In the absence of such rules and procedures for enactment, educational leaders are left with considerable discretionary space in making sense of education for democracy. In a social-democratic, low-stakes context of accountability, educational professionals seem to be granted much leeway in this process of enactment, but they are still situated in both organizational and occupational forms of professionalism (e.g., Evetts, 2009). This poses the question of what it means to be a professional educator in an age of accountability.

Based on the above, I distinguish between two approaches to leadership in democratic enactment: the *technical approach* to leadership regarding data and

performance, and the *participative and deliberative approach* involving practices that are dispersed across the organization, and collegial authority. These relate to different understandings of professionalism, which are explained in the section below.

3.5 Professionalism

Across the three articles, I use professionalism as one of the overarching perspectives (e.g., Evetts, 2011; Mausethagen & Granlund, 2012; Sugrue & Solbrekke, 2014). Evetts' (2009) distinction between two "ideal-types" of professionalism, organizational and occupational, serves as a point of departure. These forms 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. It also includes standardized work procedures linked to organizational objectives and accountability based on performance reviews. On the other hand, occupational professionalism is characterized by collegial authority and relationships based on trust, with latitude for discretionary judgement. Here, internalized codes of ethics correspond with standards in the field. According to Evetts (2009), organizational professionalism expands output measures and standardized practices. The degree to which organizational professionalism gains ground, however, differs between educational contexts and must therefore be empirically examined. I adhere to Anderson and Cohen's (2018) perspective, which did not advocate reasserting occupational professionalism, because it proposes that structural injustices, especially in a US context, persist under both forms of professionalism. Thus, Anderson and Cohen advocate a new form of democratic professionalism, one that encompasses inclusion, advocacy, and activism, as well as democratic teaching and a view of the principal as a facilitator and advocate allied with the community. Democratic professionalism involves activism within the school (intra-institutional activism) but also encompasses activism outside of institutional boundaries (extra-institutional activism) (see also Berkovich, 2014; Furman & Shields, 2005; Smyth, 1989; Szeto, 2020). It also involves promoting democratic schools at the organizational level (Apple & Beane, 1995)

3.6 Democratic accountability

The analytical distinction between occupational and organizational professionalism is linked to understandings of accountability. Accountability may be defined as the process of "which people are required to explain and take responsibility for their actions," while "giving and demanding reasons for conduct" (Sinclair, 1995, pp. 220-221). In accordance with this definition, I distinguish between professional and managerial accountability. Professional accountability involves adhering to the standards of the profession, seeing teaching and leadership also as a moral endeavor, integrating codes of ethics into schools, developing norms that foreground students' needs, and engaging in collaboration and knowledge sharing and improvement of practice. Managerial accountability 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, p. 40). Both approaches are linked to democracy in the sense that the latter, managerial approach to accountability means that professionals produce data to justify public money use; and the former, professional accountability means that professionals have expertise and the trust of the public in covering core expenditures.

Moreover, and in accordance with the approach by Hart (2018), I point to the current literature's lack of attention to democratic accountability, taking the form of public transparency (Ranson, 2003) regarding the institutional primary task related to the democratic purpose in education. I argue, in the same trajectory as Ranson (2003), that schools should be transparent to stakeholders concerning the institutional primary task (James et al., 2020). Nevertheless, educational leaders are situated between bureaucratic control and professional autonomy (see sections 3.1 and 3.2), and they are expected to be transparent in their work (Molander, 2016). Accordingly, professionals with a democratic orientation must balance between understanding leadership as particular tasks and behaviors that hold responsible parties accountable for educational outputs and for refining organizational structures on the one hand (cf. Hopkins & Higham, 2007; Leithwood, 2001; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011), and for striving for ideals of freedom, democracy, and emancipation on the other (see Shields, 2010).

3.7 Summary

The current chapter highlighted theories and key concepts that are constitutive of leading education for democracy. These include democratic enactment, professionalism, and democratic accountability.

(1) Democratic enactment, which includes the interpretation, translation, and legitimization of democratic policy directives (cf. Ball et al., 2012). Part of this is perceiving educational leadership as a field of tensions between understanding leadership as particular tasks and behaviors that hold responsible parties accountable on the one hand, and striving for ideals of freedom, democracy, and emancipation on the other (e.g. Berkovich, 2014; Foster, 1989; Shields, 2010).

(2) Professionalism aimed at inclusion, advocacy, and activism (Anderson & Cohen, 2018), where activism not only occurs within the school (intra-institutional activism) but also encompasses activism outside of institutional boundaries (extra-institutional activism) (see also Berkovich, 2014; Furman & Shields, 2005; Smythe, 1989; Szeto, 2020). It also involves promoting democratic schools at the organizational level (see Apple & Beane, 1995).

(3) Democratic accountability, taking the form of public transparency regarding the institutional primary task related to the democratic purpose in education (Ranson, 2003). In the LED project, I assumed that educational leadership was tied to the institutional primary task (James et al., 2020) while also being a dispersed practice that can emerge in situations not necessarily tied to formal leadership positions (Lingard et al., 2003; Woods, 2004).

In the LED project, I blended these three theoretical perspectives: scholarship on democratic leadership, professionalism, and educational accountability. I combined these perspectives to account for leading education for democracy, and I demonstrated how these three perspectives of scholarship are interconnected.

The next chapter will attend to the choice of research design and methods, as well as the data collection and analysis process. This includes a discussion of the robustness of the research (validity and reliability), in addition to ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

The aim of the LED project was to investigate what democratic enactment looks like in policy and practice in a low-stakes accountability context, one which is influenced by managerial accountability demands. This aim necessitated investigating leading education for democracy in both policy and practice by using three sub-studies, which will be elaborated on later. In this chapter, I start by shortly presenting the ontology and epistemology that lay the foundation for the LED project. Then, a description of the multi-phase design and research process is provided. This is followed by a description of the data collection process, sampling procedure, and participants, and of the data analyses that comprised the foundation for the extended abstract and the articles of my thesis. I finish the chapter by discussing how I dealt with issues of validity and reliability in my research, as well as ethical considerations.

4.1 Basic philosophical assumptions

I anchored the LED project in a phenomenological perspective, which is a field in philosophy that is concerned with studying structures of experience and consciousness (Smith, 2018). The main aspect of phenomenology is the study of conscious experience through how it is experienced from a first-person viewpoint (Smith, 2018). The founder of phenomenology was Edmund Husserl (1900). According to Husserl, experience is directed—through intentionality—toward things in the world through concepts, thoughts, ideas, or images. A key concept in Husserl's system is *bracketing*, which means to "bracket out" preconceived notions as a means to experience the true essence of things (Husserl, 1900). Husserl developed and refined his system of philosophy from 1890 to the early 1900s, and later defined phenomenology as the science of the essence of consciousness (Husserl, 1931).

For the purpose of my thesis, I defined phenomenology as the study of experience or perceptions as they appear to the experiencer or first-person. I assumed that participants in my study drew from their first-person experiences in their stories of interpreting and translating democracy, and when reporting how they perceived factors

related to the state of democracy in schools. The first sub-study provided insights into the context of experiences in which the educational leaders operate. This worked as a foundation for a deeper understanding in the subsequent sub-study that focused on the school leaders' and teachers' stories of enacting education for democracy (the second sub-study), as well as teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools (the third sub-study). In the second sub-study, I asked follow-up questions in the interviews as an attempt to "bracket out" thoughts, ideas, and memories that were unrelated to their experiences with democracy. This was performed to delve into the essence of their stories of experiencing democracy; specifically, how they interpret and translate democracy and democratic policy directives. In the third sub-study, I aimed to discern teachers' experiences by exploring factors associated with how they perceived the state of democracy in their schools.

4.2 The multi-phase, exploratory sequential design

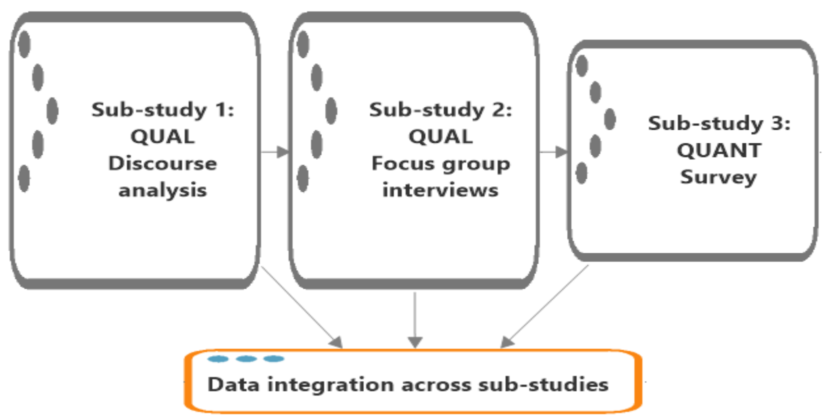
The LED project consisted of three phases, comprising three sub-studies. I collected data using both qualitative and quantitative methods, starting with a discourse analysis of key public policy documents (sub-study 1) and focus group interviews with school leaders and teachers (sub-study 2) as well as an investigation through a survey of how a larger sample of teachers perceived the state of democracy in their schools (sub-study 3). The sub-studies and the chosen methods for each corresponded with the three research questions posed in the articles (see section 1.4).

To conduct interviews with school leaders and teachers, it was necessary to gain insights into how policy expectations pertaining to professionalism and the democratic mandate in education have been constructed and legitimated over time, prior to the fieldwork, which involved understanding how these policy expectations were interpreted and translated by educational professionals. This provided a knowledge foundation on the developments of policy expectations regarding the democratic mandate from the past and present that may influence school leaders' and teachers' stories of policy enactment. To conduct the survey, it was necessary to examine what characterizes professional discretion in enacting education for democracy through the interviews completed in the second sub-study. Gaining knowledge on educational leaders' stories of enacting education for democracy

informed the choice of independent and dependent variables when developing the survey in the third sub-study.

Consequently, a multi-phase, exploratory sequential design was chosen. The strength of an exploratory design rests in its capacity to generate data from the bottom up (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The research process consisted of multiple sub-studies occurring in phases where the second sub-study built upon the first, and the third built upon the second. I formulated the three research questions by identifying relevant gaps in the literature (see Chapter 2.3). Based on this method, I started by searching for patterns (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), which in the case of my thesis meant searching for patterns within key policy documents and within interview materials, which in turn informed the selection of key variables employed in the quantitative sub-study. Figure 4.1 depicts the research design, which will be explained below:

Figure 4.1 The multi-phase, exploratory sequential design



Sub-study 1 was undertaken during the spring and autumn of 2018 and involved a qualitative discourse analysis of key education policy documents related to the democratic mandate and professionalism in the wake of a national reform in Norway. This sub-study generated insights into relevant concepts and themes regarding expectations of professionalism and the democratic mandate over time. It also laid the foundation for the interviews undertaken in sub-study 2.

Sub-study 2, which also employed a qualitative method, was conducted in autumn 2018. The main purpose of this sub-study was to examine the characterizations of school leaders' and teachers' stories of enactment of the

democratic purpose in schools. As the discourse analysis in sub-study 1 revealed that professionals are given some leeway to interpret the democratic purpose in education, I decided to focus on characterizations of professional discretion in school professionals' work with education for democracy. That is, while sub-study 1 revealed policy expectations concerning education for democracy, sub-study 2 revealed how these expectations were manifested in the stories of enactment at schools. Accordingly, the themes identified in sub-study 1 informed themes used in the interview guide, especially themes such as leadership cultures and structures of decision making in schools, as well as how educational leaders handle tensions between caring for the individual on the one hand, and the broader community on the other.

The multi-phase, exploratory sequential design allowed the development of a third, quantitative, sub-study focusing on lower-secondary school teachers' perceptions of their schools' democratic character. The first two sub-studies revealed that, among other findings, (1) there are indications of discretion granted to professionals within policy documents regarding expectations about education for democracy; (2) tensions between the instrumental approach and the social-democratic approaches to professionalism have been exacerbated and rendered more visible over time; and (3) school leaders and teachers are positioned in such a way that they must balance between acts of leadership and caring for the professional community. This implies, for example, tensions between making swift decisions as formal leaders while at the same time addressing concerns from members of the professional community before such decisions are made. As already outlined in Chapter 3, I understand leadership not as actions of single individuals but rather as practices that are dispersed across the school and that are not necessarily associated with formal leadership (Lingard et al., 2003; Woods, 2005). Based on this understanding, I scaled up my research to include a larger number of teachers in a quantitative sub-study to understand how teachers perceive their schools' democratic character in a low-stakes context, including their possibilities for partaking in practices that are dispersed across the organization. I used a larger-scale sample from a bilateral project[3] consisting of 206 teachers working in five different schools located in the eastern part of Norway.

[3] This project, which was named "Conceptualizing the Democratic Character of Schools Amid a New World Order," is described in Chapter 4.3.3.

4.3 The sub-studies

The current section provides an overview of each of the sub-studies with regard to participants, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. This section intends to complement and serve as a supplement to what is written in the articles and to exemplify how the data sources and analysis may be understood in combination. This should be seen as supplementary information to and overarching comments about what is included in the articles and informs how the data from all of the methods were analyzed regarding the overarching framework of the LED project. While illustrating the internal cohesion of my thesis, the current section also illuminates how employing a multi-phase design can be used in studying leadership of education for democracy.

4.3.1 Sub-study 1: Examination of public policy documents

In the first sub-study, data were collected through an examination of key policy documents. The data set/sampling consisted of three White Papers (WPs) by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) published in the wake of the reform of knowledge promotion: WP 30, "Culture for Learning" (MoER, 2004); WP 31, "Quality in Schools" (MoER, 2008); and WP 28, "Subjects – In-Depth-Learning – Understanding – A Renewal of the Knowledge Promotion" (MoER, 2016). These documents were supplemented with four additional WPs to better contextualize the findings.

The sample was a purposive sampling of representative policy documents aimed at assessing a wide scope of policies in the wake of a national education reform in Norway. I thus aimed at variation in the data, choosing from policy documents formulated by different governments over time. This was an important sampling criterion, as it generated insights into possible tensions in policy documents as they emerged over time at the national level.

I conducted a discourse analysis consisting of three dimensions of reading (Fairclough, 1992). In the first reading, I gained a holistic overview of the themes in the policy documents and determined which themes stood out to better understand how social problems and solutions related to education for democracy were constructed and legitimated. In the second reading, I analyzed the constructions of professionalism and democracy based on the themes that emerged in the first reading.

In the third reading, I mapped competing discourses in the policy documents and hence identified discursive shifts.

To ensure consistency and reliability in my overall project, theories on professionalism (including accountability) and democratic leadership served as the overarching framework that guided the data collection from policy documents (e.g., Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Evetts, 2011). This framework involved inclusion, advocacy, and activism (see Chapter 3). Sub-codes of these three notions were applied to observe nuances in the data. In Appendix 2, I exemplified the coding process. Appendix 2.1 shows how the coding was done in NVivo and how pieces of text were coded into sub-codes relevant to the overarching framework. Although the document is written in Norwegian, the piece of text in the left column stands for "Leadership in a school community." This was coded as "professional community," which represents a sub-code of professionalism. Appendix 2.2 exemplifies how I went about the classification into different sub-codes. For example, as institutional empowerment was part of the framework related to inclusion (cf. Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Woods, 2005), "school culture" was identified as a sub-code.

The analysis encompassed the two last dimensions of reading in the three-dimensional model suggested by Fairclough (1992). These two dimensions involved a deductive analysis through the scanning of themes and aligning them with the theoretical framework. The discourse analysis as the analytical approach provided the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the differences and nuances in professionalism and education for democracy as constructed by different governments over time. A large portion of the themes consisted of topics related to the international discourse on learning. Still, it was possible to identify parts of the policy documents that were particularly relevant for expectations of professionalism and the democratic mandate. In the second phase of reading, I sought to identify constructions of professionalism and democracy after corroborating categories of sub-codes that were generated in an inductive manner. Here, I used codes based on professionalism and democratic leadership. Examples of coding themes were professional communities as part of either organizational or occupational professionalism (cf. Anderson & Cohen, 2018) and inclusive and healthy learning environments (cf. Woods, 2005). In the third phase, no coding was performed, but instead attempts were made to identify possible discursive shifts and tensions based on the existing codes and the holistic overview of the themes. The analysis was performed to provide insights into what policy

expectations of the democratic mandate and professionalism look like in a low-stakes accountability context, with professionalism applied as the overarching framework, exactly like the second phase (see Appendix 2).

4.3.2 Sub-study 2: Semi-structured focus group interviews

I used semi-structured focus group interviews with principals, deputy leaders, and teachers to explore their interpretations and translations of policy expectations related to education for democracy. According to Kvale (1997), qualitative interviews constitute a form of conversation about issues. The interviews made a significant contribution to the generation of insights into how school leaders and teachers interpret, legitimize, and translate the democratic purpose of education in a low-stakes, "soft-regulation" system. The sample consisted of, in total, 21 school leaders and teachers. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study (see Appendix 5), and they were provided with detailed information about the study (Appendix 6). Table 4.1 presents an overview of the schools and participants. In the table, I refer to formal leaders, such as department heads, as "leaders."

Table 4.1. Overview of schools and participants

School name (anonymous)	*Geography*	*Number of interviewees*
School 1, Valley	West	4 teachers, 2 leaders, principal
School 2, Hilltop	East	4 teachers, 1 counselor, principal
School 3, Crown	East	3 teachers, 1 leader, principal
School 4, Road	West	2 teachers, principal

The sample in the second sub-study referred to in the table above was also generated from purposive sampling with the addition of snowball sampling or "chain referral" (Tansey, 2007) and consisted of focus group interviews with 21 school leaders and teachers. While the sample in the first sub-study involved the national level, the sample in the second sub-study represented the regional and school levels, as it was derived from four schools distributed across the eastern and western parts of Norway. The purpose of choosing both regions was to achieve variation in the sample. Adhering to purposeful sampling, I selected participants within each school who were engaged in social studies, politics, and citizenship education (cf. Creswell & Poth, 2016).

By following seven stages of conducting a research interview (Kvale, 1997, p. 47), I thematized and carefully planned how I would go about the interviews. Based on the findings derived from the first sub-study, I formulated an interview guide to structure the interviews. For example, as the discourse analysis of policy documents in sub-study 1 unveiled tensions between the ideas of thin and deep democracy, items that were related to this theme were included in the interview guide (see Appendix 3). The guide was formulated as open-ended, and the questions were designed to reveal what was most important for the topic in focus (Ary et al., 2010). Formulating an interview guide was helpful in ensuring that I kept the duration of the interviews within the time limits set by the participants. Still, it proved challenging to balance between following the interview guide while also, as emphasized by Ary et al. (2010), modifying the questions during the interview process. This was particularly challenging because the participants showed a high level of engagement in the topic. To keep the interviews focused, I gently reminded the participants of the topic of the interview if they went off-topic.

Focus group interviews conducted as the discourse analysis in sub-study 1 showed that professional communities were a key policy expectation for educational leaders. Thus, I assumed that education for democracy was a shared endeavor with the institutional empowerment of all individuals (Woods, 2005), which presented the possibility of studying meaning making in interaction (cf. Coburn, 2005). In addition, I offered individual interviews when I did not have access to interviewing the leadership team due to practical reasons. Individual interviews (Kvale, 1997) were conducted only on two occasions, both with principals from two of the schools.[4] These individual interviews included the same questions posed in the focus groups but were adapted to the role of the participant in focus. For example, questions more relevant to teachers in a dynamic conversation were left out when interviewing principals. Apart from these two interviews, studying the interactions among participants was the method of choice concerning this subject (cf. Bryman, 2015; Creswell, 2007). A focus group involves a moderator leading a discussion with participants (in this case, the teachers and school leaders) to examine in detail how participants in the group think or feel regarding a specific topic, which may be reflected in how they talk about this topic.

[4] These two principals were not able to attend, but I wanted to hear about their experiences regardless.

Focus groups can be used for many purposes (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). These purposes range from obtaining general background information about a topic of interest to interpreting previous quantitative results. In the LED project, I identified two purposes: learning how respondents talk about a phenomenon of interest, and generating a research hypothesis that can be submitted to further research and testing using more quantitative approaches (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, pp. 325-326). Using focus groups generated insights into participants' stories of enacting education for democracy by observing how the participants engaged in meaning making when discussing this topic. Second, focus group interviews can lead to the generation of a research hypothesis or an assumption, which can be assessed in further research and testing using a quantitative approach. This last purpose aligns with the multi-phase, exploratory sequential design, as sub-study 2 laid the foundation for the last sub-study of the LED project (cf. Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017).

In the second sub-study, I analyzed interview material based on data from the focus groups. This analytical strategy illuminated how school leaders and teachers reflected on leading education for democracy. The interactions among the participants focused on meaning making in a professional domain (Coburn, 2005), which revealed how the participants negotiated, interpreted, and translated education policies pertaining to the democratic mandate over time. The very first analysis occurred during the transcription of the interview material by identifying potentially relevant themes that would later be assigned codes derived from the theoretical framework. During the second round of analysis, analytical concepts, such as organizational and occupational professionalism, and the rationalities of democratic agency established by Woods (2005), i.e., therapeutic, decisional, discursive, and ethical rationality, were deductively applied after reading and transcribing the interviews and after the holistic reading.

As the data from the interviews in sub-study 2 unveiled the importance of enabling professional communities as a key leadership activity in educational leaders' stories of enacting education for democracy, I theorized that there are certain conditions for enabling democratic features in schools. Thus, I now elaborate on sub-study 3, in which I focused on what factors are associated with teachers' perceptions of their schools' democratic character.

4.3.3 Sub-study 3: Survey

The survey represented a different approach compared to those employed in the previous two sub-studies. The survey instrument was, as described previously, designed based on the previous two sub-studies in accordance with the purposes of integrating research methods (cf. Greene, 2007), as well as other relevant theoretical and empirical research.

For the third sub-study, which focused on collecting quantitative data, the sample comprised schools located in the eastern part of Norway. Through purposive sampling, I reached out to six schools, e-mailing their principals to gauge their interest in taking part in the study. All of these principals negotiated with their teachers about how to respond to the invitation from the university, and five principals ultimately expressed interest in participating. This resulted in 206 participating teachers from five lower-secondary schools. The survey was administered in common meeting arenas for the leadership in collaboration with staff at the respective schools. The survey was paper-based as I assumed, based on previous experiences, that this would increase the response rate. The paper-based survey was ultimately successful as the return rate included all teachers present at the staff meeting. No one declined to complete the survey. To complement the sampling in the second sub-study, the survey sample encompassed all of the present teachers at each school, not just teachers engaged in subjects related to social studies. This sampling was grounded on the fact that all teachers are expected to teach the democratic purpose as part of the primary task of education.

The survey instrument was to be part of a larger project funded by the Peder Sather Centre for Advanced Study. This larger project, of which sub-study 3 was a part, aimed to compare teacher responses from schools located in Oakland, US, i.e., a high-stakes accountability context, with teacher responses from Norwegian schools, i.e., a low-stakes accountability context, about perceptions of the democratic character of their schools. I participated in the development of the survey instrument together with colleagues at UC Berkeley and University of Oslo, but due to closed schools in the US during 2020 and until May 2021, data collection in Oakland has been postponed and the survey has so far only been carried out in Norway, as part of the LED project. As the previous two sub-studies revealed the crucial role of professional communities and teachers' dispersed leadership, I focused especially on the teachers' perceptions of

their schools' democratic character, including their opportunities for democratic leadership practices and involvement in decision making. I used nine factors from the survey: a dependent variable (state of democracy) and eight independent variables, all made up of several survey items. The selected factors allowed me to investigate organizational context for leading education for democracy, such as teachers' perceptions of leadership and support structures. Except for the background variables, the items included in the dependent and independent variables were scored on 4-, 5-, and 7-point Likert scales. The survey items and associated factors are outlined in Appendix 4.

Analyses in the third sub-study were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in several stages. The research question was formulated based on findings from the methods used in the two previous sub-studies, discourse analysis and interviews. To answer this research question, i.e., which factors are associated with teachers' perceptions of their schools' democratic character, I identified *the degree to which the teachers perceive their schools to be democratic for students and teachers* as the dependent variable of this sub-study. First, I ran a preliminary analysis (descriptive statistics) of the selected items. Second, I used principal component analysis (PCA) to determine whether the items aimed at measuring a factor worked well empirically. Finally, to identify the strength and significance of the relationships between the dependent variable (the degree to which the teachers perceived their school to be democratic to students and teachers) and the chosen independent variables, I conducted a multiple regression analysis.

4.3.4 Data integration across sub-studies

This section presents how the data analysis across the three sub-studies in the LED project was performed: qualitative thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012, p. 578). A thematic analysis does not have a clearly defined procedure (Bryman, 2012), so it is open to interpretation how researchers should go about the analysis. In the LED project, I aimed to categorize the findings across the sub-studies by identifying common themes between them. A theme can be defined as a category that is identified through the data that relates to the research focus and builds on codes or field notes to provide the researcher with enhanced theoretical understanding (Bryman, 2012).

In the LED project, the thematic analysis across the sub-studies was performed using a data handling/data assistance software program called ”MindManager.” This software provided me with the opportunity to gain an overview of large amounts of data in a mind-map format. Importing the three articles (reported in Part 2 of this thesis) into MindManager enabled me to obtain a thematic overview of them all. This in turn permitted me to gain an overview of similar themes across the sub-studies. The themes identified across the sub-studies were integrated into the overarching findings. This process is explained below.

The thematic analysis across the sub-studies revealed that in the policy documents analyzed in sub-study 1, there are indications of a discretionary space granted to professionals in the domain of education for democracy. This finding was corroborated by the findings from sub-study 2, which confirmed that professionals were indeed granted discretionary space in education for democracy. This corroboration culminated in finding 5.4.1: “leeway in professional discretion.”

The emphasis on institutional empowerment, such as professional cooperation in policy expectations (sub-study 1) and the presence of shared leadership and internalizing codes of ethics (sub-study 2), culminated in finding 5.4.2: “facing tensions between a language of performance indicators and dispersed leadership.”

Additionally, a key finding from sub-studies 2 and 3 was the importance of school-wide processes, including professional communities, in enabling education for democracy understood in a broad manner. Sub-study 2 also revealed challenges and opportunities in handling digital devices in classrooms as well as issues related to rising individualism. These findings were integrated into an overarching finding across the sub-studies, finding 5.4.3: “Enabling and constraining factors in promoting education for democracy”. The overall thematic analysis consisted of a visual comparison followed by the establishment of relevant overarching themes across the sub-studies. Where necessary, I compared the data sets in relation to the specific themes identified across the sub-studies by importing them into MindManager.

4.4 Research credibility

Research credibility involves performing research that can be justified and can produce high-quality and robust findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2016). I first discuss issues of validity and reliability pertaining to the qualitative sub-studies before moving

on to a discussion of validity and reliability issues within the quantitative sub-study. This is followed by a discussion of issues related to research credibility with regard to the multi-phase, exploratory sequential design prior to a reflection on ethical considerations.

4.4.1 Validity and reliability in sub-studies 1 and 2 (discourse analysis and interviews)

Validity simply refers to the truthfulness of research, which can be questioned in the absence of checking for contrary cases or situating a study in a broader context (Silverman, 2010). A general concern and threat to validity in qualitative methods is self-reporting in accounts given by participants during interviews. In the second sub-study, I used member checking as a strategy to reduce this threat (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), thereby clearing up areas of confusion and misinterpretations as a means to ensure validity. This was performed in two steps. First, prior to the interviews, I conducted pilot interviews with two persons, each of whom had extensive experience working as teachers and leaders. This helped clear up misunderstandings and correct the instrument (the interview guide) prior to the interviews being conducted in the four schools. Second, after conducting the focus group interviews, I asked the participants whether they had understood the questions that were asked. The participants confirmed that they had. In accordance with the purposes of mixing or integrating methods (Greene, 2007), I also collected data in phases as a means to reduce the threat posed by self-reported data.

An additional concern to validity is the temptation to only provide “telling examples” or what is commonly known as “anecdotalism.” In the LED project, I aimed to justify my inferences by relying on comprehensive data treatment (Silverman, 2019, p. 280) using NVivo software in the process of analysis in both sub-studies (analyzing the policy documents and the interview material). Accordingly, I sought methodological awareness (Silverman, 2010) by employing a data-assisted analysis of the collected data. By doing this, I ensured that I would not leave crucial material out of the analysis in favor of examples that “stood out” from the rest. In the NVivo data treatment, I made every effort to ensure that the coding was consistent throughout the two qualitative sub-studies. The codes were applied using an overarching theoretical framework (see Chapter 3). This framework primarily revolved around concepts related to

professionalism and democratic perspectives on leadership. NVivo software was used to apply these codes, which consequently helped to inform the categories included in the survey as the third sub-study. As such, I combined inductive and deductive approaches (cf. Silverman, 2010).

Data-assisted analysis was conducted as part of the discourse analysis in the first sub-study. Coding all material in the documents provided a holistic overview of the themes in the text and provided insights into what constituted the dominant narratives (see section 4.3.1 and Appendix 2). For example, the coding process revealed that the primary emphasis was placed on performance and instrumental discourses across the policy texts (see Chapter 5). The same process of data-assisted analysis was performed to ensure validity in the handling of the interview material in the second sub-study.

According to Silverman (2015), reliability in qualitative research refers to "making the research process transparent" by describing the research strategy and data analysis methods in a "sufficiently detailed manner" (p. 84). Reliability was maintained in transcribing the semi-structured focus group interviews by using "low-inference descriptors" (Silverman, 2010, p. 287). This means that all of the audiotapes from the interviews were transcribed in great detail, including, for example, overlaps and naturally occurring pauses ([…]) as well as questions preceding participants' comments. Employing such descriptors secured the reliability of the analysis, as it produced insights into the conversational dynamics at work when participants engage in meaning making (Coburn, 2005). These descriptors appeared to reveal the degree of certainty or uncertainty regarding certain topics. The degree of uncertainty around education for democracy (reflected in pauses such as "ehm" and in asking clarifying questions to other members of the group) could reflect the participants' discretionary space in interpreting the democratic mandate. It provided evidence that educational leaders interpreted the mandate almost as an emerging task, and that the meaning did not emerge only from policy expectations but also from the group immersed in the topic through in-the-moment reflections among the focus group members. This example shows how securing reliability in the interpretation of transcripts enabled a deeper understanding of leading education for democracy.

4.4.2 Validity and reliability in sub-study 3 (survey)

Validity is obtained in different ways in qualitative and quantitative research. Validity in quantitative research may be understood as "The accuracy of the inferences, interpretations, or actions made on the basis of test scores" (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 248). In this section, I will discuss issues of construct validity, internal validity, and external validity, as well as internal consistency reliability relating to the third sub-study in the LED project.

Theories and findings from the two previous sub-studies were used to identify potential independent variables. Construct validity refers to the extent to which a higher-order construct is accurately represented in a particular study (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 406). Based on my theoretical framework and assumptions, I grouped items that I expected to contribute to the underlying construct. I used PCA to verify the construct validity (Cohen et al., 2017) and to determine whether the selected items indeed fit well empirically as well as theoretically. For example, some items were excluded as they did not contribute to measuring the underlying construct. PCA was used as a tool to assess the operationalization of the dependent and independent variables (factors). Cronbach's α was employed to capture the breadth of the constructs used and to assess the measurement reliability of the items for each scale (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The results for these measures were mostly satisfactory, with values ranging from .728 to .841. (see Article III and Appendix 4).

The previous sub-studies revealed the role of professional communities and teachers' leadership, which includes possibilities for leadership (see section 4.4.3). This was part of securing construct validity. PCA was conducted to both cluster similar items and separate them from each other (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 138). The tool was also used to assess and verify the operationalization of the dependent and independent variables (factors). Verifying construct validity was an important step prior to ensuring internal consistency reliability, which refers to the consistency of measurements over time. This measurement indicator deals with whether the items comprising a factor show internal consistency, and whether respondents' scores on items tend to be related to scores on other factors (cf. Bryman, 2015, p. 169). For example, items that constitute the independent variable/factor "teachers' involvement in processes of decision-making" may be related to the variable "teacher collaboration." Cronbach's α was employed to capture the breadth of the constructs used and to

assess the measurement reliability of the indicators for each scale (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The results for these measures were mostly satisfactory, with values ranging from .728 to .841. (see Article III and Appendix 4).

A distinction is commonly made between internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the ability to infer a causal relationship between two variables, while external validity refers to whether the results can be replicated outside of the current setting (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). With regard to internal validity, there are three required conditions for causation (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 527): First, variables must be related (the relationship condition). Second, a proper time order must be established (the temporal antecedence condition). Third, the relationship between two variables must not appear due to a confounding or extraneous third variable (alternative or rival explanation). In interpreting the results of the quantitative analyses, I do not claim causation. Even though I theorized expected relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable (teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools), suggesting a possible causal relationship, it was not possible to affirm that the relationships were indeed causal. Even though the analysis established the relationship condition (the first condition for causation), it was difficult to establish a proper time order (the second condition for causation). This is because data collection occurred at a single point in time (cross-sectional), and thus I was not able to observe potential causal relationships directly. Moreover, I could not rule out possible alternative or rival explanations (confounding or third variables affecting the measurement). In addition, error variance or systematic error (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), such as that related to self-reporting, may have affected the measurement of both the independent variables and the dependent variable.

The focus of the investigation may have influenced the consistency of the results. This is known as the Hawthorne effect (Ary et al., 2010). In that regard, my presence as the researcher in administering the survey may have affected the participants' responses to the items. Due to sample limitations, I do not claim external validity (cf. Johnson & Christensen, 2016). External validity concerns whether the study can be generalized to and across populations, settings, times, outcomes, and treatment variations (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 400). As the LED project included a limited sample of schools and a set number of participants across the three phases, I can only claim external validity to a minimal extent. That is, the LED project may have uncovered tendencies, but these tendencies would have to be confirmed or

rejected by additional studies that scale up the number of schools and/or the number of participants.

4.4.3 Research credibility in the multi-phase, exploratory sequential design

I identified and mitigated validity threats with respect to the exploratory sequential design throughout the study (Cresswell & Plano-Clark, 2017, p. 252). For example, steps were taken to ensure that the findings in the two qualitative sub-studies informed the third, quantitative sub-study (see section 4.2). As the second sub-study revealed the crucial role teachers play in enacting leadership, this finding informed the choice of the dependent variable in the third, quantitative sub-study: teachers' perceptions of their schools' democratic character, including their involvement in decision making and dispersed leadership. Teachers' role in shared leadership also has a theoretical foundation (cf. Lingard et al., 2003; Woods, 2005). Accordingly, the independent variables were selected based on what may influence teachers' perceptions of their schools' democratic character as well as their role in shared and dispersed leadership.

The items in the survey were derived and adapted from different instruments, including the ICCS. I used a selection of these items for the purpose of the third sub-study in the LED project. Moreover, I used PCA as a systematic procedure to design the quantitative approach and to ensure the internal consistency and validity of the chosen factors (cf. Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017). Additionally, measures should be taken to guard against replicating the sample in the quantitative phase (Cresswell & Plano-Clark, 2017). Consequently, I scaled up the number of participants and went beyond schools that indicate on their websites that they work specifically to develop strategies to promote democracy in schools and communities, which characterized the sample chosen in the second sub-study.

Reliability can be understood in the context of both qualitative and quantitative research (Johnson & Christensen, 2016). As I used both qualitative and quantitative methods in my research, I drew from both frames of understanding reliability (see previous sections). Below, I briefly comment on a form of reliability relevant for the multi-phase, exploratory sequential design: internal consistency.

In analyzing the data in the LED project, I sought to ensure internal consistency through a consistent application of the overarching theoretical framework. However, the LED project consisted of different methods of data collection and analysis

producing different forms of data, and these are difficult to combine. Still, I anchored the formulation of research instruments in the overarching framework, in addition to being informed by the previous sub-studies, to strive for internal consistency in the project. The research instruments are presented in Appendix 3 (interview guide) and Appendix 4 (survey). For example, the key concept of tensions emerged in sub-study 1, the discourse analysis. This concept of tensions (between individualism and the collective good) informed the interview guide. I then used this concept as a theme for interview questions that revolved around this issue, which was also anchored in previous research related to democracy and education (see, for example, Englund, 1994; Woods, 2005). The consistency in responses from the school leaders and teachers throughout sub-study 2 (interviews) and sub-study 3 (survey), that the Norwegian school has a democratic orientation, suggests some internal consistency validity in the multi-phase design of the LED project. Still, it is important to note that the different methods produce different data, which makes nuancing across the phases of sub-studies difficult. However, this was also a strength of the study, as choosing different methods that generated a variety of data allowed for the study of different facets of leading education for democracy.

4.4.4 Ethical considerations

The principle of informed consent to participate in the study was followed in both the interviews and the survey (see Appendices 4 and 5). The data collection procedures were undertaken in accordance with the guidelines of ethics formulated by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD). The NSD approved the application and provided permission to collect the data (see Appendix 1).

The principle of anonymity was strictly adhered to in all of the interviews. The participants were informed prior to each interview that they should not disclose any names during the interview, not even the name of their school or municipality. This measure served to ensure that in the event any sensitive topics were mentioned in the interviews, personal data and/or information would be protected or removed. This was particularly important, as the interviews revolved around notions of democracy and citizenship, which could raise controversial issues. Examples of this in my material were the debate on the use of the hijab and views on religious systems that are often enmeshed in the discussion of democracy and citizenship. This strategy proved to

work well, as the participants were careful of mentioning names when exemplifying particular experiences that related to sensitive or controversial topics. The recordings were stored on a secure server at the University of Oslo for the duration of the project period.

Conducting interviews on sensitive subjects (Lee, 1993) is a particularly important issue to be aware of when discussing democracy and citizenship. The interview might be perceived as an intrusion, and the interviewer might be seen as someone who can impose sanctions on those interviewed (Cohen et al., 2017). For example, some participants may have been reluctant to discuss topics concerning how they perceive leadership in schools if this was a sensitive subject for them. I was aware of this prior to the interview process, and thus I made explicit that this was an anonymized project for research purposes only, as written in the consent form.

Participants were fully informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process (see Appendices 6 and 8 for more information). The exception was sub-study 3, because the participants in this study consented by completing and submitting the survey. As the survey was anonymous, there was no reason for the participants to withdraw. During sub-study 3, the principle of informed consent was also adhered to. The survey was fully anonymized, and the participants were told not to write their names on the survey sheet. Necessary information about the project was given to the participants (orally) prior to administering the survey to ensure validity (by not affecting the perceptions of the participants). Additionally, information about the study was conveyed on the front page of the survey, including information about confidentiality. Participants provided their informed consent by completing and submitting the survey (see Appendix 8).

I now turn to how the articles represent the LED project before summarizing the chapter.

4.5 The articles

The results of the three phases of the LED project were disseminated in three articles, as explained earlier. These phases were chosen based on different purposes and consisted of three different methods of data collection. They also varied with respect to data sources and number of participants. In Table 4.2 below, I present an overview of the different phases and the respective names of the associated articles comprising

this thesis, which reports on the LED project. Here, I also mention the key concepts associated with each article.

Table 4.2 Overview of phases in the three articles

	Phase 1 – Article I	Phase 2 – Article II	Phase 3 – Article III
Article title	*Constructions of professionalism and the democratic mandate in education: A discourse analysis of Norwegian public policy documents*	*Mission and mandates: School leaders' and teachers' enactment of education for democracy*	*Teachers' perceptions of their schools' democratic character*
Purpose statement	Examine how professionalism is constructed and legitimized within and across key education policy documents	Explore how school leaders and teachers interpret and translate policy expectations relating to the democratic purpose in an age where accountability policies prevail	To explore factors associated with how teachers perceive the state of democracy in their schools in a low-stakes accountability context
Data collection methods	Discourse analysis of key public policy documents	Qualitative, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews	Quantitative survey
Participants	-	21	206
Data sources	Public policy documents	Audio-recorded and transcribed focus group interviews	Survey data
Key concepts	*- Professionalism* *- The democratic mandate* *- Public policy*	*- The democratic purpose* *- Education for democracy* *- Accountability* *- Enactment*	*- Democracy, teachers' perceptions, leadership, accountability*

4.6 Summary

This chapter illustrated and summarized the methodological approaches used across the three sub-studies of my dissertation. It substantiated the use of the multi-phase, exploratory sequential design in answering the overall research question through first explaining the ontological and epistemological basis for the LED project. Here, the organizational context for leading education for democracy was presented as the primary focus. Focusing on the organizational context served as a rationale for the first phase, which involved studying the policy context of leading education for democracy through a discourse analysis of key policy documents. It also substantiated the choice of semi-structured focus group interviews in phase two, as I aimed to better

understand how educational professionals describe and interpret their enactment of democratic policy directives. The rest of the chapter explained the specifics of the design in addition to data collection methods, data analysis, research credibility, and the structure of the articles. The three sub-studies, each with its own unique purpose statement, produced data that will be discussed in the next chapter. The findings from the three sub-studies are discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5: Summary of main research findings

Introduction

The following overarching research question guided my thesis: *How is the democratic purpose constructed in policy and interpreted and translated by educational professionals in a low-stakes accountability context?*

To address this question, three sub-studies were conducted focusing on different levels (level of policy, stories of policy enactment in schools, and teachers' perceptions). For each sub-study, specific research questions were developed. The current chapter provides a summary of the main findings of my thesis as well as findings across the three sub-studies considering the overarching framework of *leading education for democracy* (Chapter 3). These findings will be discussed in Chapter 6.

5.1 Article I

Larsen, E., Jensen, R., & Møller, J. (2020). Construction of professionalism and the democratic mandate in education: A discourse analysis of Norwegian public policy documents. *Journal of Education Policy.*
https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2020.1774807
Status: Published

My first article focused on the constructions of policy expectations concerning professionalism and the democratic mandate in education. The aim in this article was to explore how professionalism was constructed and legitimized in key education policy documents over the last 13 years in the wake of a major national educational reform, Knowledge Promotion (K06). The following research questions guided the study: (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? I identified possible discursive shifts and examined what tensions are at play at the policy level via a textual analysis of key public policy documents. Theories on professionalism, accountability, and democratic leadership served as

theoretical perspectives. The methodology used was inspired by a critical approach to discourse analysis.

Based on the discourse analysis, which consisted of three phases of reading, I found 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 but there is leeway for professional judgement; and (3) there is increased emphasis on fulfilling students' individual rights. I argued that introducing a language of performance expectations permitted the reinterpretation of what it means to be a professional educator in a social-democratic welfare state. This article supports evidence suggesting that Norwegian public policy documents are predominantly weighted on the instrumental and performative approach as a way of legitimizing professionalism. I pointed to the indications of an increased emphasis on fulfilling students' individual rights through increased judicial influence over time. Accordingly, I specified the risks posed when individual rights are given prominence over the collective good and duties, possibly changing the discourse of a democracy for citizens into a discourse of democracy for consumers. I argued that this new conceptualization may erode or displace a broader discussion about education for citizenship over the long term.

5.2 Article II

Larsen, E. (2021). Mission and mandates: School leaders' and teachers' professional discretion in enacting education for democracy. Manuscript accepted for publication in *International Journal of Leadership in Education*.
https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2021.1893390
Status: Published

Building on the finding from the discourse analysis that (1) there is leeway for professionals to interpret the democratic purpose in education, and (2) tensions between the instrumental approach and the social-democratic approaches to professionalism have been exacerbated and rendered more visible over time, I focused on characterizations of professional discretion in school professionals' work with education for democracy. The aim in this article was to examine what characterizes professional discretion in enacting education for democracy in a low-stakes, "soft-regulation" system. The following research questions guided the study:

(1) How do school leaders and teachers interpret and legitimize the democratic purpose in education? (2) What characterizes school leaders' and teachers' professional discretion when translating the democratic purpose in education? (3) How do school contexts play into school leaders' and teachers' stories of enacting democracy in schools? Theories on policy enactment, democratic leadership, and professionalism were employed. I used a qualitative case study design with interviews as the data collection method, and a content analysis was used to analyze the data.

First, the findings suggested that interpretations and legitimizations are based on an internalized code of ethics, and that translation occurs in a cross-curricular way. Second, the analysis indicated that there is a considerable discretionary space for teachers. In other words, as the discourse analysis demonstrated that little attention is given to professionalism as a deliberative activity in policy documents, there is space for teachers to interpret and translate. Third, the findings revealed that school leaders and teachers experience tensions between a thin democracy representing an individualist and self-centered project and a deep democracy aiming for the public good. This result confirms findings from the literature on how parents' increasing concerns over their children's rights as individuals relate to a narrow understanding of democracy (Møller & Rönnberg, 2021), or what Furman and Shields (2005) called a "thin" democracy.

As already mentioned, the analysis suggested that Norwegian teachers are offered a large discretionary space for both interpreting and translating and illustrated that the teacher and leadership professions in the Norwegian context have a long tradition of cooperation and autonomous decision making. This indicates only a small influence of managerial accountability in the selected schools. As such, occupational professionalism seems to dominate the profession, which counters the influence of neoliberal and managerial policies. However, the prevalence of occupational professionalism does not automatically imply that the leadership practices in schools become more democratic. For example, Anderson and Cohen (2018) claimed that the project is not to reassert occupational professionalism, as it tends to support structural injustices.

A main argument and contribution in this second article is that aspects central to a developmental democracy may be undermined. There is a risk of narrowing the meaning of democracy, thereby ignoring the broader democratic purpose, which involves adhering to ethical values and aspiring to truths over the long term. I argue

that narrowing the meaning of democracy may pose a challenge to the Norwegian education system, where the educational narrative so far has been dominated by low-stakes accountability.

5.3 Article III

Larsen, E., & Mathé, N. E. H. (2021). Teachers' perceptions of their schools' democratic character. Manuscript submitted to *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*
Status: Under second review

My third article focused on teachers' perceptions of their schools' democratic character. The aim of this study was to go beyond the teachers' stories of enacting education for democracy (sub-study 2) to explore how teachers perceive school democracy in practice in a low-stakes accountability context. Through a multiple regression analysis based on collected survey data, I investigated possible predictors of teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools. The study was undertaken among all teachers in five lower-secondary schools located in a large Norwegian region. A blending of three theoretical perspectives, i.e., educational leadership, democratic leadership, and professionalism, served as the overarching framework.

First, the analysis revealed a relationship between teacher–leader collaboration, including teacher involvement in decision-making processes, and teachers' perceptions of how democratic they perceive their school to be for students and teachers. This finding suggests that the degree to which teachers who experience trust, support, and an inclusive relationship with their principal and leadership team relates to the extent to which they perceive their school to have democratic features. This association serves as an indicator that teachers engage in practices that are dispersed across the organization (Lingard et al., 2003), although, based on the findings, it is difficult to affirm whether they promote the institutional primary task focusing on the democratic mandate (James et al., 2020). Second, the analysis demonstrated that the more importance teachers place on teaching skills and values related to democracy, the more democratic they perceive their school to be. Third, the analysis provided empirical support for theory, suggesting that collaboration and professional communities are closely associated with democratic practices. In sum, the study

demonstrated that education for democracy not only occurs in the classroom but is also embedded in the structures of decision making and collaboration at the school level and in the larger organization in which the schools are situated.

5.4 Looking across the three sub-studies

In this section, I present findings across the three sub-studies. The presentation seeks to illustrate the internal cohesion between these studies and demonstrate what democratic enactment (leading education for democracy) may look like in policy and practice in a low-stakes accountability context, which is, to an increasing extent, influenced by managerial demands.

5.4.1 Leeway in professional discretion

Prior to the early 2000s reforms in Norway, stakeholders such as parents and the public showed a high degree of trust in educational professionals. At the national level, it seems like this trust toward professionals later evolved into trusting what can be measured by results (Møller & Skedsmo, 2013; Uljens et al., 2013). There are also indications of significant local variations regarding the level of trust in professionals. Some municipalities have, to a higher degree than others, developed detailed performance indicators (Camphuijsen et al., 2020). The shift to focusing on results reflects more emphasis and value placed on performance and progress indicators.

The findings in the LED project lend little support for narrowing discretionary spaces and instead suggest leeway for professional discretion on the part of educational leaders when they describe their experiences of working with the democratic purpose (see Article II). Although external mechanisms of accountability are at play in holding educational leaders accountable for student outcomes within the domain of basic skills (Camphuijsen, 2020; Møller & Rönnberg, 2021), conversations about promoting the democratic mandate are somewhat different as the emphasis is on experiencing and participating in democratic processes. Also, the national curriculum provides great leeway for teachers in organizing their teaching, and there are no national tests constraining leeway on this topic. As such, the educational leaders decide on what democratic processes to focus rather than being confined by competence goals.

There are very few indications from the findings in the LED project to suggest that educational leaders expect to be held accountable for promoting democracy or that they miss being held to account within this domain.

5.4.2 Facing tensions between a language of performance indicators and dispersed leadership

The findings from both the second and third sub-studies reveal the importance of dispersed leadership in enabling education for democracy, which means practices that are dispersed across the organization that are not necessarily tied to formal leadership roles (Lingard et al., 2003, p. 53). For example, through the second sub-study, I exemplified the role of cross-curricular cooperation related to education for democracy while also demonstrating how school leaders attempt to include staff in processes of decision making, in addition to functioning as role models for the students to follow. These are important constituents in democratic and shared leadership (Lingard et al., 2003; Woods, 2005). The findings from the third sub-study also highlight the significance of the creation of positive feelings of involvement, dispersed leadership practices, and inclusion in decision making, as well as of distributing internal authority as a means of striving toward democratic ideals. According to the LED framework, inclusion, advocacy, and activism should be key constituents of democratic professionalism (see Anderson & Cohen, 2018). Advocacy did not seem to play a key role in the findings, as perhaps is the case among some teachers and principals in high-stakes systems of accountability. However, one revealing finding was that dispersed leadership based on internalized codes of ethics seemed to be an integral part of professionals' work in the investigated schools: Educational professionals are given great leeway and take ownership of the meaning of education for democracy while they interpret and translate the democratic mission in a shared manner.

When looking across the three sub-studies, it is possible to identify tensions between thin and deep understandings of democracy (cf. Furman & Shields, 2005). For example, the discourse analysis in the first sub-study exemplified how a language of performance expectations has permitted the reinterpretation of what it means to be a professional educator. It showed that there are tensions between the use of performance data and education for democracy as well as an increased emphasis on fulfilling students' individual rights. In sum, the LED project suggests that educational

leaders face tensions between teaching to the test related to basic skills and education for democracy through dispersed leadership and internalized codes of ethics.

5.4.3 Enabling and constraining factors in promoting education for democracy

The findings across the sub-studies demonstrate the importance of the professional community in working with the democratic purpose in education and also in facing challenges pertaining to individualism and digital environments. In particular, the findings from the second sub-study reveal how teachers perceive the importance of approaching topics related to education about democracy in a cross-curricular way. These teachers align the contents across subjects to provide their students with a rich experience of what democracy means in practice. The findings from the second sub-study also suggest that an enabling factor in leading education for democracy is the role of professional communities in modeling democracy. The school leaders and teachers emphasized inclusion in decision making and ensuring that every voice is heard as enabling factors in a school democracy. The findings from the third sub-study also speak to the professional community as an enabling factor, as a strong relation was revealed between teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their school and their perceptions of teacher–leader collaboration. Teachers' gender, years of experience, and the subjects they reported teaching were not significantly associated with their perceptions of school democracy. This means that the characteristics of individual teachers and the subjects they taught did not matter as much as school-wide processes, such as collaborative environments and dispersed leadership, when it comes to leading education for democracy. The emphasis on school-wide processes also illustrates how this work occurs through professional communities in the Norwegian context and highlights the role and importance of the school community in securing a democratic purpose.

However, the LED project also revealed some possible constraining factors. For example, the analysis indicated that principals are increasingly being held to account for students' individual rights, which emerged as a possible constraining factor in leading education for democracy if such rights are not counter-balanced with collective rights. This is reflected in the explicit responsibility given to principals in ensuring students' individual rights in policy documents, which is supported through the experiences of some of the participants. Also, looking at the second sub-study, there

are indications that test-based accountability in times preceding exams may come at the expense of education for democracy, which may be granted less attention. As such, this speaks to managerial accountability as a possible constraining factor.

In addition, the analysis provided evidence about how the use of digital devices and social technologies pose a challenge to teachers and also to the classroom climate. There was consensus among the interviewed teachers that educational spaces should be public spheres where all students should feel safe and cared for, and where everyone is met with respect. A main concern expressed by many teachers was safety and mutual respect being challenged by students using social technologies such as Snapchat or Facebook. There were also concerns about sharing inappropriate content meant to harass targeted teachers or students. If such episodes are widespread, there should be concern about the state of democracy in and around schools with respect to social technologies. On a more positive note, educators also expressed the possibilities of using digital devices for educational purposes in a classroom setting.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Introduction

The analysis revealed the following patterns in the data. First, while it is possible to identify tension between a thin and a deep understanding of democracy, Norwegian educational leaders still have professional discretion when promoting education for democracy. Second, educational leaders face tensions between a language of performance indicators and dispersed leadership based on codes of ethics. Third, digital environments and the rise of individualism appeared as constraining conditions in leading education for democracy. The current chapter is structured according to the findings listed above, which will be discussed in correspondence to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. I will end the chapter by discussing some implications and limitations of the LED project and by making suggestions for further research on the topic.

6.1 Leeway in professional discretion as enabling democratic enactment

The findings of the LED project suggest that a professional culture in which ideas float freely, one that includes an internalized code of ethics, coupled with great leeway to interpret democratic policy directives may ensure a solid foundation for education for democracy to flourish. No national tests are constraining professional discretion on this topic, thus opening more possibilities of shared and dispersed leadership, as educational leaders do not have to think in terms of outcomes to the same extent as the domain of basic skills. It remains an empirical question whether they will be better prepared to promote the democratic purpose if they are held to account for schools being democratic or for promoting the democratic purpose within their schools in the same way as with basic skills. If they are held to account by detailed performance indicators within this domain, they may lose professional leeway in adapting to the specific educational context in which they are situated. For example, the second sub-study demonstrated that discretionary space allowed for the inclusion of minority students at one school, while at another school without the same proportion of minority

students focus was placed on strengthening professional communities and generating awareness of democracy through, for example, teaching history from the Second World War. This leeway given to professional discretion somewhat contrasts with the findings of other studies conducted in a Norwegian context, which have described a narrowing of discretionary spaces in schools, especially measuring teachers' performance by holding them accountable for learning outcomes determined at the central level (e.g., Camphuijsen, 2020).

The findings from the LED project resonate with a participative and deliberative approach to leadership in democratic enactment, one which entails practices that are dispersed across the organization (cf. Lingard et al., 2003; Shields, 2010; Woods, 2005). Moreover, the findings across the three studies reveal that inclusion occurred as part of the institutional primary task (cf. James et al., 2020). This shows that professional accountability holds a key role in enacting education for democracy, as the educational leaders engage in collaboration by adhering to standards of the profession (Sinclair, 1995). Cross-curricular cooperation through a close alignment of topics across departments, themes, and subjects (sub-study 2) and the importance of school-wide processes in education for democracy (sub-study 3) may be radical ideas in high-stakes and individually oriented systems such as the US context (Trujillo et al., 2021), but it was highly evident in the Norwegian low-stakes system. Although this conception of dispersed leadership only to a small degree resembled activism and expanded to take on extra-institutional forms (Berkovich, 2014), it did reveal a considerable discretionary space in the professionals' stories of enacting education for democracy as well as a culture of cooperation, speaking to what Woods (2005) labeled "decisional and therapeutic rationality."

The leeway that educational leaders are given in professional discretion (see section 5.5.1) when working with the democratic purpose might connect with the fact that education for democracy—despite being a policy expectation—is not tied to value-added models or other forms of national testing as is the case with subjects with a strong orientation around basic skills. Rather, education for democracy seems to represent an overarching value orientation anchored in the Nordic model (Telhaug et al., 2006) and appears to be something educational leaders "take for granted." Thus, promoting the democratic mandate and focusing on basic skills are priorities that appear to co-exist, at least as reflected in the participants' stories. Consequently, the findings from the LED project suggest that professional accountability dominates in

promoting a democratic purpose, as education for democracy appears to be tied to seeing leadership as a moral endeavor and is a standard of the profession (Sinclair, 1995). Hence, it contrasts with a technical approach to leadership and demonstrates what a participative and deliberative approach to educational leadership looks like in enacting education for democracy. Additionally, the analysis suggests that the technical approach observed in promoting basic skills (cf. Camphuijsen, 2020) does not appear to have influenced the domain of education for democracy in the same manner. However, it is important to note that learning basic skills in subjects such as language arts enables democratic participation. Thus, the two purposes are not necessarily contradictory.

Leading education for democracy appears to be anchored in internalized codes of ethics, somewhat resonating with an occupational form of professionalism (Evetts, 2009). In a similar way, the professional communities in schools investigated in the LED project had, to a certain extent, integrated notions of democratic professionalism (Anderson & Cohen, 2018). This was particularly evident when professionals integrated what resembles activist activities in their day-to-day practices by generating awareness of racial injustices and closely cooperating with teachers across topics, themes, and subjects (see section 5.4.2). Educational leaders told stories of enacting democratic processes and having leeway in organizing and teaching the local curriculum (cf. Apple & Beane, 1995), which also relates to the fact that the Norwegian national curriculum is not governed by content but instead by competence goals.

Throughout the phases of the LED project, there was also some evidence to suggest that professionals were aware of their responsibility to parents and to the wider communities in which the schools were embedded, especially when it came to awareness of parents' involvement in their children's rights being fulfilled as demonstrated in sub-study 2, which resonates with democratic accountability (Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Ranson, 2003). This exemplifies a form of enactment that occurs in spheres of meaning making of policy within the collegial community but it does not necessarily involve the voices of parents or communities in discussions about the content of a democratic curriculum. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that educational leaders apply some mechanisms of democratic accountability. On the other hand, they do not necessarily display democratic professionalism, as their stories reveal that they are not engaging with the wider community or seeking authentic community relations when it comes to education for democracy, which is a

key characteristic of democratic professionals (cf. Anderson & Cohen, 2018). The analysis indicates that the presence of collegial communities engaging in democratic enactment and the presence of professional leeway in discretion dominate over bureaucracy and managerial mechanisms of accountability when promoting the democratic purpose. Accordingly, leeway in professional discretion seems to enable democratic enactment, which means interpreting and translating policy directives and not merely implementing them (cf. Ball et al., 2012). There is little evidence to suggest that structural and managerial mechanisms of accountability constrain discretionary space in democratic enactment (cf. Molander, 2016).

6.2 Tensions between promoting the democratic mandate and performativity?

Most existing research on educational leadership related to tensions between education for democracy and cultivating basic skills comes from high-stakes accountability contexts (see, for example, Berkovich, 2014; Furman & Shields, 2010), but I argue that these tensions are also evident in a low-stakes accountability system. These tensions play out somewhat differently in this context, which I explain below.

The overarching findings from the first and second sub-studies suggest that a heavy emphasis on basic skills and instrumental characteristics of education may pose a challenge in working with the democratic purpose over the long term. Earlier studies have demonstrated how tensions between a thin and a deep understanding of democracy in democratic enactment have permitted the re-interpretation of what it means to be a professional educator in Norway, even though the country is characterized as a low-stakes accountability context (Camphuijsen et al., 2020; Mausethagen & Granlund, 2012; Uljens et al., 2013). Introducing a language of performance expectations means that professional educators are increasingly held accountable for learning outcomes in basic skills (cf. Møller, 2002; Skedsmo & Møller, 2016). Such tensions resonate with findings in the LED project, concerning both the analysis of policy documents (sub-study 1) and stories from school leaders and teachers (sub-study 2).

Public policy documents since the “The Knowledge Promotion” (2006) reform seem to emphasize basic skills and predominantly weigh an instrumental approach in legitimizing policy. The analysis resonates with research demonstrating that, although the Norwegian education system is still anchored in social-democratic values and

equity, managerialist ideas have an increasing influence on how schools are governed (Møller & Skedsmo, 2013). This implies that a discourse related to NPM, standardized testing, and evaluation procedures competes with a social-democratic discourse for prominence (Camphuijsen et al., 2020; Møller, 2006; Møller & Skedsmo, 2013). In particular, the policy documents analyzed in the LED project suggest that an instrumental approach to education with a focus on basic skills dominates.

However, the LED project also demonstrated the presence of participative and dispersed leadership through common deliberation in decision making (cf. Lingard et al., 2003; Shields, 2010; Woods, 2005), as discussed in section 6.1. The participants' stories of practices seem to align with notions of democratic leadership (Woods, 2005), where trust and shared forms of leadership play a key role. This democratic orientation is linked with Norway having a strong welfare state, in which the equal distribution of rights and benefits, equity, and solidarity has historically played an important role both politically and economically (Esping-Andersen, 1989). Hence, the findings from the LED project lend support to research indicating that the Norwegian education system has been somewhat reluctant to adopt neoliberal policies (Wiborg, 2013). It may be argued that the LED project points to a viable and practical alternative for *leading education for democracy* compared to the use of governing instruments aimed at equalizing students' life chances by reducing learning gaps measured in basic skills, the latter of which is to a large degree inspired by the OECD (cf. Møller, 2017). Chile and England may serve as illustrations of a more instrumental approach (Verger et al., 2019). For example, in these high-stakes contexts, the meaning of democracy and social justice is often interpreted as leadership aiming to reduce achievement gaps in basic skills between groups of students (cf. Jacobson & Bezzina, 2009), an interpretation of democracy and social justice that also serves to enhance school choice and competition in addition to democratic control (see Verger et al., 2019, p. 264) and monitoring from district levels (Trujillo et al., 2021).

However, it is also possible to observe how trust in educational professionals has increasingly been replaced by trust in what can be measured by results in many Norwegian municipalities (Uljens et al., 2013). This fact lends support to earlier research on democratic leadership in Norway, emphasizing that traditional norms of democratic accountability are being questioned (Møller, 2002) and indicating ongoing tensions in discretionary spaces. The focus on democracy through interdisciplinary themes seems to exacerbate these tensions at the policy level, as the discourse on

learning is also strongly present in later policy documents from 2015. The erosion of the welfare state, the rise of neoliberalism, and the idea of the consumer (or “the learner”) permitted this discourse on learning to gain a foothold in the last decades of the twentieth century (Biesta, 2004, p. 57). In Norway, the discourse on learning was accelerated in 2004 through the White Paper “Culture for Learning” (MoER, 2004), which explicitly stated that schools should be learning organizations (Møller, 2007). Additionally, there is some evidence to suggest that in preceding exams, little attention was given to teaching democracy (see Article II), although further research should explore this in more depth. Accordingly, while professionals are granted great leeway in enacting the democratic mandate, there might be a risk of downplaying the democratic mission as part of the institutional primary task as the narrative of results is gaining more ground.

It is possible to argue that Norway illustrates a case of leading education for democracy that represents a viable alternative to the “TINA” principle (“There is No Alternative”) (Muhr, 2010) of neoliberal governance with a heavy focus on performance-based accountability. This reflection of *leading education for democracy* exemplified in principals’ and teachers’ stories of practices highlights the importance of democratic enactment in an age of accountability where governing instruments aimed at closing achievement gaps primarily in basic skills between groups of students dominate educational narratives at regional, governmental, and school levels (e.g., Maroy, 2015; Verger et al., 2019), and where democratic practices are sorely needed in some high-stakes contexts (cf. Trujillo et al., 2021).

6.3 Digital environments and the rise of individualism

The findings based on the stories of educational professionals’ practices at the school level raise important questions regarding how to uphold a democratic purpose at a time when the use of mobile devices and social technologies among students is widespread. On the one hand, mobile and electronic technologies may engage students by enabling democratic discursive practices. On the other hand, such technologies are subject to market infiltration; they reproduce structures and constrain conceptions of the possible (Meabon Bartow, 2014). This begs the question of how educational leaders can approach the uses of these technologies to ensure emancipation for all students in a digital environment. Over the long term, there may

be a risk of professionals' engagement with the democratic purpose at the classroom level suffering from disruptions due to constant distractions (cf. Ellul, 1962). There are clear concerns from teachers expressing the dangers of using social media in a careless way. There seems to be an emergent challenge for professionals regarding the use of digital devices in enabling students to experience what democracy means in practice, as well as in cultivating a democratic ethos for students and the professional community.

The second challenge worth discussing is the rise of individualism as part of contextual changes in the society. Norway experienced a shift in policy with the introduction of the "Knowledge Promotion" reform back in 2006, which accelerated the language of performance expectations coupled with external accountability demands (Camphuijsen et al., 2020; Møller & Skedsmo, 2013). This resembles NPM, where the market-oriented model has been adopted in the public sector. Compared to Sweden, where the introduction of private schools and free school choice has gained widespread acceptance since the 1990s, Norway has been more reluctant in adopting neoliberal policies (Møller & Rönnberg, 2021; Wiborg, 2013). Still, some urban areas in Norway have permitted free school choice. Findings from the LED project confirm the earlier analysis of the increasing focus on individual rights in Norway, but it has, so far, not gained ground to a significant extent.

The first sub-study elaborates on how school leaders are increasingly held responsible for the fulfillment of students' individual rights in recent policy documents from 2015, which closely aligns with a thin understanding of democracy (Furman & Shields, 2005). This resonates with findings from the second sub-study, in which Norwegian principals and teachers expressed concerns over the increased focus on individual rights, which exemplifies the risk of re-configuring democracy as a "consumer democracy" (Woods, 2005). It appears that a rising focus on parents' concerns with their children's rights may reflect a narrow understanding of democracy or what Furman and Shields (2005) conceptualized as a "thin" understanding of democracy. A "consumer democracy" parallels the description by Tomas Englund (1994), who emphasized how education understood in this way is based on possessive individualism, a notion he called education as "a private good." It is an individual-centered tradition of democracy in which individual civil rights take center stage. In sum, the two sub-studies demonstrate that a focus on performance indicators related to individual basic skills and a focus on individual rights may generate tensions

when educational professionals interpret and translate education for democracy (cf. Ladson-Billings, 2006). Specifically, this suggests that a tension exists between understanding leadership as particular tasks and behaviors that hold responsible parties accountable on the one hand, and striving for emancipation for staff and students on the other (e.g. Berkovich, 2014; Foster, 1989).

Scholars have argued that the focus on individual rights is linked with an understanding of education as an economic investment (Biesta, 2006; Englund, 1994). Findings from the second sub-study in the LED project lend support to this argument, which is expressed in educational leaders' concerns over parents' standing up for children's rights rather than appreciating participation in a democratic community. However, so far, it appears to be mostly a concern among professionals about an anticipated future.

6.4 Contributions and implications

Blending three theoretical perspectives, the LED project bridged scholarship on democratic leadership with research on professionalism and educational accountability and empirically showed how these three perspectives are integrally linked. The LED project also contributed empirically to the current body of literature by exemplifying how stories of democratic enactment of an institutional primary task in a low-stakes accountability system contrast with approaches to framing democracy in more high-stakes contexts. More specifically, the analysis suggests that educational leadership may benefit from including the following points in laying the foundation for democracy to flourish in educational settings. First, the necessity of cultivating professional communities in which ideas float freely, with consideration of both professionals' and students' participation in education for democracy. This speaks to the importance of not only teaching students about democracy at an intellectual level but also teaching for and through democracy, speaking to attitudes, values, and skills in democratic participation. For example, there is a positive relationship between including teachers in processes of decision making and how democratic teachers perceive their schools to be. This may affect how they convey democracy and practice democracy with their students. Second, great leeway in interpreting policy directives can enable education for democracy.

In sum, the LED project shed light on how educational leaders interpret and translate education for democracy, and what this looks like in Norway as a low-stakes accountability context. The project demonstrated that democratic enactment is possible and found at least one critical enabler. That is, educational leaders are given professional leeway in this mission. Facilitating professional communities seems to be, however, a necessary condition because it creates possibilities for dispersed leadership and participation in decision making. Such communities may serve as a support when schools increasingly encounter a perception of education understood as an individual good, which is possible at the expense of education understood as a collective good.

6.5 Limitations and further research

The limitations of the LED project were related to the sampling procedure and the methods used. For example, self-reporting in both the interview process and the survey was a clear limitation. It permitted the possibility that participants painted a rosier picture of reality than what was actually the case. Moreover, the study is not generalizable, as the overall sample only consisted of participants from nine schools in two different districts. To uncover broader trends, a larger sample of schools and informants would be appropriate. It should also be noted that four of the schools (sub-study 2) were involved in a program for professional training in promoting democracy in schools and thus had this on the agenda on their websites. This selection of schools may position education for democracy higher on the agenda than schools not involved in the program. Despite this, the teachers who participated in the survey in schools that did not place education for democracy high on the agenda on their websites lent support to the findings generated by the second sub-study. Thus, the LED project has contributed to the knowledge base on how global policy trajectories intersect with an education system characterized by a long tradition of democratic values.

Future research could study—both more broadly and in more depth—the conditions for cultivating professional communities that enable ideas to float freely, and the conditions for ensuring emancipation and participation for all, including students, staff, and parents at a school-wide level. In addition, it is possible to argue for the need for comparative research across low-stakes and high-stakes contexts in exploring possibilities and restrictions of democratic enactment. Norway might serve as a focal

point of comparison with high-stakes contexts. Moreover, future research should inquire into how school professionals balance tensions between education understood as an individual right versus a collective good, and between performativity and the democratic mandate. More research is needed to uncover how instrumental approaches to education intersect or interfere with professionals' discretionary space and autonomy when working with the democratic purpose. Still, the LED project has contributed insights into what leading education for democracy looks like in a low-stakes context and has proposed some key elements in democratic enactment in schools based on Norway as a case example.

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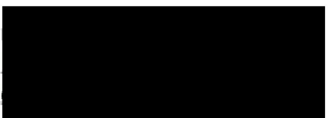
Appendix 1: Letter of approval



Vår dato: 14.08.2018 Vår ref: 60589/LAR/LR Deres dato: Deres ref:

VURDERING AV BEHANDLING AV ALMINNELIGE PERSONOPPLYSNINGER I PROSJEKTET «LEADING DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION IN AN AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY - LEGITIMIZATIONS AND POLICY WORK IN THE NORWEGIAN CONTEXT»

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS viser til meldeskjema innsendt 02.05.2018. Meldingen gjelder behandling av personopplysninger til forskningsformål.

Etter avtale med den behandlingsansvarlige, Universitetet i Oslo, har NSD foretatt en vurdering av om den planlagte behandlingen er i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen.

Resultat av NSDs vurdering:

NSD vurderer at det vil bli behandlet alminnelige personopplysninger frem til 30.06.2026.

NSDs vurdering er at behandlingen vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen, og at lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen er samtykke.

Vår vurdering forutsetter at prosjektansvarlig behandler personopplysninger i tråd med:

- opplysninger gitt i meldeskjema og øvrig dokumentasjon
- dialog med NSD, og vår vurdering (se nedenfor)
- Universitetet i Oslo sine retningslinjer for datasikkerhet, herunder regler om hvilke tekniske hjelpemidler det er tillatt å bruke
- Universitetet i Oslo sine retningslinjer for bruk av databehandler

Nærmere begrunnelse for NSDs vurdering:

1. Beskrivelse av den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger

Prosjektets formål er å bidra til innsikt i hvordan offentlige styringsdokumenter konstruerer, innrammer og legitimerer ledelse av demokratiopplæring, hvordan skoleledere og lærere begrunner og gjør rede for ledelse av demokratiopplæring, og hvordan det tverrfaglige temaet demokrati og medborgerskap omsettes fra politikk til praksis på skoler i to distrikter med ulik form for styring.

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS Harald Hårfagres gate 29 Tel: +47-55 58 21 17 nsd@nsd.no Org.nr. 985 321 884
NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data NO-5007 Bergen, NORWAY Faks: +47-55 58 96 50 www.nsd.no

Utvalget vil bestå av rundt 600 personer. Av disse vil rundt 44 skoleledere og -eiere delta i intervjuet, mens rundt 10 av disse vil delta i observasjonsdelen. Rundt 70–80 lærere vil delta i gruppeintervjuer, og rundt 360–400 VG2-elever vil delta i spørreundersøkelse.

Alle deltakere vil være over 15 år, og det vurderes således at det er tilstrekkelig at det innhentes samtykke fra deltakerne selv. Vi anbefaler likevel at det gis informasjon om forskningsprosjektet til elevenes foreldre.

Datainnsamling skjer gjennom elektronisk spørreskjema, personlig intervju, gruppeintervju og deltakende observasjon. Spørreskjemaene, som retter seg mot elever, vil dreie seg om elevenes oppfattelse av demokratisk skolekultur og læringsmiljø. Intervjuer med skoleledere/-eiere og lærere vil omhandle spørsmål om skolens kultur og læringsmiljø samt undervisning i temaet demokrati og medborgerskap. Det gjøres lydopptak i forbindelse med intervjuer.

Observasjon vil gjennomføres i forbindelse med ledelse og læreres daglige virksomhet ved skolene. Dette kan eksempelvis være planleggings- eller utviklingsmøter. Det vil gjøres lydopptak på møter dersom alle tilstedeværende har samtykket til dette i forkant.

Det vil i samarbeid med skoleledelsen sikres at forsker ikke deltar i sammenhenger der det kan fremkomme taushetsbelagte opplysninger om enkeltelever eller -foreldre. Fokus vil ligge på arenaer der det diskuteres organisering, tilrettelegging, utviklingstiltak og liknende på et overordnet nivå. Ledere og lærere vil i forkant av observasjon oppfordres til å be forsker om å forlate rommet dersom taushetsbelagte opplysninger vil kunne fremkomme.

All behandling av personopplysninger i prosjektet er basert på utvalgets informerte samtykke.

Ifølge meldeskjema skal personopplysninger behandles frem til 30.06.2026.

2. Personvernprinsipper

NSDs vurdering er at behandlingen følger personvernprinsippene, ved at personopplysninger;

- skal behandles på en lovlig, rettferdig og åpen måte med hensyn til den registrerte (se punkt 3 og 4)
- skal samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål og der personopplysningene ikke viderebehandles på en måte som er uforenelig med formålet (se punkt 1 og 3)
- vil være adekvate, relevante og begrenset til det som er nødvendig for formålet de behandles for (se punkt 7)
- skal lagres slik måte at det ikke er mulig å identifisere de registrerte lengre enn det som er nødvendig for formålet (se punkt 5 og 7)

3. Lovlig grunnlag for å behandle personopplysninger

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger er lovlig fordi det skal innhentes samtykke fra de registrerte. Samtykke innhentes ved at deltakerne signerer på samtykkeskjema i papirform.

4. De registrertes rettigheter

NSD vurderer at den registrerte har krav på å benytte seg av sin rett til informasjon, innsyn, retting og sletting av personopplysninger, begrensning og dataportabilitet.

Behandlingen er basert på samtykke fra den registrerte, og vedkommende kan utøve sine rettigheter, herunder trekke tilbake samtykket, ved å ta kontakt med prosjektansvarlig.

NSD vurderer at informasjonsskriv vedlagt meldeskjema hovedsakelig er godt utformet, og vil gi de registrerte god informasjon om hva behandlingen innebærer. Det må imidlertid tilføyes opplysninger om det følgende:

- At samtykke er det lovlige grunnlaget for behandling av personopplysninger i prosjektet (behandlingsgrunnlaget)
- Retten til å be om innsyn, retting, sletting, begrensning og dataportabilitet
- Retten til å klage til Datatilsynet
- Kontaktinformasjon til institusjonens personvernombud

For forslag til formuleringer, henviser vi til vår mal til informasjonsskriv, som nå er oppdatert i henhold til nytt personvernregelverk. Denne kan finnes på våre nettsider: http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvernombud/hjelp/informasjon_samtykke/informere_om.html

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har Universitetet i Oslo plikt til å svare innen en måned. Vi forutsetter at prosjektansvarlig informerer institusjonen så fort som mulig og at institusjonen har rutiner for hvordan henvendelser fra registrerte skal følges opp.

5. Informasjonssikkerhet

Personopplysninger samles inn og lagres i TSD (Tjenester for sensitive data). Koblingsnøkkel oppbevares adskilt fra øvrig datamaterial i personlig safe i forskers hjem, som er beskyttet med alarm. Avidentifiserte data lagres på forskers hjemmeområde ved Universitetet i Oslo.

Anonymiserte data kan deles med aktuelle forskere/veiledere og studenter. Ingen enkeltpersoner vil være identifiserbare i det aktuelle datamaterialet.

NSD forutsetter at personopplysningene behandles i tråd med personvernforordningens krav og institusjonens retningslinjer for informasjonssikkerhet.

6. Databehandler

Ifølge meldeskjema kan det være aktuelt å gjøre bruk av ekstern aktør i forbindelse med transkribering. NSD forutsetter at prosjektansvarlig avklarer bruk av databehandler med Universitetet i Oslo, som har ansvar for at bruk av databehandler skjer i samsvar med personvernforordningen art. 28. Institusjonen skal blant annet foreta en risikovurdering og inngå skriftlig avtale med databehandleren før denne behandler personopplysninger.

Dersom det benyttes ekstern leverandør av spørreskjematjenester, forutsetter vi at det også foreligger databehandleravtale med denne.

7. Varighet

Ifølge meldeskjema skal personopplysninger behandles frem til 30.06.2026. Opplysninger som kan knyttes til en enkeltperson skal da slettes/anonymiseres.

Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan bli identifisert. Det gjøres ved å:

- slette navn, telefonnummer og andre identifikatorer
- slette eller grovkategorisere alder, stilling, arbeidssted og andre bakgrunnsopplysninger
- slette eller sladde lydopptak

Institusjonen må kunne dokumentere at datamaterialet er anonymisert.

Meld fra om endringer
Dersom behandlingen av personopplysninger endrer seg, kan det være nødvending å melde dette til NSD via Min side. På våre nettsider informerer vi om hvilke endringer som må meldes. Vent på svar før endringen gjennomføres.

Informasjon om behandlingen publiseres på Min side, Meldingsarkivet og nettsider
Alle relevante saksopplysninger og dokumenter er tilgjengelig:
- via Min side for forskere, veiledere og studenter
- via Meldingsarkivet for ansatte med internkontrolloppgaver ved (Institusjon).

NSD tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger
Etter avtale med Universitetet i Oslo vil NSD følge opp behandlingen av personopplysninger underveis og ved planlagt avslutning.

Vi sender da en skriftlig henvendelse til prosjektansvarlig og ber om skriftlig svar på status for behandling av personopplysninger.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt ved spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Med vennlig hilsen

[signature removed] [signature removed]

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren
seksjonsleder

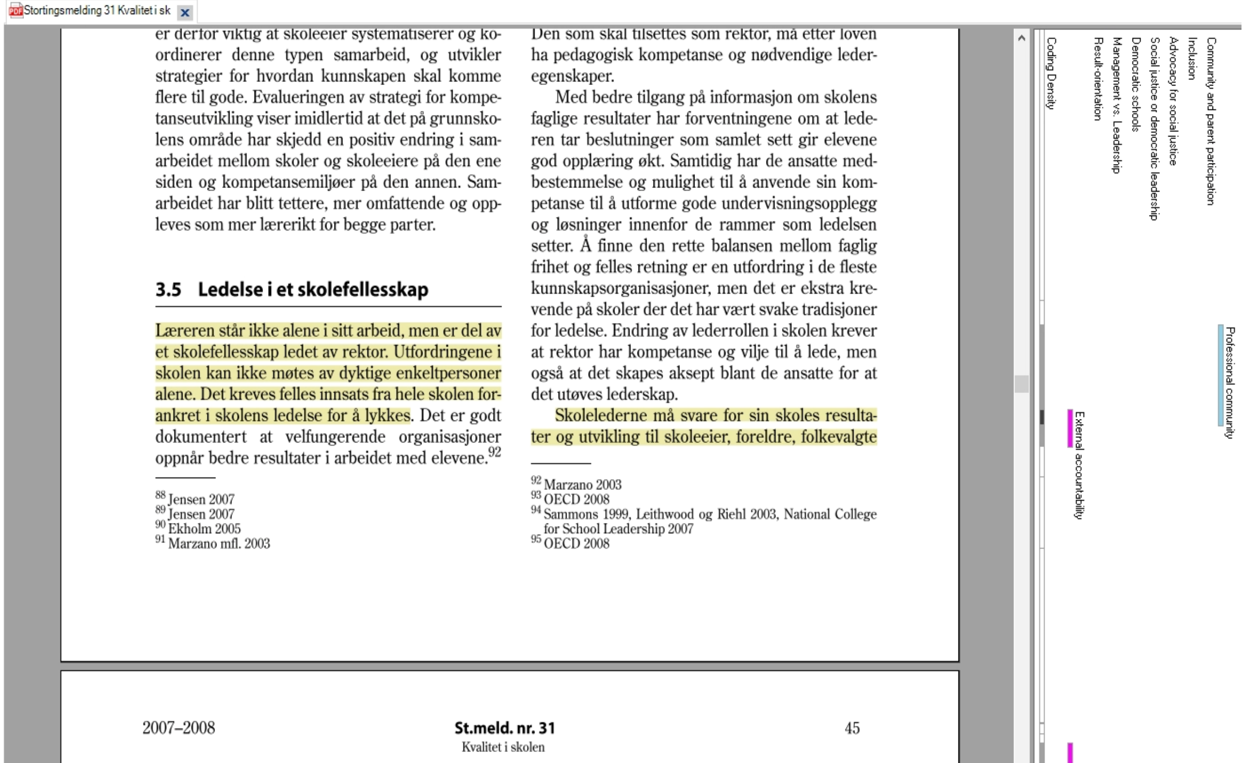
Lasse André Raa
rådgiver

Lovhenvisninger

NSDs vurdering er at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger:
- er regulert av personopplysningsloven, jf. § 2.
- oppfyller prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:
  - lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet jf. art. 5.1 a)
  - formålsbegrensning jf. art. 5.1 b)
  - dataminimering jf. art. 5.1 c)
  - Lagringsbegrensning jf. art. 5.1 e).
- kan finne sted med hjemmel i personvernforordningen art. 6.1. a)
- gjennomføres på en måte som ivaretar de registrertes rettigheter jf personvernforordningen art. 11–21.

Appendix 2: The coding process (sub-study 1)

2.1 Example of the coding process


Stortingsmelding 31 Kvalitet i sk

er derfor viktig at skoleeier systematiserer og koordinerer denne typen samarbeid, og utvikler strategier for hvordan kunnskapen skal komme flere til gode. Evalueringen av strategi for kompetanseutvikling viser imidlertid at det på grunnskolens område har skjedd en positiv endring i samarbeidet mellom skoler og skoleeiere på den ene siden og kompetansemiljøer på den annen. Samarbeidet har blitt tettere, mer omfattende og oppleves som mer lærerikt for begge parter.

3.5 Ledelse i et skolefellesskap

Læreren står ikke alene i sitt arbeid, men er del av et skolefellesskap ledet av rektor. Utfordringene i skolen kan ikke møtes av dyktige enkeltpersoner alene. Det kreves felles innsats fra hele skolen forankret i skolens ledelse for å lykkes. Det er godt dokumentert at velfungerende organisasjoner oppnår bedre resultater i arbeidet med elevene.[92]

[88] Jensen 2007
[89] Jensen 2007
[90] Ekholm 2005
[91] Marzano mfl. 2003

Den som skal tilsettes som rektor, må etter loven ha pedagogisk kompetanse og nødvendige ledeřegenskaper.

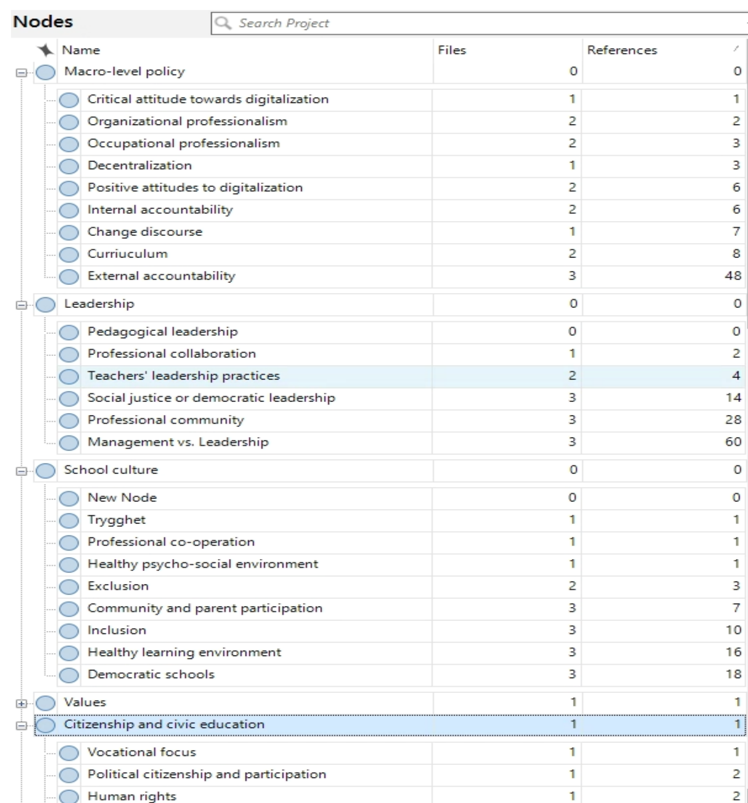
Med bedre tilgang på informasjon om skolens faglige resultater har forventningene om at lederen tar beslutninger som samlet sett gir elevene god opplæring økt. Samtidig har de ansatte medbestemmelse og mulighet til å anvende sin kompetanse til å utforme gode undervisningsopplegg og løsninger innenfor de rammer som ledelsen setter. Å finne den rette balansen mellom faglig frihet og felles retning er en utfordring i de fleste kunnskapsorganisasjoner, men det er ekstra krevende på skoler der det har vært svake tradisjoner for ledelse. Endring av lederrollen i skolen krever at rektor har kompetanse og vilje til å lede, men også at det skapes aksept blant de ansatte for at det utøves lederskap.

Skolelederne må svare for sin skoles resultater og utvikling til skoleeier, foreldre, folkevalgte

[92] Marzano 2003
[93] OECD 2008
[94] Sammons 1999, Leithwood og Riehl 2003, National College for School Leadership 2007
[95] OECD 2008

2007–2008 **St.meld. nr. 31** Kvalitet i skolen 45

2.2 Example of nodes



Name	Files	References
Macro-level policy	0	0
Critical attitude towards digitalization	1	1
Organizational professionalism	2	2
Occupational professionalism	2	3
Decentralization	1	3
Positive attitudes to digitalization	2	6
Internal accountability	2	6
Change discourse	1	7
Curriuculum	2	8
External accountability	3	48
Leadership	0	0
Pedagogical leadership	0	0
Professional collaboration	1	2
Teachers' leadership practices	2	4
Social justice or democratic leadership	3	14
Professional community	3	28
Management vs. Leadership	3	60
School culture	0	0
New Node	0	0
Trygghet	1	1
Professional co-operation	1	1
Healthy psycho-social environment	1	1
Exclusion	2	3
Community and parent participation	3	7
Inclusion	3	10
Healthy learning environment	3	16
Democratic schools	3	18
Values	1	1
Citizenship and civic education	1	1
Vocational focus	1	1
Political citizenship and participation	1	2
Human rights	1	2

Appendix 3: Interview guide

- Åpningsspørsmål:
- Hvis en som ikke kjenner denne skolen fra før, kom på besøk, hva tror du han/hun ville legge merke til?
- Er det bestemte forhold ved skolen din som du mener er viktige å fremheve?
- Hva vil du si kjennetegner den elevgruppen som går her på skolen

1. Opplæring *om* demokrati

- Hvordan skjer undervisningen om demokrati og medborgerskap her på skolen? (i.e. klasseromspraksis, elevråd etc).
- Hvilke fag er inkludert?
- Hva tenker du om organiseringen av det nye tverrfaglige temaet «demokrati og medborgerskap»? Hva er nytt sammenlignet med det skolen har undervist i tidligere om dette temaet? Hva skal til for å lykkes?
- Er det bestemte temaer som er mer utfordrende å ta opp i klasseromssituasjonen. Hvis det er tilfellet, hvorfor? (kun LÆRER).

2. Opplæring *for* demokrati (verdier og holdninger; modell-læring)

- Hvordan arbeides det med å fremme oppslutning om demokratiske verdier og holdninger
- Hvordan arbeides det med å motvirke fordommer og diskriminering?
- Hvordan bidrar skolen til å utvikle elevenes evne og ferdigheter i konfliktløsning
- Hvordan verdsettes mangfold og nye måter å gjøre ting på?
- Hva er rommet for eksperimentering og problemløsning?
- Hvordan ivaretas elevenes rett til et godt psykososialt miljø??

3. Opplæring *gjennom* demokratisk deltakelse

- På hvilke områder har elevene reell medvirkning? Gi eksempler og pek på eventuelle utfordringer
- Hvordan legges det opp til reell medvirkning for elever i skolehverdagen og i undervisningssituasjonen? Gi eksempler og pek på eventuelle utfordringer
- Hvordan håndteres uenighet blant elevene? Gi eksempler og pek på eventuelle utfordringer

- Avslutningsvis: Hva vil du si er essensen i skolens arbeid med demokratiopplæring og/eller det tverrfaglige temaet demokrati og medborgerskap?

4. Ledelse og skolekultur

- Hvordan karakteriserer du ledelseskulturen på din skole?
- I hvilken grad respekteres mangfold og ulikhet på din skole?
- Hvordan fremmes likeverdighet og inkludering i skolefellesskapet
- Hvilke strukturer fremmer deltakelse i beslutninger og læringsfellesskap

- Hvordan håndteres uenighet og kritikk i personalet?
- Hvordan fordeles ressursene blant elevene?
- Hvordan håndteres eventuelle spenninger mellom individuelle rettigheter og hensynet til fellesskapets beste. Gi eksempler
- Hvilke prosedyrer og planer har skolen utviklet med relevans for demokratiopplæring

Appendix 4: Survey items and factors

Constructs	*Mean values*	*Std. deviation*	*Skewness/kurtosis*	*Component loadings*
State of democracy				
On a scale of 1 to 7, how democratic is: Your school for students	4.76	1.160	-.227/-.193	.895
On a scale of 1 to 7, how democratic is: Your school for teachers	5.00	1.162	-.498/.270	.895
Teacher-leader collaboration				
My principal typically acts in the best interests of the teachers	3,53	,929	-,712/,498	.742
Most teachers in my school trust the principal.	3,54	,883	-,504/,207	.811
Our principal and teachers collaborate on school-wide matters.	3,32	,959	-,340/-,416	.857
I feel that my voice is heard when the school makes school-wide decisions.	3,06	,909	-,370/,135	.880
Teacher collaboration				
My school provides enough time for teachers to work together	3,03	1,015	-,139/-,909	.867
Teachers here observe each other and share feedback.	2,89	,984	-,258/-,896	.700
I have sufficient space to collaborate with my colleagues.	3,33	,918	-,473/-,732	.845
Teaching democracy				
All teachers should strive to promote students' understanding of democracy	4,69	,570	-2,324/8,495	.731
All teachers are responsible for nurturing democratic values in students.	4,74	,520	-2,789/12,900	.821
In order to learn about democracy, you need to learn about racism and/or other forms of discrimination.	4,62	,588	-1,756/4,190	.660
It is my school's responsibility to help increase the number of young voters in elections.	4,07	,865	-,830/652	.685
Critical thinking is essential for participating in a democracy.	4,51	,686	-1,720/4,354	.726
Citizenship activities for students				
To participate in political discussions	5,39	1,425	-,718/,238	.617
1 Engage in protecting the environment	5,65	1,310	-,756/-,175	.667
To participate in peaceful protests against unjust laws	4,44	1,629	-,207/-,820	.707
To work for the betterment of the local community	5,65	1,169	-,602/,212	.806

Being active in the work for Human Rights	5,44	1,408	-,713/,023	.867
Support from home				
When the students' families are not able to do enough to support their children academically, it is unreasonable to expect the school to meet those same needs	2.15	.936	.725/.436	.910
When the students' families are not able to do enough to support their children's basic health and wellness needs, it is unreasonable to expect the school to meet those same needs.	2.19	.898	.510/-.006	.910
My hands are often tied when it comes to motivating students from unsupportive family backgrounds. There is nothing more that my school can do for those students.	2.10	.851	.621/.449	.581
Teacher experience				
How long have you been a teacher?	2.78	1.171	-3.14/-1.423	.924
How long have you been a teacher at this school?	2.21	1.059	.420/-1.038	.924
Gender				
What is your gender identity?	1.34	.475	.673/-1.563	
What subjects do you teach?				
Science	.40	.490	.429/-1.835	
Language	.51	.501	-.051/-2.018	
Art	.41	.492	.385/-1.871	
Civics	.47	.500	.113/-2.008	
Elective subjects	.44	.497	.258/-1.953	

Appendix 5: Letter of consent for interviews

Forespørsel om deltakelse

Tittel på Prosjekt: «Leading Democratic Education»

Du inviteres herved til å delta i et doktorgradsprosjekt ved Institutt for lærerutdanning og skoleforskning (ILS) ved Universitet i Oslo. Du er invitert til å delta da du enten jobber som skoleeier, leder, lærer, eller er elev over 15 år ved en av de utvalgte skolene i dette prosjektet.

Bakgrunn og formål

I mitt forskningsprosjekt skal jeg studere demokratiopplæring i norsk skole. Målet for prosjektet er å få økt innsikt i hvordan ledere og lærere ved ungdomsskoler arbeider med demokratiopplæring, og hvordan dette emnet kan videreutvikles i skolen.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Deltakelse innebærer deltakelse i intervju og fokusgruppeintervju,. Personlige opplysninger som innhentes er begrensede: Kontaktinformasjon, samt alder, kjønn og etnisk bakgrunn vil være aktuelle for analysedelen av prosjektet. Følgende temaer er aktuelle i intervjuene med skoleledere og fokusgrupper med lærere: Ledelse av opplæring om og for demokrati, opplæring gjennom demokratisk deltakelse.

Varigheten på datainnsamlingen vil variere ut fra hvilken datainnsamlingsmetode du tar del i. Intervjuer vil ta fra 1 til 1,5 timer hvor det gjøres lydopptak.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Informasjon om dine personopplysninger vil oppbevares på et trygt sted, og ikke i datamaterialet. For å sørge for at din personinformasjon ikke fremgår i datamaterialet vil en navneliste (også kjent som «koblingsnøkkel») bli oppbevart adskilt fra datamaterialet. Denne navnelisten vil ligge på et trygt sted uten innsyn. Kun involverte parter som ivaretar konfidensialitet vil ha tilgang til dine opplysninger: forsker, veileder og databehandler.

Deltakerne skal ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjon (publisert doktorgradsavhandling).

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 30.6.2021. For analyseformål og etterprøving av data anonymiseres datamaterialet to år etter prosjektslutt, dvs. senest innen 30.6.2023. Dette innebærer at navnelisten/koblingsnøkkelen og alt opptak fra intervjuene og observasjoner blir slettet. Kun forsker og veileder(e) vil ha tilgang til datamaterialet i forkant av dette.

Frivillig deltakelse
Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli anonymisert.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med Eivind Larsen via telefon eller per e-post

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS.

Dine rettigheter
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg,

- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få slettet eller begrenset personopplysninger om deg,
- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet), og
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av

personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Eivind Larsen, [redacted]
- Vårt personvernombud: Personvernombud for administrative behandlinger av personopplysninger ved UiO: Morten Opsal, e-post: personvernombud@uio.no
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personvernombudet@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Eivind Larsen (prosjektansvarlig).

Studien er meldt til personvernombudet for forskning, NSD, og er godkjent der.

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Jeg samtykker til følgende: (Sett gjerne flere kryss)

☐ Å bli observert i avtalte møter og/eller andre avtalte settinger

☐ Å delta på intervju eller fokusgruppeintervju

☐ Å besvare spørreskjema

Hvis ja, skriv inn din mailadresse her:

____

Appendix 6: Information letter for interviews

UiO Universitetet i Oslo
Det Utdanningsvitenskapelige Fakultet. Institutt for Lærerutdanning og Skoleforskning.

Til:

Dato: 10. mars 2021

Informasjon om doktorgradsprosjekt

Tittel på norsk: Ledelse og demokratiopplæring
Tittel på engelsk: Leading Democratic Education

Bakgrunn og formål
I mitt doktorgradsprosjekt skal jeg studere ledelse og demokratiopplæring i norsk skole. Målet for prosjektet er å få økt innsikt i hvordan ledere og lærere ved ungdomsskoler arbeider med demokratiopplæring, og hvordan dette emnet kan videreutvikles i skolen.

Jeg er tilgjengelig på telefon [redacted] hvis det er ønskelig med mer utfyllende informasjon.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?
Studien er godkjent av NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata) og innebærer deltakelse i intervju med rektor og mellomledere og fokusgruppeintervjuer med lærere. Følgende temaer er aktuelle i intervjuene: Ledelse av opplæring om og for demokrati (kunnskap, holdninger og verdier), opplæring gjennom demokratisk deltakelse.

Intervjuer og fokusgrupper vil vare fra 1 til 1,5 timer.

Professor Jorunn Møller og førsteamanuensis Ruth Jensen er veiledere.

Med vennlig hilsen,
Eivind Larsen
Stipendiat og prosjektansvarlig

Postadresse: Moltke Moes vei 35, 0851 OSLO
Telefon: 46411564
E-post: eivind.larsen@ils.uio.no
www.uio.no

Appendix 7: Information letter for survey

Epost til rektorene:

Demokrati og medborgerskap: Invitasjon

Universitetet i Oslo, ved Institutt for lærerutdanning og skoleforskning, har fått midler til å gjennomføre en survey blant lærere om utdanning og demokrati. Prosjektet er en del av en internasjonal studie som gjennomføres i samarbeid med University of California, Berkeley. Studien er helt anonym og godkjent av NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata).

Vi har valgt ut noen skoler med ungdomstrinn som vi er spesielt interessert i å komme i kontakt med. Er det mulig for oss å få komme til din skole for å invitere lærerne til deltakelse? Studien innebærer at lærerne svarer på et spørreskjema som tar ca. 20-25 minutter. Hvis det er mulig, vil vi gjerne komme til et fellesmøte og gjennomføre undersøkelsen.

Målet med denne studien er at den skal bidra med viktig innsikt som skolene så kan bruke i sitt videre arbeid med demokrati og medborgerskap. Når resultatene foreligger, tilbyr vi et seminar for kommunens lærere. Dette kobles til fagfornyelsen. Om ønskelig kan vi også gi en times seminar lokalt på den enkelte skole etter at spørreskjemaet er fylt ut.

Med håp om positiv respons. Vi vil følge opp med en telefonsamtale.

Vennlig hilsen

Professor Jorunn Møller, førsteamanuensis Nora Mathé og stipendiat Eivind Larsen

Appendix 8: Information to participants (survey)

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO
INSTITUTT FOR LÆRERUTDANNING OG
SKOLEFORSKNING

Spørreundersøkelse blant lærere om utdanning og demokrati

Tusen takk for at du er villig til å svare på denne spørreundersøkelsen. Formålet med undersøkelsen er å få innsikt i hva norske lærere gjør for å gi elevene mulighet til å medvirke og til å lære hva demokrati betyr i praksis, og hvordan læreres og skolens rolle kan forstås i denne sammenhengen. Dette temaet er nært knyttet til den pågående fagfornyelsen, spesielt det tverrfaglige temaet 'demokrati og medborgerskap' som skolene får et fornyet ansvar for.
Spørreundersøkelsen er en del av en internasjonal studie om demokrati og utdanning som vi gjennomfører i samarbeid med University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Education. Det tar ca. 20 minutter å svare på skjemaet.

Hva skjer med informasjonen fra deg?
Dine svar på denne undersøkelsen blir behandlet konfidensielt. Navnet ditt vil ikke knyttes til spørreskjemaet, og vi vil ikke dele individuelle resultater fra din skole med din rektor eller med dine kolleger. Vi vil heller ikke vise individuelle svar fra dine skole til skoleeier eller andre på kommunenivået. Vi vil bare analyse de aggregerte resultatene fra lærersvarene vi får fra alle skolene som er inviterte til å delta. Personlige opplysninger som innhentes, er begrenset til kjønn og nasjonalitet. Prosjektet vil avsluttes 31.12.2021. Ved å besvare dette spørreskjemaet, samtykker du til deltakelse i studien. Når prosjektet er avsluttet, vil kommunens lærere få tilbud om seminar basert på resultatene.

Frivillig deltakelse
Det er frivillig å delta i undersøkelsen, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn.
Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS.

Vennlig hilsen

Nora Elise Hesby Mathé	Jorunn Møller	Eivind Larsen
Postdoktor, UiO (Prosjektleder)	Professor Emeritus, UiO	PhD-student, UiO

Part II

The Articles

Article I

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION POLICY
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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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Professionalism; education policy; new public management; democratic citizenship; leadership

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 1980 s, 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 Shipps 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) (MoER[1] 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 *Culture for Learning WP 30* 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 *Quality in Schools WP 31* 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 *Subjects – In-Depth-Learning – Understanding – A Renewal of the Knowledge Promotion WP 28* 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 Horsfjord, 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 show 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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Article II

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Mission and mandates: school leaders' and teachers' professional discretion in enacting education for democracy

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has contributed to the literature on what constitutes school leaders' and teachers' democratic practices in both high- and low-stakes accountability contexts, but less is known about how they interpret, legitimize, and translate the democratic purpose of education in a low-stakes, 'soft-regulation' system. The current study used Norway as an example, and examined this issue via a qualitative case study design with interviews as the data collection method, while theories of policy enactment, professionalism, and democratic leadership functioned as analytical approaches. The findings suggest that interpretations and legitimizations are cross-curricular based on an internalized code of ethics; there is a large discretionary space for teachers but the schools experience – in their dialogs with parents – tensions between a thin democracy representing an individualist and self-centered project, and a deep democracy aiming for the public good. A main argument is that instrumental approaches to education and an increased focus on individual rights may undermine a broad interpretation and translation of the democratic purpose of education over the long term.

Introduction

New managerialist ideas and accountability measures have introduced systems of quality control and performance management that affect education systems worldwide (Camphuijsen et al., 2020; Møller & Skedsmo, 2013). Under these policy influences, school leaders and teachers are expected to enact national policy directives (e.g., Ball et al., 2012). As such, they are held accountable for their school's performance in a hierarchical system characterized by centralized monitoring (Gunter et al., 2016) while also being expected to promote a democratic purpose (Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Horsford & Anderson, 2019; Møller, 2017). Consequently, educational professionals experience considerable tension between the democratic purpose of education on the one hand, and managerial accountability measures and logics of governance, such as new public management (NPM), on the other (Camphuijsen et al., 2020; Gunter, 2016; Møller, 2006; Thomson, 2009). A vital question thus emerges regarding how school

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leaders and teachers interpret and translate policy expectations relating to the democratic purpose in an age where accountability policies prevail.

This article employs Norway as a national context to examine these tensions with the aim of contributing to scholarship on how global policy initiatives intersect with national settings in which democratic values and objectives, such as equity and solidarity, have a long tradition (Møller, 2006; Telhaug, 2006), particularly in primary and secondary education (The Education Act, 1998). In recent decades, Norway has been subject to accountability-based policies, especially after the Knowledge Promotion reform launched in 2006 (Karlsen, 2006; Mausethagen et al., 2018). Nonetheless, compared to Anglo-Saxon countries, Norway retains a 'soft' or 'reflexive' accountability system (Maroy, 2015; Verger et al., 2019) – i.e., a low-stakes system in which school leaders are not sanctioned to the degree they would be in a high-stakes system. In contrast, the affective dimension of Anglo-Saxon education may be overshadowed by the instrumental, cognitive objectives and policies of regulation through high-stakes, 'hard' accountability, which may undermine autonomy in decision making and risk a redefinition of professionalism, thereby raising ethical questions (Maroy, 2015). Thus, this article examines what characterizes professional discretion in enacting education for democracy in a low-stakes, 'soft-regulation' system.

Norwegian education policy directives and recent reforms have granted much leeway in working with education for democracy, with school leaders' and teachers ' professional discretion positioned as a decisive factor (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017), albeit mediated by school contexts. Professional discretion implies accountability, as professionals are expected to justify their decisions (Molander, 2016, p. 21). Accordingly, three research questions are addressed: (1) How do school leaders and teachers interpret and legitimize the democratic purpose in education? (2) What characterizes school leaders' and teachers' professional discretion when translating the democratic purpose in education? (3) How do school contexts play into school leaders' and teachers' stories of enacting democracy in schools?

Through a qualitative design, I analyzed data based on interviews with school principals and teachers. The analysis was framed by three theoretical frameworks. First, the theory of policy enactment, which implies interpreting and translating policy expectations (Ball et al., 2012; Coburn, 2005). Second, theories of professionalism, including the distinction between occupational and organizational professionalism (Evetts, 2009), and the theory of professional discretion (Molander et al., 2012). Third, Woods' (2005) theory of democratic leadership, which guided the analytical approach.

In this article, I make two assumptions. First, I assume that leadership is distributed within an organization (Spillane, 2006). Second, although this article assumes that those in formal leadership positions have a particular responsibility in promoting democratic schools, it is an empirical question whether or how leadership in a distributed perspective contributes to democratic leadership. Woods (2004) distinguishes between distributed and democratic leadership. His main argument is that distributed leadership is merely a descriptive approach, while democratic leadership serves a moral purpose (Woods, 2004).

The article is organized as follows: I begin by reviewing relevant literature on social justice and citizenship education, after which I present the theoretical framework, the Norwegian context, and the methodology. The research findings are then discussed,

followed by some conclusions aimed at highlighting the study's implications for enacting education for democracy.

Research on education for democracy and related fields

Educational leadership is a contested concept and has been studied from numerous perspectives. Hence, many definitions of the concept have flourished. Over the last 30 years, accepted definitions of the concept have entailed actions of influence in order to achieve organizational goals (James et al., 2020). In this article, I distinguish between two understandings of educational leadership; leaders and leadership. The former understanding involves professionals in a formal role as educational leaders, while leadership is directly linked to educational purposes and entails practices that are distributed (Lingard et al., 2003). I anchor this article in the assumption of leadership as distributed, and I primarily review studies using this assumption as a point of departure.

Extensive international research in fields related to education for democracy, such as social justice and citizenship education, has been conducted, especially in Anglo-Saxon contexts. Both social justice and democracy constitute moral purposes of schooling and like Furman and Shields (2005) I argue that social justice leadership cannot be understood without related understandings about democratic leadership because theories of social justice and democracy are integrally connected. Citizenship education is not a monolithic concept, and is indeed practiced differently in distinct national contexts (Peterson et al., 2016). In this article, I define citizenship education according to the tripartite definition (and respective dimensions) of democratic participation given by Stray (2010): education about (knowledge), for (attitudes and values), and through (participatory skills) democracy. As the terms 'education for democracy' and 'democratic purpose' are used interchangeably in this work, they both pertain to the three dimensions.

Four strands of research relevant to the present work can be identified. The first relates to the empirical character of large-scale surveys (e.g., Arthur, 2011; Schulz et al., 2018). Such research has investigated student knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, and activities in relation to civic and citizenship education and students' opinions of specific subject areas, such as social science. This research has demonstrated the importance of 'teaching by example' for students' value development (Arthur, 2011). In the 2016 International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS), a nationally representative sample of more than 6000 Norwegian 9th-grade students were tested on their knowledge of civic principles, civic society and systems, and were surveyed on their civic identities and participation. The findings showed that of the OECD countries, Norwegian students ranked fifth on the civic knowledge test and demonstrated high levels of trust toward democratic institutions (Huang et al., 2017; Seland, 2019). Similarly, in Mathé's (2019) investigation of Norwegian students' perceptions of democracy, politics, and citizenship preparation, the students valued the theme of democracy and politics in social studies with respect to citizenship preparation, and their level of enjoyment and facets of instruction were close indicators of their perceptions regarding citizenship preparation.

A second research strand has examined the relationship between policy contexts and the promotion of social justice and democracy in schools. More specifically, such research has explored what constitutes successful leadership and the policy context for

citizenship education, as well as how principals make sense of leadership with the aim of promoting social justice and democracy (e.g., Trujillo et al., 2021; Møller, 2006). One study based on qualitative data from two international principal exchanges examined how school leaders make sense of social justice and democracy in their practice in two distinct settings: high-stakes testing (the USA) and low-stakes testing (Norway) (Trujillo et al., 2021). The analysis underscored the significance of contextual conditions in developing what leading education for democracy means in practice. Specifically, as opposed to low-stakes testing, high-stakes testing was shown to create obstacles for promoting democratic schools. Further, acting in accordance with democratic values was shown to set the foundation for distinguishing leadership as successful in Norwegian schools. Møller (2006) found that leadership enactment of democratic values involved establishing open communication between staff and students, creating opportunities for student decision making and deliberation, being personally committed to making a difference in students' lives, and establishing an ethics of care for individuals as well as a concern for the common good.

The third research strand is aimed at unpacking how school leaders and teachers lead and work value-based with education for democracy (e.g., Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Apple & Beane, 1995; Brown, 2004; Woods, 2005). Several factors have been proposed to promote leading education for democracy: free flow of ideas, irrespective of popularity; faith in the capacity for decision making among both individuals and groups; critical reflection and analysis concerning ideas, problems, and goals; care for the welfare of individuals and the community; and ensuring the safety, dignity, and rights of individuals and minority groups (Apple & Beane, 1995; Scanlan & Theoharis, 2016). Other researchers, such as Ryan and Rottmann (2009), have also argued that administrators who value inclusion and relationship building in diverse school settings tend to bypass democratic options and draw instead on hierarchical, bureaucratic power to ensure greater student enrollment. Based on these findings in high-stakes setting they argue that administrators' positioning within a hierarchical system suggests little room for professional discretion in pursuing the democratic purpose.

A fourth strand of research has payed particular attention to the role of formal leadership in promoting democracy and social justice in schools (e.g., Alviar-Martin et al., 2008; Szeto, 2020; Wong et al., 2020). Studies within this strand have critiqued the largely conceptual nature of existing studies on the enactment of social justice in schools (Berkovich, 2014; Szeto, 2020), and have addressed practices of leadership in the work with social justice. For example, studies have demonstrated that during turbulent socio-political times, teachers experience difficulty addressing controversial issues and thus tend to avoid controversial topics, especially when school leaders lack a clear vision of citizenship education (Alviar-Martin et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2020). Moreover, a study by Szeto (2020) has demonstrated how principals' practices of democratic leadership occurs through responding to social justice challenges by cultivating an inclusive school environment to ensure equitable participation in school activities, fulfilling the needs of every student, motivating teaching teams' potential at different levels of hierarchy in the school, as well as establishing a mutual understanding with community stakeholders based on their personal morality and professional ethics.

In sum, previous research has contributed insights into students' knowledge, skills, and perceptions of education for democracy, as well as different approaches to

democratic practices in both high- and low-stakes accountability contexts. Still, it remains unclear how educational professionals interpret, legitimize, and translate the democratic purpose of education in a low-stakes, 'soft-regulation' system. Insights in this regard may extend our knowledge about how school leaders and teachers construct and legitimize their promotion of democracy in practice and increase our understanding of the interplay between curriculum standards, accountability, and professional discretion in a low-stakes accountability context. Accordingly, in this article, I present empirical insights into this phenomenon.

Analytical approach

To address the research questions, literature and theories of policy enactment, professionalism, and democratic leadership were employed. In the theory of policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012), policy is encoded in texts and translated into action via interaction and interconnections between actors, texts, talk, technology, and objects. Policy is made sense of, mediated, and struggled over. School leaders and teachers engage in sense making, interpreting, adapting, and re-configuring policy expectations, and in deriving meaning from environmental information while simultaneously assimilating new information into preexisting worldviews (Coburn, 2005; Weick, 1995). In this article, I primarily use the following key concepts as part of policy enactment: interpretation, legitimization, and translation of policy.

Second, I employ theories of professionalism, specifically the analytic distinction between organizational and occupational varieties of professionalism (Evetts, 2009, 2011), which must be understood as ideal forms incorporating elements of continuity and change. 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 practices, external regulations, and accountability based on performance reviews. Conversely, occupational professionalism is characterized by collegial authority and relationships based on trust. Authority dominates over control, and there is space for discretionary judgment. According to Evetts (2009), 'such authority depends on common and lengthy systems of education and vocational training and the development of strong occupational identities and work cultures' (p. 248). These notions of professionalism may relate with two forms of accountability. While organizational professionalism may relate with managerial accountability, whose main focus is on reporting and accounting for results within a hierarchical system, professional accountability adheres to professional standards. In the latter, teaching is seen as a moral endeavor with an integrated code of ethics. This notion of professionalism emphasizes the centrality of student needs as well as collaboration, knowledge sharing, and improvements of practice (Sinclair, 1995). In this article, this distinction in accountability contextualizes how school leaders and teachers work with the democratic purpose.

I also draw from the literature on professional discretion (i.e., Molander, 2016; Molander et al., 2012). Although the Norwegian Education Act and Curriculum guidelines regulate school actions, there is space for discretion in professional work. Molander (2016, p. 60) argues that discretion entails accountability, as school leaders and teachers must be able to account for their judgments and decisions, especially in their interactions

with parents and students, who may be well-informed and knowledgeable about their rights, and local educational authorities. Structural measures of accountability constrain discretionary spaces through the specification of rights and rules, thereby holding to account those charged with discretionary power. If the discretionary space is narrowed with predefined procedures and legal standards, then the profession holds little discretionary power. Conversely, fewer standards and procedures grants the profession considerable discretionary power. Accordingly, it is important to unpack the ways in which curriculum guidelines and legal norms are translated into social practices and how school leaders and teachers legitimize their work to ensure the fulfillment of children's right to education (The Constitution, 1814, § 109).

Third, my understanding of democratic leadership is inspired by Woods' (2005) conceptualization. In democratic leadership, one of the main responsibilities of educational leaders is to promote democratic values in both the school and the community (Woods, 2005). This conceptualization of leadership is based on a developmental conception of democratic practice (Woods, 2005, p. 12) that involves four rationalities, each with its own distinctive focus and priorities: *decisional*, concerning the right to participate; *discursive*, concerning the possibilities for open debate; *therapeutic*, concerning the creation of positive feelings of involvement, social cohesion, and shared leadership; and *ethical*, concerning aspirations to truth and distributions of authority (Woods, 2005, pp. 11–15). Notably, in combination, these rationalities express a view of human potentiality congruent with the developmental model of democracy (Woods, 2005). In line with Furman and Shields (2005) I will also distinguish between *thin* and *deep democracy* when discussing findings. *Thin democracy* is based on individualism and self-interest, and *deep democracy* refers to Dewey's ideas about 'lived democracy' (Dewey, 1916; Møller, 2006). The way education for democracy is explained in our National Curriculum demonstrates expectations promoting deep democracy.

The Norwegian context

As a social democratic welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1989) espousing equity and participation, Norway supports the equal distribution of goods and services, especially in its educational system, and regards social democracy as an integral political ideology.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, neoliberal reforms gained ground internationally, including in Norway. New policies emphasizing performance measurement, improved learning outcomes, and accountability-based practices were launched (Skedsmo & Møller, 2016). The '*what works* agenda' advanced an NPM platform borrowed from the private sector, one which fundamentally clashed with the traditional social democratic ideology. Educational professionals found themselves positioned in increasingly hierarchical structures and had to report results (learning outcomes) to local educational authorities (e.g., Ministry of Education and Research, 2008) through the National Quality Assessment System (NQAS). Simultaneously, they were expected to improve academic results and ensure a healthy learning environment for all students within their schools. Although managerial elements have challenged traditional egalitarian values, studies at school level have demonstrated that there is still a significant space for professional discretion among principals and teachers. The school seems mainly in control of their quality work (Karseth & Møller, 2018). New expectations of public reporting and external

accountability may create both challenges and dilemmas for school leaders, but how these affect the work of school leaders very much depends on the local organizational work contexts. While Norwegian principals and teachers are well aware of a strong focus on test results by politicians and bureaucrats, these test results seem to be of little consequence at school level (Trujillo et al., 2021).

The Education Act and the National Curriculum comprise a binding framework within which, however, local educational authorities, schools, and teachers have room for discretionary power and decision making. Although numerous rules regulate Norwegian schools and educators must know and understand the law to attend to their roles as civil servants, the interpretation of legal standards is often highly situational (Karseth & Møller, 2018). After schools began working with the new General Curriculum in 2017 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017), a renewed focus on education for democracy in Norway emerged. The General Curriculum has the status of a legal document, and schools are required to work on 'Democracy and Citizenship' as a cross-curricular theme; it is therefore expected that students will participate and engage in democratic practices, particularly in regard to the following:

> The education shall provide the students the knowledge and skills to face challenges in accordance with democratic principles. They shall understand dilemmas inherent in recognizing the rule of the majority as well as the rights of minorities. They shall be trained in their ability to think critically, learn to handle different opinions and respect disagreements. (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, author's translation)

This policy expectation reflects what I refer to as democratic practices. Both universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) offer professional development programs aimed at boosting the competence of leaders and teachers in the domain of education for democracy. For example, the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies offers curriculum texts and teaching materials intended to promote critical thinking, democratic citizenship, and inclusion (Lenz & Geissert, 2016). A program called *Democratic preparedness against racism and anti-Semitism (Dembra)* is also offered. Some schools have prioritized education for democracy in their agenda and employ resources offered within the Dembra program, which focuses on the professional development of teachers. The program seeks to raise awareness and cultivate competences among school staff and leadership regarding education for democracy, and aims to prevent prejudice and racism.

Data and methodological approach

The present study is part of a larger investigation into how education for democracy is being enacted after recent education reforms in Norway. A qualitative case study design was employed, which increased the duration and depth of the study of accountability in relation to policy enactment (Gawlik, 2015; Yin, 1984). The data were derived from 11 individual and focus group interviews, including 21 informants from four lower secondary schools located in two regions of Norway (East and West). The two regions are geographically and socio-politically distinct, thereby supporting data variation. Purposeful sampling was used to select individuals (Tansey, 2007) who were involved in professional training provided by a local NGO. More specifically, snowball,

i.e., 'chain-referral,' sampling was used to first recruit a relevant set of interviewees, who then suggested other potential interviewees within the schools who were in some way engaged in education for democracy. To provide greater insight into school leaders' and teachers' professional discretion in enacting education for democracy, I selected four schools that have collaborated with the local NGO for some time. Common to these schools was their prioritization of education for democracy as part of their professional training via the Dembra project. Ultimately, 14 teachers and seven school leaders (including principals) were recruited.

The data collection method comprised semi-structured, in-depth interviews (Bryman, 2012), which were audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed. Principals were individually interviewed whenever possible and appropriate according to their schedules. As sense making is not an individual process (Weick et al., 2005), I used focus group interviews with mid-level leaders and teachers to elicit their interpretations and translations of policy in a communicative, organizational setting (Weick et al., 2005, p. 413). This method is preferred when interactions among participants are believed to yield the best information concerning a particular subject (Bryman, 2012; Cresswell, 2007).

School selection was assisted by the local NGO that administered the Dembra program in the two regions. This strategy facilitated access to the schools, where I met with educators who were willing to share their thoughts and experiences in addition to reflections about how they enacted the democratic purpose. Table 1 provides an overview of the schools, geographical locations, and participants (anonymized).

The interview guide was methodologically structured in light of the tripartite categorization and dimensions of education for democracy: education about (knowledge), for (attitudes and values), and through democracy (participatory skills). As this framework is also mentioned in Norwegian White Papers (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016), it may be regarded as a policy expectation. Questions included school leaders' and teachers' democratic practices as defined in the new General Curriculum and the cross-curricular theme 'Democracy and Citizenship'.

A qualitative content analysis (Bryman, 2012) guided by analytical concepts drawn from professionalism and combined with policy enactment theory and notions of democratic rationality was performed. First, the interviews were inductively analyzed to identify emerging themes informative of how school leaders and teachers enact education for democracy. NVivo software was used to code for emergent themes and identify instances in which school leaders and teachers discussed interpretations and translations of policy and professional work. The interviews with leadership teams (including the principal and school inspectors), department heads, and teachers were treated as separate datasets, permitting a comparison between schools as well as highlighting variations between group interviews at each school. Two of the interviews with principals (Valley and Road) were individual interviews. Second, the interview

Table 1. Overview of selection.

School name (anonymous)	Geography	Number of interviewees
School 1, Valley	West	4 teachers, 2 leaders, principal
School 2, Hilltop	East	4 teachers, 1 counselor, principal
School 3, Crown	East	3 teachers, 1 leader, principal
School 4, Road	West	2 teachers, principal

transcripts were deductively analyzed according to the concepts outlined in the framework. The following analytical concepts were deductively employed: organizational and occupational professionalism; professional, managerial, and structural measures of accountability; and conceptions of democratic rationalities as outlined in the analytical approach.

Findings

This section reports the findings on what characterizes professional discretion in enacting education for democracy in a low-stakes, 'soft-regulation' system. The initial subsection answers the first research question concerning how school leaders and teachers interpret and legitimize the democratic purpose in education. The following two subsections answer the other research questions.

Finding # 1: interpreting and legitimizing education for democracy

A cross-curricular approach to democracy

Across the schools, interpretations of democracy aligned with a cross-curricular approach to teaching. At all four schools, there was a consensus that democracy could be part of many subjects, the most common of which were social sciences, Christianity and ethics, and history and language, particularly English and Norwegian (both include history). The degree to which the schools had undertaken a cross-curricular approach to education for democracy differed.

Valley had a more sophisticated cross-curricular understanding compared with the other schools. Here, a holistic understanding of democracy was explicitly mentioned:

> At this school, there is a common understanding that teachers should cooperate across subjects and display a cross-curricular interest, and that it should be in the best interest of the students. At other schools, it may be that teachers become their own little 'islands,' and then it becomes more difficult to think holistically about citizenship, democracy, and participation. (Teacher 3, Valley)

From this quote, it can be observed that cooperation between teachers is a precursor to thinking holistically in educating students for citizenship and democracy. This understanding largely reflects The Education Act (1998) and the overall democratic purpose in the Norwegian context (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). The principal of Valley also concurred with this view:

> I welcome the idea of interdisciplinary themes, and I believe it's important to see connections between important subjects. It's also stated in the purpose clause. I think it's more clear and explicit in the new General Part of the Curriculum than in the past [. . .]. (Principal, Valley)

This quote illustrates the principal's cross-curricular approach at Valley. Interestingly, the principal referred to the purpose clause in The Education Act (1998), alignment with which is evident in how the principal and teachers at Valley approach education for democracy. This approach differed somewhat in comparison to the other schools, where little or no reference was made to policy or legislation in interpreting education for democracy. However, none of the interviewees commented on being accountable to their superiors.

Established practices and internalized codes of ethics

The centrality of established practices was common across the schools in terms of how school leaders and teachers legitimized their work with education for democracy. That is, educational professionals drew on preexisting knowledge and experience in their interpretations of the democratic purpose (cf. Coburn, 2005).

At the schools, a wide range of established practices were relied upon to legitimize work, including annual excursions and the construction of religious monuments in order to encourage cooperation among students from different backgrounds. At Hilltop, for example, teachers mentioned special ‘theme days’ on which they worked with attitudes about relevant topics, such as conscientiously using the internet and social media:

> We have, especially in the last three years, implemented days where there is awareness raising of how to use the internet, what responsibilities we have, and how we speak about each other online [. . .]. So we set off time for these theme days to such topics, but we have to review these topics regularly because the students are affected daily by social media and things we can’t control. (Teacher 2, Hilltop)

This quote illustrates the role of an established practice to legitimize working to create healthy attitudes regarding internet and social media use. It also suggests that the teachers have inherited values anchored in an internalized code of ethics. They did not, however, refer to outside procedures, policies, or legislation as part of professional ethical norms. It seems as being professional accountable is taken for granted.

The school leaders and teachers at Valley described a variety of teaching approaches as part of established practices: cross-curricular work and cooperation, excursions, anti-bullying programs, and established procedures for handling conflicts among students. At the formal leadership level, established leadership norms were emphasized in which diversity and a common vision of schooling played a key role:

> In the leadership team, we accept differences, and we are a team consisting of people with different strengths. So, we complement each other with our individual differences, but we do have a common vision that enables us to be a well-functioning team. And I think that is important. If we had different visions of education or a different view of the students, that would have made things more difficult. (Department Head 1, Valley)

This speaks to a form of shared leadership evoking a therapeutic rationality (cf. Woods, 2005). Shared leadership presupposes a common vision of schooling as a means of legitimizing education for democracy. Of particular interest at Valley, however, was the tension between the teachers’ established professional norms and the students’ expression of opinions in the classroom:

> There are many different classes, and that plays into how teachers systemize their teaching [. . .] the teacher has a large impact on the class, and there is a difference between classes. Some teachers emphasize ‘this is the way it is and the way we do things around here,’ while other teachers continuously push the students to have their own opinion that affects [the teaching situation]. (Teacher 4, Valley)

This statement demonstrates how some teachers draw on professional norms (‘the way we do things around here’), whereas others encourage the students to express their own opinions. This could mean that teachers’ established norms of practice leave little room

for students to have their own opinions. Also, it seems as the teachers refer to individual norms, not necessarily collective professionalism.

At Oak, the school leaders' and teachers' established practices revolved around their work in formal subjects and emerging cases in the Student Council. Unlike at the other schools, teachers at Oak expressed concerns over how to 'evaluate' practices or skills related to the new interdisciplinary theme relating to the democratic purpose, for which they had no clear evaluation forms or standards: 'we do need assessment, we are expected to assess' (Teacher 1, Oak). This statement indicates that some teachers find it difficult to assess education for democracy.

Other forms of established practices largely revolved around the notion of respecting diversity, which was framed differently across the schools, ranging from being good role models for students to ensuring the students' voices were heard. At Hilltop, the teachers expressed the importance of role-modeling:

> I think that we demonstrate great leeway and we show [to the students] that we are different. We reach the same goals but we do it differently. (Teacher 3, Hilltop)

> Grown-ups are in general amazingly bad role models for the students, and those I hang out with on social media receive one shock experience after another. (Teacher 2, Hilltop)

These quotes are clearly contradictory. Still, Teacher 3 was describing school performance, whereas Teacher 2 was discussing general social tendencies. At Road, role-modeling through mutual respect was highlighted, as illustrated in the following quote:

> [. . .] The freedom of expression and taking others' perspectives, and learning about differences, is a very important competence in order for us to have a well-functioning democracy. Agreeing about disagreeing and still respecting each other's viewpoint, that is the foundation of a democratic system. But it starts already earlier than that. For respecting people's differences, that begins the moment they step through the door. We model, and we say that we can't demand respect from someone just by the role of being a teacher. (Teacher 1, Road)

This observation seems to be based on a sense of internalized ethics as part of occupational professionalism. Without referring to outside documents or expectations for working with education for democracy, the teachers illustrated ethical principles when legitimizing their work with education for democracy. Such internalized ethics resonates with the notion of ethical rationality, whose key aim is espousing values representing goodness (Woods, 2005, p. 13).

In sum, these findings suggest that school leaders and teachers interpret and legitimize education for democracy mainly through their own established practices and internalized codes of ethics. In contrast, little reference was made to policy or legal documents or to external accountability.

Finding #2: key facets of professional discretion

A large discretionary space

A large discretionary space characterized school leaders' and teachers' translation of the democratic purpose. Noticeably, scant attention was paid to policy expectations or accountability measures in work with education for democracy, and hence translation

appeared mostly aligned with professional norms. The following excerpt from the focus group interview with teachers at Valley illustrates this point:

Interviewer: What does education for democracy and citizenship look like in this school?

Teacher 1 (Valley): It occurs in vastly different ways. On the one hand, you have to teach what democracy is, and on the other hand, you ask the students to communicate what democracy means to them. Perhaps one has to talk about institutions, but simultaneously, it's also about subjects such as democracy in practice, where the education is mostly about students being active participants in a democracy, one way or another.

Through this key quotation, it can be seen that the teachers employed multiple approaches to education for democracy at different levels, including teaching about democracy, which speaks to intellectual knowledge, and enabling students to experience what democracy means in practice (cf. Stray, 2010).

At Hilltop, unlike the other teachers, the school counselor was granted a great degree of autonomy and trust in working with education for democracy. The counselor had the discretionary power to develop educational initiatives aimed at addressing, e.g., substance abuse and bullying. The leadership team recognized this, noting that the counselor was a key figure in facilitating dialogue between students involved in conflicts and in negotiating their resolution, emphasizing how conflict managing was part of education for democracy.

At Road, which enrolls a large number of students with minority backgrounds, the importance of trust and delegation of responsibility regarding the inclusion of all students was especially highlighted. The excerpt below demonstrates how one teacher at Road perceived his work with minority students. The following statement reinforces the interpretation that teachers are trusted by the principal in their work and are granted large discretionary space in educating for democracy:

> Regarding our responsibility as teachers of minority classes, I believe we have a greater degree of autonomy than the rest of the school. And [we are granted] trust that we can do the job. But we are also (. . .) two teachers with much experience in building [education for democracy] at this school. (Teacher 1, Road)

For the teachers at Road, teaching youth is accompanied by special challenges to conflict management, and as such these teachers value the trust granted to them by the principal in their work, especially on the basis of their extensive professional experience. At the other schools, trust was connected to the notion of developing an inclusive school community and to the delegation of responsibility within the school.

At Oak, the principal mentioned the importance of delegating responsibility in order to handle emerging tasks and allocating more time for developmental tasks, which reflect notions of shared leadership (Woods, 2005). School leaders and teachers endorsed a wide range of practices related to education for democracy. Examples of democratization were included in the curriculum, especially concerning the theme of 'freedom fighters,' such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. A program was also developed in each subject with themes related to climate, elderly care, the fur industry, gender equality, etc. Making teaching relevant and relatable was repeatedly mentioned, with one teacher remarking 'Recently, there was an election in the United States, so I can't have social

studies and not mention it.' The teachers agreed that the classroom represented a democracy 'in miniature,' and that small elections could thus be held in the classroom to simulate democracy on a larger scale. This practice illustrates the exercise of a wide professional discretionary space, one which adheres to principles of democratic agency, particularly therapeutic and decisional rationality (Woods, 2005).

Balancing acts of leadership and care for the community

The findings indicate that school leaders' and teachers' discretion was characterized by attempts to between balance decision making as acts of leadership on the one hand, and caring for the broader school community on the other. This occurred at the professional community level as well as in interactions with students in the classroom. A key point made at the schools was that all teachers and leaders should have their voices heard and included when decisions are made. This echoes Sinclair's (1995) notion of professional accountability, particularly collaboration.

Nonetheless, when involving staff in decision-making processes concerning the discretionary work of inclusion, the leadership team faced challenges:

> [...] I think that it is important that we listen and try to involve people in processes. It is important that we anchor all processes involving development to ensure that everything isn't bottom-up all the time, but that we in the leadership team are willing to act [...]. At least we try to be process-oriented, and [...] involve those who are affected by [the process], which is also a part of the education for democracy for the grown-ups. (Principal, Oak)

This quote reflects the dilemma of negotiating the typical leadership role of making decisions and 'acting' while also including those affected by the decisions. It appears that 'living with' such circumstances should be part of education for democracy for the adults, and that subordinates would occasionally have to accept that decisions would be made for them. Discretion in a school democracy occurs not just among those in the classroom but also among anyone affected by decision-making processes.

At Hilltop, the leadership team faced the same dilemma. Numerous arenas were arranged for meeting with department heads to plan instruction for minority students as well as to allocate resources for students with special needs. Still, the principal at Hilltop emphasized leadership dilemmas in a democratic school despite the arrangement of meeting arenas:

> I believe we are very open to listening and involving everyone [...] We cooperate with different services, including counselors and advisors, and meet with them once a week. So we have created arenas where everyone may express their views, and we support that. Of course we do have a future goal, but we try to govern in a way that brings everyone on board without just making decisions and settling them. (Principal, Hilltop)

This can be interpreted to mean that although the leadership team had a clear vision of governing, including the staff in all decision-making processes was especially important, even though doing so would affect this vision.

The leadership team also noted there might be tensions between caring for the students' well-being (cf. Woods, 2005) and on learning if they focus too much on learning outcomes.

Two of the schools (Valley and Oak) imposed restrictions on mobile devices in order to keep students engaged and focused. Meanwhile, the other schools stressed the

challenges posed by mobile devices to educational processes and democracy-related issues. Valley introduced a 'mobile-free school,' mandating all students to relinquish their phones during the school day. This policy was enacted in response to a couple of unfortunate incidents, one of which two students had deliberately provoked and filmed teachers. The mobile device restriction at Valley was reached by consensus among the leadership team and teachers. Despite this, one teacher acknowledged that the restriction 'wasn't a particularly democratic way of doing things' for the students. At Oak, the decision was less streamlined, with the principal referring to the decision as 'brave and tough.' The restriction was heavily opposed by the students, and possibly also by some parents and teachers. According to the school inspector at Oak, 'We listened to what the Student Council had to say, but we can't go for it, either because we are hindered either by the Law or by pedagogical discretion which makes it impossible.' Procedurally speaking, the restriction was a structural measure of accountability (Molander, 2016).

Across schools, the informants mentioned various challenges related to mobile phones, but particularly social media. At Hilltop, social media, social pressure, and the experience of anarchy were interlinked:

> I think our answer to that is that it's challenging. The students experience intense pressure when using social media, and they take that pressure into school (Teacher 3, Hilltop) . . . yes, there is a greater experience of anarchy than democracy on social media, which creates challenges. (Teacher 4, Hilltop)

The use of mobile phones and social media appears to have created a special arena over which the schools have little control. This clearly poses challenges and stokes tensions in the schools, prompting the leadership team and teachers to seek to regain control by narrowing the discretionary spaces for students and professionals alike in the classroom. This is an example of how acts of formal leadership creates space for democracy through introducing rules, procedures, as well as structural mechanisms of accountability.

As already mentioned, the profession is granted considerable discretionary power and spaces. These spaces are organized and arranged by local schools in the formal and informal work occurring daily. Teachers especially emphasized, to a great extent, the challenges that arise in the classroom. Whatever they do can be perceived as wrong. For example, one teacher mentioned a situation that involved students making racist statements:

> I had a white male student who was reasonably upset because he thought he was the victim of another student's racism. I then talked to the one who had made these racist comments [. . .] Then you get into a situation that is a little tricky to handle in 8th grade; to explain to them that bullying has to do with power and power relations, and the white man has in a way a different position from the minorities in this country. . . . it's a bit like a minefield after all. Suddenly, you say something that is perceived badly by someone else (. . .). (Teacher 1, Valley)

Likewise, a similar occurrence at Hilltop also highlights the difficulties teachers face:

> There are themes that teachers struggle with. They think it's difficult to talk about hijabs in a classroom when you have three girls wearing the hijab. How does one handle that? Does one dare to? (Teacher 1, Hilltop)

These quotes demonstrate how teachers think they must speak and act very cautiously, knowing that their own statements can inadvertently support racist statements. Some teachers might feel that the increased focus on individual rights has problematized otherwise mundane topics, which are now viewed as representing a 'minefield.'

The teachers also reflected on their own situation and behavior, e.g., they did not always behave democratically toward students when they were tired, even though they were genuinely concerned with their students' independence, interests, and commitments. As one teacher at Valley remarked:

> When I'm really tired and . . . Maybe I've just had a really tough class with complicated things, then I'm not always so flexible that [pinch] I come up with a new idea. The interaction between teacher and students is there all the time. Sometimes I am a complete dictator and say 'No, we will do it that way' and off to 'What do you want? We'll do that today!' (Teacher 1, Valley)

In addition to classroom events, teachers at Valley also discussed more informal work, such as preventing a poor debate culture and monitoring student behavior in school corridors.

Including students and the importance of attending to their individual needs

Across schools, a gap between the state of democracy as perceived by the teachers and the experiences as reported by students could be observed. For example, according to one teacher at Hilltop, some students had allegedly expressed not having a 'real impact' on what they wanted:

> We struggle a bit to get the students on track [. . .] and we work with that, and we get feedback from the students that they don't feel they have a real impact on everything they want [. . .] so it is one of our most challenging areas, and it is probably to a large extent how we manage to meet them at their maturity level. (Teacher 4, Hilltop)

This statement underscores the challenge of including all students by understanding their needs, i.e., keeping the students 'on track.' Likewise, a counselor and a teacher at Oak noted the difficulty identifying struggling students who are not as 'visible':

> [It is] very easy to help those who are very visible or who are coming to us. But noticing everyone is perhaps a little bigger challenge. But as a school counselor, I notice that there are some who are extremely much better at it than others. (Counselor/Teacher, Oak)

These statements reflect that some teachers feel they lack the capacity to enact parts of the democratic purpose, particularly students' right to be seen and heard regardless of one's visibility in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers may be impeded from helping students to make a real impact on vital decisions because they also think they have to 'teach to the test' when an exam is approaching. The following quote captures this point:

> I noticed that for my own part, the possibilities were downgraded when we closed in on the last semester of the last grade, and I said 'ok this is what we will have to learn' and 'you have to know this because there is an oral exam coming up.' Now . . . It's a bit of an unsettling feeling, and external pressure, and I feel I then get less space [to enable real participation]. (Teacher 1, Valley).

This statement illustrates teachers' perceptions of a restricted professional discretion as an exam becomes imminent. It appears, then, that less space for enabling students' participation represents the 'one best' option for the teacher. But it also quite clear how this puts the teacher in an uncomfortable position. It is possible to understand this as a form of organizational professionalism, whereby the reporting of test results assumes center stage (Evetts, 2009).

In sum, the findings indicate multifaceted translations of education for democracy involving dilemmas between acts of leadership and caring for the community and illustrating a large discretionary space in translating policy expectations. Broadly speaking, this evokes notions of collaboration as a main constituent in occupational professionalism, although indications of practices related to organizational professionalism are also evident (Evetts, 2009).

Finding # 3: enabling and constraining factors in policy enactment

Increased focus on individual rights and education as a private good

Concerns were raised across the schools about increased individualism in society. These concerns were related to individual rights and the current policy debates about free school choice, allowing parents to decide which school their child should attend. For example, standing firmly on individual rights, such as the right to special instruction, was highlighted. Below, one teacher explains how the increased focus on individualism in society could undermine the best interests of the community:

> [...] we weigh between [individual rights] and the interests of the community [...] that is a challenge we have in today's society, we are moving towards more and more individualism and maybe at the expense of the community [...]. so we work a lot with that balance [...]. (Teacher 4, Hilltop)

These rather general remarks reflect teachers' concerns over increased individualism in society at large. In contrast, the principal at Road made more specific points about increased individualism:

> [...] This focus on 'my own rights,' the focus on what society should do for me and what I have the right to get out of the municipality and state and everyone around me, that focus, instead of what I can contribute. I feel that is a wrong development in society. (Principal, Road).

> I am terrified of those schools that are more streamlined, and I am very skeptical about the idea of free school choice in high school, where you get classes with students who have a very similar background [...] that the students with the upper class backgrounds distance themselves from others. I think that is a problem for democracy. (Principal, Road)

These statements address both an increased focus on individual rights seen broadly, as well as concerns regarding a concrete policy – in this case, free school choice at upper secondary schools. Hilltop also expressed concern about the effects of free school choice:

> At the Eastern side of the city you have the poor people who choose certain schools, while in other areas, in a neighborhood nearby, you get elite schools consisting of students who don't know those pupils [from a lower SE background] who live just across the street. (Teacher 1, Hilltop).

These remarks exemplify concerns over how the policy of free school choice at upper secondary level, which has been implemented in certain urban areas in Norway, creates segregation between children from different socio-economic backgrounds even when living in close proximity. The free school choice policy approaches education as an individual right and a private good, rather than as a common good, as the goal of education (see Englund, 1994). Moreover, the principal at Road commented on parents' increased motivation to stand up for their rights as individuals:

> So we try to bring in the student voice. [. . .] Constantly we experience that parents stand firmly on behalf of their own children and demand one-to-one instruction. [. . .] In other words, *they stand firmly on what rights they have as individuals*. They are not always interested in listening to the school's arguments regarding participating in a community that we believe works better. So, it is something about the individual focus in society that has gotten increasingly stronger [. . .]. (Principal, Road, author's emphasis)

Statements such as these exemplify leaders' and teachers' concerns about the increased focus on individualism and individuals' rights, regardless of geographic location. However, as both Hilltop and Road are situated in low socio-economic areas, these concerns may reflect this context

The professional community and education for democracy

The findings indicate that interactions between school leadership and teachers may facilitate opportunities to work on, for, and, in particular, through democratic participation. Education through democratic participation means that students experience what democracy means in practice (Stray, 2010). The relationships between school leaders and teachers, and between teachers, should serve as role models for students to follow, providing them with experiences of what democracy looks like in a community. Examples from across the schools demonstrate the importance of established norms and practices in providing such democratic experiences for students. Take Hilltop, for example:

> There is a very positive climate in the teachers' room, one that dominates this school. It's a highly inclusive environment. We have a vision that there shall be great leeway and positive feelings of involvement, and that vision has been formulated in accordance with the attitudes we display in the teachers' room, and not the other way around. (School counsellor, Hilltop)

This speaks to the notion of institutional empowerment (Woods, 2005) and, in particular, to shared feelings of positive involvement, both aligned with the vision of caring for the community as expressed by the leadership team. At Valley, the teachers underscored the established practice of cross-curricular cooperation, and cooperation between teachers, in working with democracy, citizenship education, and participation. The principal reiterated how important it was for the leadership team to set a good example for the students to follow:

> I believe it's important that we as a leadership team set a good example, and that we demonstrate great leeway. We also have certain 'friendship rules.' They have been here in the past, too. Those rules have been co-created by the students, teachers, and leaders. The rules may encompass behaviors such as making others feel well, meeting everyone with a smile, and that we are all here to learn. A healthy learning environment doesn't come

> automatically, we have to constantly work on it. I emphasize that the students not only have rights, they also have duties. And that's important in a citizenship perspective. (Principal, Valley)

Here, the principal emphasized the significance of the professional community as an enabler of education for democracy and the function of friendship rules as a reminder of the values that should penetrate all levels of the community – among students, teachers, and the school leadership. It stresses how students should experience what democracy means in practice through the creation of healthy learning environments, and that the leadership team should set a good example in this regard. In this respect, it is a prime example of therapeutic rationality, encompassing feelings of positive involvement and shared leadership (Woods, 2005). In addition, support from the leadership can also function to encourage education for democracy, with statements such as 'the principal's door is always open' serving to exemplify the support available to students to share their concerns or ask questions about specific practices. This open-door policy, as well as feelings of positive involvement, appear to promote the free flow of ideas and enable their critical reflection (Apple & Beane, 1995). In all four schools that participated in this study, it is reasonable to argue that the attitude of the leadership teams were crucial in creating such a sharing culture. As such, the findings also demonstrate how leadership matters in promoting education for democracy.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore what characterizes professional discretion in enacting education for democracy in a low-stakes, 'soft-regulation' system. The three main findings presented in the previous section are discussed below in light of relevant research.

A broad conception of democracy and the prevalence of occupational professionalism

Although school leaders' and teachers' interpretation of education for democracy differed across the schools, consensus was reached on a cross-curricular approach. It was commonly agreed that several subjects should be included in educating for democracy. This position was mostly in alignment with the democratic purpose in the Norwegian education system (cf. Ministry of Education and Research, 2017).

Critics have raised concerns regarding equity when it is understood as closing achievement gaps on standardized test scores across different groups of students rather than eliminating the economic and social structures that sustain inequality, thereby ensuring quality education for all (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The interpretations of equity reported in the current study appear to address the latter understanding, which encompasses notions of equity involving human and civil rights as part of inclusion (cf. Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2006). This understanding aligns with central notions of the democratic purpose in Norway (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017), which emphasize that the education system should guarantee respect for diversity and enable students to solve conflicts peacefully.

Although policy documents include tensions and conflicting purposes (Larsen et al., 2020) it seems as the study's participants only to a small degree highlight this as a problem. The school leaders and teachers draw from established practices and internalized codes of ethics in legitimizing their work in a low stakes, 'soft regulation' system. Accordingly, their interpretation of the democratic purpose of education is anchored in professional standards, which in turn indicates the prevalence of occupational professionalism (Evetts, 2009). Neither legal nor policy expectations are frequently mentioned, with few exceptions, thus suggesting that regulations are not actively employed in practices pertaining to education for democracy. This calls into question the role of regulations. A large space for interpreting the democratic purpose may activate school leaders' and teachers' professional norms, but it requires that professional work is based on discretionary reasoning and justified decisions. Both school leaders and teachers are accountable to parents, superiors, and the public for what they are doing (Molander et al., 2012). Participants in the reported study seem to take this aspect of professionalism for granted. In a Norwegian context, this may relate to the high degree of trust in the teaching profession.

The challenge of discretionary power and accountability

School leaders' and teachers' professional discretion is key to balancing between the inclusion of individuals on the one hand, and the strengthening of the community on the other (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). However, the data do reveal tensions between acts of leadership and care for the community. Although there were some indications that discretionary spaces were narrowed, particularly for formal leadership, this was likely due to attempts to include staff in decision making, which speaks to facets of occupational professionalism, such as collegiality and collaboration (Evetts, 2009), as well as to shared leadership (Woods, 2005). Including department heads and teachers in decision-making processes and delegating responsibility both reflect existing research on democratic practices (cf. Apple & Beane, 1995; Møller, 2006; Scanlan & Theoharis, 2016; Woods, 2005). In the reported study, the principals open up for shared leadership and as such, it provides an example of how leadership matters in two ways. First, it displays traits of what Furman and Shields (2005) have labeled 'deep' democracy, where notions such as participation, inclusiveness and solidarity are reflected in the leadership teams' caring for the community by ensuring every voice is heard. Second, it portraits how formal leadership is an enabler of an inclusive school environment that ensure equitable participation in activities where the aim is fulfilling the needs of every student (cf. Szeto, 2020).

While previous research has identified narrow discretionary spaces in bureaucratic school systems or 'high-stakes' settings (e.g., Trujillo et al., 2021; Ryan & Rottmann, 2009), the current study revealed considerable space for professional discretion for school leaders in a low-stakes, 'soft-regulation' system. Accordingly, occupational professionalism appeared to dominate in the study context, with little influence from the structural measures of accountability.

School leaders' and teachers' use of both inclusion and restrictions suggest the prevalence of considerable professional discretionary power (Molander, 2016). This power entails a high degree of responsibility, which includes caring for all students and ensuring that their needs and right to be heard are fulfilled. Previous research has underscored the

importance of high-quality instruction in citizenship education (Mathé, 2019) and the establishment of an ethics of care for all individuals (Møller, 2006). This study suggests that some teachers admit a lack of the requisite capacity to identify all students' needs, and consequently to ensure that the students' right to have a voice is honored. Such a lack of capacity may impede these teachers from fostering an ethics of care for all students and prevent them from ensuring high-quality instruction. This self-reported deficiency may be exacerbated before examination periods, indicating the interference of organizational professionalism (Evetts, 2009) in enacting the democratic purpose. It raises the broader issue of how applicable democratic practices are in pre-exam periods, especially in situations where students feel their voices are going unheard. This in turn begs the question of whether there can be too much space in professional discretion. It may be that greater regulation and professional accountability in teachers' work is in fact advisable to ensure all students' right to be heard, especially prior to exam periods.

Overall, the present study suggests flexibility in professional discretion and democratic agency in responding to the democratic purpose of education. There are, however, also indications of regulatory measures and organizational professionalism. Restrictions placed on mobile devices represent one such structural measure. Finally, legal accountability may constrain professionals' discretionary responses to controversial topics in the classroom. The principal at Road expressed concern that parents are increasingly holding the school to account for their children's rights, and that this may eventually narrow discretionary spaces for school leaders and teachers. As such, the current study indicates that it is not so much the political context that narrows the discretionary space (cf. Wong et al., 2020) in the Norwegian context but is instead the community and the stakeholders closer to the schools, such as parents.

The risk of re-configuring and narrowing understandings of democracy

My analysis expanded the existing literature by suggesting that increased individualism in society represents a possible constraining factor in schools. The findings indicate changes similar to those that occurred in Sweden in the 1990s, when there was a discursive shift from perceiving education as a social and collective right to viewing it as an individual and civil right (Englund, 1994). This was evident in parents' increasing concerns over their children's rights, reflecting a narrow understanding of democracy (Møller & Rönnberg, 2021), or what Furman and Shields (2005) call a 'thin' democracy. Norwegian principals and teachers nonetheless expressed concerns over the increased focus on individual rights, which exemplifies the risk of re-configuring democracy as a consumer democracy, following the argument of Woods (2005). In such a re-configuration, focus is reoriented toward self-interest at the expense of students acting as mutual resources. One potential consequence of this narrowing focus on individual rights is that teachers may become ever more cautious so as to avoid reinforcing racist statements related to issues of liability.

The professional training received by interviewees through the Dembra program may have inculcated certain modes of democratic thinking. In this respect, Dembra may have broadened some interpretations of what democracy means for some of the participants. The analysis suggests that Norwegian teachers are offered a large discretionary space for both interpreting and translating the democratic mandate. This illustrates that the

teacher and leadership professions in the Norwegian context have a long tradition of cooperation and autonomous decision making, and that the influence of structural accountability measures may, to a small degree, downplay this tradition. As such, occupational professionalism represents a counterweight against the influence of neo-liberal, managerial policies through 'soft' regulation of the welfare state. Therapeutic and decisional rationalities seem to dominate interpretations of education for democracy (Woods, 2005). Little attention is paid to other, but nevertheless important, features of democratic agency and leadership, such as ethical rationality. Furthermore, my study showed that some concerns were raised regarding teachers' lack of capacity to attend to students' needs; the absence of real participation for students approaching exams; and the increasing focus on individuals' rights. In particular, my study suggests a possible challenge for democracy whereby teachers feel they are forced to 'teach to the test' when exams are imminent. In this respect, it is possible that a focus on performance indicators related to basic skills (Larsen et al., 2020) may undermine a quality of education for all (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Thus, managerial measures of accountability focusing on achievements on tests run the risk of undermining the softer dimension of education for democracy by overshadowing its importance. Corroborating the above, broader ethical values and aspects central in a developmental democracy may be undermined. One risks narrowing the meaning of democracy, thereby ignoring the broader democratic mandate, which involves adhering to ethical values and aspiring to truths over the long term. This may pose future challenges for the Norwegian education system, whose educational narrative so far, is dominated by low-stakes accountability.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to examine what characterizes professional discretion in enacting education for democracy in a low-stakes, 'soft-regulation' system by asking: (1) How do school leaders and teachers interpret and legitimize the democratic purpose in education? (2) What characterizes school leaders' and teachers' professional discretion when translating the democratic purpose in education? (3) How do school contexts play into school leaders' and teachers' stories of enacting democracy in schools? The findings suggest that interpretations and legitimizations are cross-curricular based on an internalized code of ethics; there is a large discretionary space for teachers, but schools experience, in their dialogs with parents, tensions between a thin democracy representing an individualist and self-centered project, and a deep democracy aiming for the public good.

This study highlighted the importance of awareness raising among practitioners regarding the nature of understandings foundational to democratic practices in professionals' work, especially in a context in which performance indicators influence the educational narrative (e.g., Larsen et al., 2020) in a 'soft' regulation system (Maroy & Pons, 2019). In the selected schools, there seem to be a coherent understanding of the importance of shared leadership in promoting democratic schools. The formal leaders' empowerment of the professional community stood out as a key enabler in the teachers' stories of education for democracy. My study demonstrated the importance of professional communities sharing a common vision of a cross-curricular approach and cooperation across subjects in realizing the democratic purpose.

It showed that the professional community according the study's participants, enables students to experience democracy *through* democratic participation (see Stray, 2010).

The current study added empirical knowledge of professional work with democracy and demonstrated a wide range of interpretations and translations of the democratic purpose in education in a low-stakes context of accountability. Furthermore, it lent support to studies claiming that performance reviews may undermine softer dimensions of education (e.g., Maroy, 2015). This article also expanded on previous research on education for democracy and added that an increased focus on individualism and individual rights may confront or challenge the wider interpretation and translation of the democratic purpose, as recalled in the testimonies of the interviewed participants. A main limitation of this study was that it only captured the stories of the participants involved and did not explore their practices through observations. Future research could provide more in-depth descriptions and undertake large-scale studies of professionals' work concerning the democratic dimensions of education.

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Article III

Teachers' Perceptions of Their Schools' Democratic Character

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Abstract

This study investigates teachers' perceptions of school democracy within a low-stakes accountability context. While previous studies have focused on teachers' perceptions of school climate and citizenship norms, we know less about the factors associated with their perceptions of their teaching about, for, and through democracy in their schools. Through a multiple regression analysis of survey data, we investigated the possible predictors of their perceptions regarding their schools' democratic character within Norway's low-stakes accountability system. In this study, theories on professionalism and educational and democratic leadership serve as an overarching framework. Results suggest that teachers who experience trust, support, and an inclusive relationship with their principal/leadership team perceive their schools as having democratic features. Moreover, despite managerial influences in the Norwegian school system, inclusion in decision-making and collaboration remain important components of teachers' perceptions of their schools' democratic character. Finally, education for democracy is embedded in the structures of decision-making and collaboration at the school level.

Keywords: democracy, teachers' perceptions, leadership, accountability

Teachers' Perceptions of Their Schools' Democratic Character

Introduction and Purpose

How schools prepare students to become active citizens in different contexts is an area of study that has received increased attention in the literature in recent years (Mathé & Elstad, 2018; Schulz et al., 2018; Trujillo et al., 2021). The role of schools in promoting democracy is accentuated by sociopolitical events, especially due to the increasing political polarization in Western democracies. Earlier studies have emphasized tensions between promoting features of democratic schools that depend on upholding professional standards on the one hand, and increasing managerial demands, such as monitoring of performance data from central and district levels, on the other (Camphuijsen et al., 2020). The significance of contextual conditions in the promotion of democracy and social justice within schools has been highlighted in the literature, specifically the notion that high-stakes, as opposed to low-stakes testing contexts, may create obstacles for promoting the democratic features of schools among school principals (Trujillo et al., 2021).

Norway, which represents a low-stakes testing context, is described as a social democratic welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1989)—one that has traditionally embraced democratic values and ideals, such as justice, equity, and participation. A key principle in the social democratic welfare system is the equitable distribution of resources and services, particularly in the education sector. During the 1980s and early 1990s, neoliberal reforms gained ground internationally. Norway was no exception, and performance measurement and

accountability-based practices were introduced at the beginning of the new millennium (Møller & Skedsmo, 2013). However, the introduction of these policies culminated in a clash between managerial notions of leadership and a focus on "what works," on the one hand, and the social democratic ideology that encompasses notions of the equitable distribution of resources and democratic participation, on the other.

As a result of such policy changes, educational professionals found themselves in the position of having to negotiate conflicting demands and tensions in their work. In particular, they were positioned in a hierarchical structure in which they were required to report the results (learning outcomes in basic skills) to local educational authorities, guided by the aim of improving academic results (Skedsmo & Møller, 2016). Simultaneously, they were expected to ensure a healthy learning environment for all students within their schools while promoting civic and democratic participation. Therefore, the aim of the current article is to increase knowledge about how teachers perceive school democracy in practice in a low-stakes accountability context. This is achieved by conducting a multiple regression analysis based on survey data, with the aim of mapping possible predictors of teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their respective schools (Camphuijsen et al., 2020). Accordingly, the research question guiding this study is as follows: *Which factors are associated with how teachers perceive the state of democracy in their schools?*

Previous studies on teachers' relationships with their principals indicate that the perceived support and care received by teachers, along with their possible active participation in various decision-making processes, are important factors in a functioning democratic school (Apple & Beane, 1995; Höög et al., 2007). Another strand of research has demonstrated the importance of communication and collaboration between school leaders and teachers in a school democracy

(e.g., Apple & Beane, 1995; Zachrisson & Johansson, 2010). Other studies have focused on the perceptions of principals (Trujillo et al., 2021), teachers (Sampermans et al., 2021), and students (Mathé & Elstad, 2018) regarding education for democracy. However, we currently have limited knowledge about how teachers perceive school democracy in practice within a low-stakes accountability context. Thus, in the current study, we explore this issue by using Norway as an example of a low-stakes accountability context in which test-based accountability demands have been institutionalized over time (Camphuijsen et al., 2020). Knowledge about this topic is important in understanding how school democracy is conceptualized in practice. In turn, we can further promote democratic practices within the school setting by building on these conceptualizations. We start by paying attention to some aspects of the Norwegian context.

The remainder of the article is organized into sections. First, we present our theoretical understanding of some key concepts in this study (i.e., educational leadership for democracy, professionalism, and accountability) before showing how previous research has influenced the development of the study. The following sections present the methodology and results of the analysis. Finally, we discuss the significance of our findings and their implications for educational practice and research.

Contextual Background

Research in the Scandinavian context has demonstrated school leaders' prominent role in promoting the democratic spirit, highlighting their duty to internalize national goals and prioritize these in the educational agenda (Höög et al., 2007; Zachrisson & Johansson, 2010). However, when the new General Curriculum was introduced in 2017, it was accompanied by new demands for working with democratic processes, thus exacerbating the conflicting tensions

in teachers' work (Larsen et al., 2020). In Norway, school leaders and teachers are required to work on 'Democracy and Citizenship' as a cross-curricular theme:

> The teaching and training shall give the pupils knowledge and skills to face challenges in accordance with democratic principles. They shall understand dilemmas that arise when recognizing both the preponderance of the majority and the rights of the minority. They shall train their ability to think critically, learn to deal with conflicts of opinion and respect disagreement. (Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2017)

This expectation is interdisciplinary in nature, and schools are expected to work on these democratic practices, as specified in the General Curriculum. In Norway, there is a long tradition of cooperation among school professionals in which a principal typically seeks staff participation in enacting policy directives, such as cross-curricular themes (Prøitz et al., 2019). Norwegian policy-related expectations are formulated in a generic way (Larsen et al., 2020); thus, school professionals are granted leeway in the process of interpreting and translating policies. In other words, teachers are on the frontline when it comes to interpreting and realizing education for democracy. This professional space actualizes their perceptions of their schools' democratic character as an area of research in this particular context.

Theoretical Framing of Key Concepts

Multiple definitions of education for democracy have been proposed in the literature (e.g., Apple & Beane, 1995; Dewey, 1916; Habermas, 2015; Mouffe, 2005; Woods, 2005). In addition, Dewey's (1916) emphasis on faith in experience, along with his argument that the best way to teach and learn democracy is to practice it, has inspired many contemporary works on democracy in education. For instance, Stray (2010) understands education for democracy in a way that is both broad and anchored in a tripartite understanding involving three elements: education about democracy (intellectual knowledge), education for democracy (attitudes and

values), and education through democratic participation. Furthermore, we argue that it is necessary to supply this perspective with an understanding of education as a public good in which the key aim is to achieve inclusion in a pluralistic community (Englund, 1994). Similarly, Anderson and Cohen (2018) emphasized working for a common good with the aim of securing equal opportunities for all students. Following this broad understanding of education for democracy, our conceptual framework draws on theories of educational leadership and perspectives of professionalism and accountability.

First, we understand educational leadership as a relational concept in which leadership practice takes place in *interactions* between people in specific contexts. This implies that educational leadership is not necessarily synonymous with a particular position. We distinguish between educational leaders in formal roles and leadership as practice (Lingard et al., 2003). In local schools, educational leaders in formal roles include principals, assistant principals, and deputy heads. Moreover, we assume that teachers serve as key actors in democratic schools by taking on informal leadership roles, such as educational leadership, through practices that are dispersed across the organization (Lingard et al., p. 53), while also being included in decision-making processes (Woods, 2005). Earlier studies have suggested that teachers play a key role in educational leadership in schools (e.g., de Villiers & Pretorius, 2011; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). For the purpose of our research, we assume that teachers take on leadership responsibilities in addition to their teaching activities (Wenner & Campbell, 2017 p. 140). For example, an indication of leadership responsibility outside the classroom is reflected in collaboration with other teachers and with school leaders in formal leadership positions (cf. Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Additionally, we draw from democratic leadership theory inspired by Woods' (2005) conceptualization. In democratic leadership, one of the main responsibilities of educational leaders is to promote democratic values in both the school and the community. This conceptualization is based on a developmental conception of democratic practice (Woods, 2005, p. 12) involving four rationalities, each with its distinct focus and priority: *decisional*, concerning the right to participate; *discursive*, concerning the possibilities for open debate; *therapeutic*, concerning the creation of positive feelings of involvement and social cohesion; and *ethical*, concerning aspirations to truth and distributions of internal authority (Woods, 2005, pp. 11–15). The four rationalities may relate to the definition of educational leadership proposed by James et al. (2020, p. 632): "Educational leadership practice is a legitimate interaction in an educational institution intended to enhance engagement with the institutional primary task." They further argued that a definition of educational leadership practice must specify the legitimacy of such practices, including, for example, the ethical/moral basis of agency.

In the Norwegian context, the "institutional primary task" includes three dimensions of education about, for, and through democracy (cf. Stray, 2013). This implies that both school leaders and teachers engage in the primary tasks of education, including the abovementioned three dimensions. We are also inspired by theories on professionalism, particularly Evetts' (2011) theory on occupational professionalism and Anderson and Cohen's (2018) conceptualization of democratic professionalism. Evetts (2011) emphasized that what is termed "occupational professionalism" involves collegial authority (as opposed to the authority of results) and relationships based on trust. Meanwhile, Anderson and Cohen's (2018) conceptualization involves culturally responsive and democratic teaching while viewing the principal and the teachers as colleagues within a democratic school community. They further argued that

democratic professionals display sensitivity to the problematic relationship between performance indicators and demographics and that being a democratic professional requires teachers to work *with* rather than *on* the students (Anderson & Cohen, 2018). It demands that teachers draw from students' prior experiences and frames of reference to ensure that learning encounters are more relevant for them. This conceptualization is well aligned with the expectations outlined in the Norwegian National Curriculum.

Democratic professionalism encompasses notions of democratic leadership, especially the inclusion of teachers in decision-making processes. As educational professionals, school leaders and teachers are situated between managerial mechanisms of accountability operating within a hierarchy. This means being answerable to superiors regarding specific outcomes or results, on the one hand, and professional accountability—guided by internalized codes of ethics—on the other (Evetts, 2009). In addition, educational professionals face democratic mechanisms of accountability, which entail collective choice and public control over decisions, such as when they have to justify their decisions to parents (Ranson, 2003).

Previous Research Influencing the Development of the Present Study

Corresponding to our understanding of educational leadership as practice (Lingard et al., 2003), studies have demonstrated that teachers taking part in decision-making processes are important features of a democratic school (Apple & Beane, 1995; Höög et al., 2007; Møller, 2006; Woods, 2005). Moreover, empirical studies have proposed some key factors for making democratic schools possible. These factors, which are relevant for school leaders and teachers, include the free flow of ideas, irrespective of popularity; faith in the capacity for problem-solving, both individually and collectively; critical reflection and analysis concerning ideas,

problems, and policies; concern for the welfare of others and the common good; concern for the dignity and rights of individuals; and the promotion of democracy not as an abstract ideal but as a set of values that must be lived (Apple & Beane, 1995). Enabling these key factors presupposes the fostering of democratic structures and processes as well as a democratic curriculum (Apple & Beane, 1995, p. 10). Apple and Bean (1995) further proposed that promoting democracy is a collective project and that enabling democratic structures and processes occur through co-operation, not competition (see also Prøitz, et al., 2019). This understanding underscores the importance of trust and collaboration in schools.

According to earlier studies, Norwegian school leaders have reported a relatively high level of teachers' involvement in decision-making (e.g., Huang et al., 2017). We have built on these findings related to how teachers themselves perceive the possibilities of being included in school-wide decision-making through teacher–leader collaboration. We assume that such collaboration, which implies leadership support and inclusion in decision-making, is a possible factor associated with how teachers perceive the state of democracy in their schools.

Extensive research has been conducted on the connections among democracy, the role of professional communities, and teacher collaboration in schools (Clark & Wasley, 1999; Fielding, 1999; Vangrieken et al., 2015; Westheimer, 2008). In the following, Westheimer (2008) elegantly communicated the idea of teacher collaboration and emphasized that democracy entails more than just collective decision-making:

> [It is] a form of human community in which human flourishing is best realized and which is, therefore, essential to good life. Thick democracy agrees that democratic practices promote fair decision-making, but its value goes well beyond this. Thick democracy attaches significant value to such goods as participation, civic friendship, inclusiveness, and solidarity. (p. 767)

This notion is largely in accordance with a developmental understanding of democracy in education, which is an important aspect of an empowering democratic community wherein teachers participate in decision-making processes (Apple & Beane, 1995; Woods, 2005).

Recent empirical studies have contributed to understanding students' knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, and activities, as well as to promoting the democratic features of schools (Arthur, 2011; Mathé, 2019; Schulz et al., 2018). These studies have demonstrated that teachers hold an important position in promoting such features, especially regarding values education and students' moral development (Arthur, 2011). Of relevance is the recent International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) from 2016 (Schulz et al., 2018), which, based on a large-scale survey, investigated the various ways in which young people are prepared for citizenship in different countries. In one study, over 6000 Norwegian 9th grade students were tested on their civic knowledge and were surveyed on their civic attitudes and activities (Huang et al., 2017). The findings revealed that, among the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Norwegian students ranked fifth in the civic knowledge test and demonstrated significant levels of trust in democratic institutions. Moreover, the ICCS study demonstrated that most school leaders and teachers (79% and 74%, respectively) perceived developing students' capabilities of independent and critical thinking as the most important factor in schools' citizenship education. These findings underscore the importance of teaching democracy in an educational setting, and, consequently, we know that the teaching dimension is central to a school democracy. In fact, this also includes how teachers work to support citizenship activities for students in school and beyond (Arthur, 2011; Babic, 2019; Chadjipadelis et al., 2020; Mathé & Elstad, 2018; Stray, 2010; Thomas, 2009). Therefore, we found it

reasonable to believe that a connection exists between how teachers perceive the state of democracy in their schools and their ideas regarding teaching democracy.

In addition, parental support from home seems to be an important factor in enabling democratic and equitable features of schools (Hahn, 2015; Marschall, 2006; Miklikowska & Hurme, 2011). The same is true for home–school collaboration, especially when it comes to creating more equitable opportunities for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds (Moles, 1993; Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). These strands of research have paid attention to students representing particular minorities (Hahn, 2015; Marschall, 2006). As these studies revolve around notions of democracy and equity, we expect that the opportunities provided by schools to assist students who do not receive sufficient support from home are associated with teachers' perceptions of school democracy. In other words, if teachers experience that they are not able to compensate for a lack of parental support, this might influence their perceptions of their school's democratic character.

Furthermore, earlier studies have emphasized tensions between promoting features of democratic schools that depend on professional standards on the one hand, and increasing managerial demands that connect with features of new public management (NPM), such as monitoring of performance data from central and district levels, on the other (Camphuijsen et al., 2020; Larsen et al., 2020). The contextual conditions for promoting democracy and social justice within schools are also crucial (Trujillo et al., 2021). Specifically, high-stakes, as opposed to low-stakes testing contexts, may create obstacles for promoting the democratic features of schools among school principals (Trujillo et al., 2021). In Norway, which represents a low-stakes testing context, traditional social democratic ideals have been put under increased pressure from neoliberal reforms inspired by the global market (Volckmar, 2008). Moreover, Lieberkind (2015)

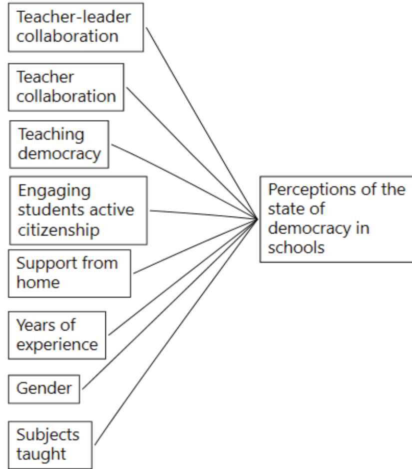
argued that changes in Scandinavian educational discourse—from a focus on democratization to that on students' knowledge and skills—have exerted pressure on democratic education in schools due to the emergence of new paradigms of accountability. On the basis of such information, we assume that contextual conditions may be related to teachers' perceptions of democracy in schools.

In summary, this review has revealed several factors that may play important roles in how teachers perceive the state of democracy in their schools. First, it has been shown that teachers play a possible role in educational leadership in schools through involvement in school-wide decision-making. Second, following previous research, it appears that leadership responsibility outside the classroom is reflected in collaboration with other teachers. Third, the teaching dimension is central to a school democracy, and this also includes how teachers work to support citizenship activities for students in school and beyond. Fourth, previous research has highlighted how the support received by students from home is related to democracy in schools. Accordingly, we found it reasonable to believe that all of these factors are related to teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools.

Additionally, we include background measures that are frequently used in empirical survey studies (cf. Burroughs et al., 2019), namely, gender, teachers' years of experience, and the subjects they teach. Following the abovementioned perspectives and previous research, we outline the expected relationships between teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools and the potential associated factors in Figure 1 below. Later, we present the methods, results, and findings of this work.

Figure 1

Expected Relationships Between Teachers' Perceptions of the State of Democracy in Their Schools and Related Predictors.



Methods

This article reports on a study conducted in Eastern Norway among teachers in lower secondary schools. We designed a quantitative study to explore the strength of the relations between teachers' perceptions of the democratic character of their schools (dependent variable) and each of the associated factors based on previous research (e.g., Huang et al., 2017; Sampermans et al., 2021; Trujillo et al., 2021). This kind of study allowed us to determine patterns and associations on an aggregated level rather than within or across individual responses.

Sample and Data Collection

We collected quantitative data through a paper-and-pencil questionnaire distributed in person at five lower secondary schools in Eastern Norway[1]. Given that fulfilling schools' democratic mandate might be challenging in diverse local communities and municipalities (Andersen & Ottesen, 2011), we purposively sampled lower secondary schools in urban areas of Eastern Norway to include heterogeneous schools, especially with respect to students from minority backgrounds. All the sampled schools had at least 350 students (M=489).

Prior to recruiting participants, we contacted the principal at each school and asked for permission to visit in person and conduct a survey among the teaching personnel during a staff meeting. Interestingly, related to the purpose of this study, all principals responded that they would need to discuss with their teachers whether the latter could spend their staff meeting time participating in our study before making a final decision. Due to time constraints, one school declined to participate. Education for democracy is part of schools' mandate in Norway; thus, we invited all teachers to participate regardless of the subjects they taught. The sample included a total of 206 teachers (63.6% women and 33% men, with 3.4 % missing values). As no teachers declined participation, we received a 100% response rate from the teachers who were present at each school.

Research Ethics

This study complied with the ethical standards required by the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (2016) and obtained approval

[1] Comprising years 8, 9, and 10 of the education system in Norway (ages 13–16).

from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. Furthermore, we discussed the study's aims with the participants and obtained informed consent from each of them. We also notified the teachers that they could choose not to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any time while completing the survey, as we would not be able to trace their anonymous data after this. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were assured, as we collected no personal or identifiable information.

Measures

The variables were each based on two to five items developed by the researchers and colleagues (see the Appendix). We also included some background information questions to control for the likelihood of observed differences caused by participants' gender, years of experience, or the subjects taught. Except for the background variables, all the measures included in this study were scored on a 5- or 7-point Likert scale with a middle neutral value. Therefore, the variables were assumed to be at an approximate interval level. The variables are as follows:

- *Teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools*[2] (dependent variable): This variable comprises two items intended to measure teachers' perceptions of how democratic their school is. Sample item: "How democratic is your school for students?"

[2] As we were interested in teachers' perceptions, we did not include a definition of the concept of democracy in the survey instrument. Therefore, we must assume that teachers' responses relied on their own conceptualizations of democracy—be they implicit or explicit.

- *Teacher–leader collaboration*: This consists of four items intended to measure teachers' perceptions of support from their school leaders. Sample item: "I feel that my voice is heard when the school makes school-wide decisions."
- *Teacher collaboration*: This comprises three items aiming to measure teachers' perceptions of the conditions for teacher collaboration in their school. Sample item: "Teachers here observe one another and share feedback."
- *Teaching democracy*: This comprises five items and aims to measure teachers' perceptions of the importance of teaching various skills and values related to democracy to their students. Sample item: "All teachers are responsible for nurturing democratic values in students."
- *The importance of citizenship activities for students*: This consists of five items adapted from the ICCS study (2016) and aims to measure teachers' perceptions of the importance of students' citizenship activities. Sample item: "Participating in political discussions."
- *Students' support from home*: This comprises three items intended to measure teachers' opinions about the opportunities provided by schools to help students who do not receive necessary support from home. Sample item: "When the students' families are unable to provide enough support for their children academically, it is unreasonable to expect the school to meet those same needs."
- *Teachers' years of experience* (background variable): This background variable consists of two items and measures each participant's years of experience as teachers. Sample item: "How long have you been a teacher?" Response alternatives: 0–4 years (coded as 1) , 5–9 years (coded as 2) , 10–14 years (coded as 3), and 15 years or more (coded as 4).

- *Gender* (background variable): We constructed the measure of gender to obtain information about teachers' self-identified gender. This variable is dichotomous (1=female, 2=male).
- *Subjects taught* (background variable): The teachers were asked to choose which kinds of subjects they taught. Response alternatives: Languages, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Social Studies, Practical–Aesthetic subjects, and Elective subjects.

The Appendix presents the constructs and items that were originally distributed in Norwegian and then translated into English for this article. Table 1 presents the bivariate correlations, descriptive statistics, and Cronbach's alpha (α) for each construct. We deem the reliabilities satisfactory for the purpose of this study.

Data Analysis

We conducted multiple linear regression analysis to examine the relationships between the variables. Its estimation using ordinary least squares (OLS) is a widely used tool that allows for an estimation of the relation between a dependent variable and a set of independent or explanatory variables (Cohen et al., 2017). Initially, we examined descriptive item statistics using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The item scores were approximately normally distributed for all variables. Then, we conducted principal component analyses (PCA) for all measures. The items associated with each variable emerged as one component of the PCA (see the Appendix). Then, we combined the respective items to make up the variables used in the regression analysis.

We found that the items related to the dependent variable accounted for 80% of the variance, whereas the items concerning *citizenship activities for students*, *support from home*, *teacher–leader collaboration*, *teacher collaboration*, *teaching democracy*, and *years of experience* accounted for approximately 54%, 66%, 67%, 65%, 53%, and 85% of the variance, respectively.

Next, we tested the hypothesized model by performing a multiple linear regression analysis in SPSS. We based the assessment of the regression model on the adjusted R2, which was a modified fraction of the sample variance of the dependent variable explained by the regressors. The aim of the analysis was to either confirm or reject the strength and significance of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Reliability, Validity, and Limitations of the Study

We used Cronbach's α, which can capture the breadth of the construct, to assess the indicators' measurement reliability for each scale (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Cronbach's α is influenced by the number of items in a test (Eisinga et al., 2013) and ranges from 0–1. Our measures were mostly satisfactory, with values ranging from .728–.841.

While this article is based on new quantitative data from lower secondary school teachers, there are some clear limitations concerning validity. First, we do not claim causality. Johnson and Christensen (2016) established three conditions for making a claim of causation between two variables: (a) the variables must be related, (b) changes in the independent variable must occur before changes in the dependent variable, and (c) there must not be any plausible alternative explanation for the observed relationship between the variables. In our study, while the first condition (presence of a relationship) was met, this was not a sufficient requirement for a causation claim. The second requirement (the temporal order condition) could not be addressed

directly, because the data were cross-sectional (i.e., collected at a single point in time). Moreover, we do not claim to have controlled for all alternative explanations. Thus, although the expected relationships were theory-generated, suggesting that the estimated regression coefficients may reveal causal relationships, the identified causal directions may be ambiguous.

The second restriction is that we made no claims to external validity or generalizability due to limitations in the sample (Johnson & Christensen, 2016). While the sample comprised over 200 teachers from five schools, we relied on non-probability sampling for this study. Furthermore, we did not suspect selectivity bias to be a clear threat to validity, because no teachers refused to participate in our investigation. A larger sample might improve the validity of the statistical conclusions (Cook & Campbell, 1979). However, readers may make naturalistic generalizations by comparing their groups' demographics and other characteristics to those of the participants in our study (Johnson & Christensen, 2016) and decide upon the transferability of the results by comparing the context of the study to their own.

Finally, we acknowledge that self-reported data provide insights into some important aspects of school life—in this case, teachers' perceptions, but not all. Moreover, we determined not to define important concepts, such as "democracy," for the participating teachers. Consequently, their various conceptualizations of democracy and related concepts may have influenced their responses.

Results

Table 1 presents the bivariate correlations (i.e., effect sizes) between the variables as well as the means, Cronbach's α, and standard deviation for each construct. For readability, we note that for binary and categorical variables, mean values denote the percentage of responses.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Bivariate Correlations

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	State of democracy (c)													
2	Teacher-leader collaboration (b)	.513**												
3	Teacher collaboration (b)	.276**	.272**											
4	Teaching democracy (b)	.244**	.176**	.71										
5	Citizenship activities (c)	0,80	.95	-0.62	.405**									
6	Support from home (b)	-0,29	-0.11	-0.43	-2.66**	-,093								
7	Teacher experience (a)	0.17	.116	.116	-0.28	0.10	.015							
8	Gender	0.72	.011	.43	-.279**	-.126	.218**	.013						
9	Natural sciences	0.09	0.42	-.007	-.112	-.173*	.015	-0.20	.105					
10	Languages	0.61	-0.34	-0.33	.290**	.163*	-.061	-0.33	-.371**	-.374**				
11	practical-aesthetic subjects	0.47	.116	-1.26	.035	.012	-.052	0.11	0.68	.070	-.228**			
12	Social sciences	0.81	.007	-.147*	.262**	.179*	-.104	0.23	-.131	-.121	.271**	.221		
13	Elective subjects	0.33	-0.10	-.107	-.163*	-.109	.101	-0.50	.225**	-.064	-.084	.002	.909	
	Reliability[1]	.752	.841	.728	.759	.779	.737							
	Means	4.88	4.54	3.10	4.55	5.32	2.15	2.50[2]	1.34	.40	.51	.41	.47	.44
	Std.deviation	1.03	.465	.791	.463	1.02	0.75	1.03	.475	.490	.501	.492	.500	.497

*Note: (a) = 4-point Likert-scale, (b) = 5-point, (c) = 7-point, **p<.01, *<.05,* [1] *Cronbach's α*

[2] *This mean value corresponds to the category of 5-9 years of experience*

Looking at the descriptive statistics in Table 1, it is worth pointing out the mean value of the dependent variable, *teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools* (4.88 on a 7-point scale). This implies that the teachers, on average, rated their school just above the neutral middle value in terms of how democratic they perceived it to be for both students and teachers. Of note in Table 1 is the strong relation between *teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their school* and their perceptions of *teacher–leader collaboration*. We also noted significant correlations between *teacher collaboration* and their perceptions of the importance of *teaching democracy*, on the one hand, and the dependent variable, on the other hand. Contrary to our expectations, teachers' perceptions of *the importance of citizenship activities for students* and their opinions about the opportunities provided by schools to support students who received insufficient *support from home* were not significantly related to the dependent variable in this

stage of the analysis. Neither were the background variables. Thus, the background variables that were not significantly correlated with the dependent variable were excluded in the next step of the analysis to allow for a simpler regression model.

Table 2

Coefficients of Regression with Teachers' Perceptions of the State of Democracy in Their Schools as the dependent variable (n=206)

	B	Std. Error SE(B)	ß	Sig.	95 % Confidence intervals for B Lower bound	Upper bound
(Constant)	-.274	.197		.113	-.123	.123
Teacher-leader collaboration	.447	.066	**.447*** **	.000	.316	.577
Teacher collaboration	.142	.066	**.142***	.032	.012	.272
Teaching democracy	.195	.074	**.195****	.009	.028	.312
Citizenship activities	-.018	.069	-.018	.795	-.157	.116
Support from home	.008	.066	.008	.905	-.104	.153
R2 - adjusted				.293		

*Note: ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05*

Unlike the correlations presented in Table 1, the regression analysis presented in Table 2 shows each variable's unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable. Furthermore, Table 2 presents the unstandardized (b) and standardized (ß) coefficients of the OLS regression with *teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools* as a dependent variable, along with the standard error of the regression (SE (B)) and confidence intervals (CI, set at 95%). Overall, the regression analysis mirrored the pattern of the correlation analysis. In particular, the results showed that *teacher–leader collaboration* was associated with *teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools* at a significance level of <.001. Additionally, *teaching democracy* and *teacher collaboration* were significantly associated with *teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools*, with significance levels of <.01 and <.05, respectively. Contrary to our expectations based on previous research, teachers' perceptions of the importance of *citizenship activities for students* and of opportunities provided

by schools to support students who do not receive necessary *support from home* were not significantly associated with their perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools.

Next, we tested the regression model but found no indication of multicollinearity being a problem in the analysis (variance inflation factor (VIF) values under 2). Below, we discuss this study's findings in relation to previous research and our understanding of key concepts before we suggest implications for educational practice and present the conclusion of this paper.

Discussion

This study offers new insights into what characterizes the practices of democratic schools in a low-stakes accountability context. First, the analysis revealed a relationship between teachers' perceptions of how democratic they perceive their schools to be for both students and teachers and teacher–leader collaboration, including teacher involvement in decision-making processes. The relatively strong association between these two variables indicates that teachers who experience trust, support, and an inclusive relationship with school leadership tend to perceive their school as democratic. This finding resonates with previous research in the Norwegian context, which stated that enacting the primary task of education occurs through collaboration within professional communities (Prøitz et al., 2019), through which school professionals are granted much leeway in translating policy and often draw from their own experiences (cf. Helstad et al., 2019).

Additionally, while we did not include background variables in the regression analysis due to their weak and non-significant correlations with the dependent variable, we would like to highlight the importance of the fact that teachers' gender, years of experience, and subjects taught were not significantly associated with their perceptions of school democracy in this study.

This finding may thus indicate that the characteristics of individual teachers do not matter as much as school-wide processes and conditions (e.g., collaborative environments and professional communities).

Closely linked to professional communities are notions of professionalism in which educational leadership is understood as a relational practice (cf. Anderson & Cohen, 2018). Thus, the current study adds to the body of literature in education for democracy, as it demonstrates a strong association between teacher–leader collaboration and teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools. This finding also lends support to earlier claims that, despite the influences of managerial elements, such as NPM and performance-based accountability in the Norwegian school system (Camphuijsen et al., 2020; Gunnulfsen, 2017; Skedsmo & Møller, 2016), collaborations through participation in professional communities still seem to be important among teachers based on findings in our sample. This is illustrated, for example, by the high mean values for the variables *teacher–leader collaboration* and *teaching democracy* (4.54 and 4.55 on a 5-point scale, respectively). Although there has been an increased emphasis on performance outputs in low-stakes accountability systems (cf. Lieberkind, 2015), teachers still perceive professional communities and collaboration as playing key roles in promoting the democratic mission in Norwegian schools. This cooperation suggests the presence of relationships based on trust, which is an aspect of occupational professionalism (Evetts, 2011). Furthermore, the association between teacher–leader collaboration and teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools suggests the presence of professional communities, which play a key part in fostering democratic professionalism (Anderson & Cohen, 2018).

A second finding is that the higher the importance teachers place on teaching skills and values related to democracy, the more democratic they perceive their schools to be.

Consequently, those who perceive teaching democracy to students as less important also perceive their schools as less democratic. This finding suggests that teachers who include skills, values, and knowledge related to democracy in their teaching are likely to see their schools as having democratic characteristics or are more aware of democratic features in their schools. In particular, the very high mean value of the variable *teaching democracy* (4.55 on a 5-point scale) indicates that the participants in our study strongly believe in the importance of teaching skills and values related to democracy to their students. In turn, this belief indicates that teachers support a broader school mandate of education for democracy, including the application of a participatory approach and the importance of nurturing democratic values (cf. Anderson & Cohen, 2018). However, we do not know how teachers' underlying conceptualizations of democracy influenced their responses or to what extent notions of inclusion and equity factored into these.

Third, the value of a collaborative environment for teachers has been highlighted, both theoretically and empirically, in previous research. Meanwhile, our study highlights the importance of democratic rationalities at play in schools (Woods, 2005). Thus, our findings reflect the presence of positive feelings of involvement, a conceptualization of educational leadership based on a developmental conception of democratic practice (e.g., by participating in practices that are dispersed across the organization), and an inclusive decision-making process as means of striving toward democratic ideals. Therefore, it is not surprising that teachers' perceptions of the conditions for collaboration with colleagues seem to be associated with their perceptions of their school's democratic character, especially considering the tradition of cooperation in Norwegian schools (e.g., Prøitz et al., 2019). Although further research is needed on the topic, our study suggests that the presence of inclusive decision-making, collaboration,

and professional communities are key characteristics of democratic practices within a low-stakes system of accountability.

Meanwhile, contrary to our assumptions, the regression analysis results showed that teachers' perceptions of *the importance of citizenship activities for students* and of their school's opportunities to compensate for the lack of parental *support from home* were not significantly associated with *teachers' perceptions of the democratic character of their schools* in this study. These findings are somewhat surprising, especially as the items making up *citizenship activities for students* are conceptually and empirically (r=.405) related to *teaching democracy*. This may be explained in two ways: (1) the variable *citizenship activities for students* mediates *teaching democracy*, and (2) *the importance of citizenship activities for students* partly points toward school-external activities and does not, in fact, highlight the role of schools.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to increase knowledge about how teachers perceive school democracy in practice in a low-stakes accountability context by investigating the potential factors associated with their perceptions of the state of democracy in their respective schools. Our main findings revealed that *teacher–leader collaboration*, *teaching democracy*, and *teacher collaboration* were significantly associated with *teachers' perceptions of the state of democracy in their schools*, while their perceptions of the importance of *citizenship activities for students* and the opportunities provided by schools to support students who do not receive necessary *support from home* were not.

As our study has demonstrated the importance of teaching democracy and teacher–leader and teacher collaborations as key factors related to how teachers perceive the state of democracy

in their schools, we present the following implications for school leadership and practitioners. First, practitioners should be aware of the importance of school organization and structure in ensuring democratic processes. There is reason to argue that support from school leaders in formal leadership positions and inclusion in decision-making processes ought to be embedded at every level possible, despite the presence of structural restraints. In particular, there should be room for participation, inclusiveness, and teachers' collaboration in a so-called "thick democracy" (Westheimer, 2008; Strike, 1999), such as through working in teams or engaging in collaborative leadership practices (cf. de Villiers & Pretorius, 2011). Including teachers in collaborative processes while also involving the leadership team may also help promote democratic structures and processes, as democracy is a collective project (cf. Apple & Beane, 1995).

Second, we suggest that, given the current responsibility of teachers to teach democracy, they should not only be prepared to do so but also to be included in collaborative reflections about what constitutes democratic features in their schools. In doing so, they can become part of a professional community that aims to support an inclusive and participatory school environment for both students and teachers. As we demonstrate the importance of collaboration in relation to teachers' perceptions of school democracy, our study supports the narrative of a common public school with robust professional communities (Møller, In Press).

Despite its limitations, we argue that the current study can serve as a point of departure for future research. First, additional factors could be added to the model to increase its explanatory potential. For example, future research could include supplementary variables regarding teachers' perceptions about school characteristics. Second, more studies are needed to improve the validity of our results. Although the reliability scores in our study are satisfactory,

there is potential for developing the operationalization of the constructs examined. Third, although this study benefited from using data from over 200 teachers in five different schools, we relied on a non-probability sample. Thus, future studies could include larger and even more diverse samples to improve external validity.

With that said, our study contributes to building a foundation of knowledge about teachers' perceptions of democracy in schools, which is understood in a wide sense. In this way, we demonstrate that education for democracy not only occurs in the classroom but is embedded in the structures of decision-making and collaboration at the school level. In addition, our study contributes empirical evidence of school-wide processes in promoting education for democracy in a low-stakes accountability context.

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Appendix

Constructs	*Mean values*	*Std. deviation*	*Skewness/kurtosis*	*Component loadings*
State of democracy				
On a scale of 1 to 7, how democratic is your school for students?	4.76	1.160	–.227/–.193	.895
On a scale of 1 to 7, how democratic is your school for teachers?	5.00	1.162	–.498/.270	.895
Teacher–leader collaboration				
My principal typically acts in the best interests of the teachers.	3.53	.929	–.712/.498	.742
Most teachers in my school trust the principal.	3.54	.883	–.504/.207	.811
Our principal and teachers collaborate on school-wide matters.	3.32	.959	–.340/–.416	.857
I feel that my voice is heard when the school makes school-wide decisions.	3.06	.909	–.370/.135	.880
Teacher collaboration				
My school provides enough time for teachers to work together.	3.03	1.015	–.139/–.909	.867
Teachers here observe one another and share feedback.	2.89	.984	–.258/–.896	.700
I have sufficient space to collaborate with my colleagues.	3.33	.918	–.473/–.732	.845
Teaching democracy				
All teachers should strive to promote students' understanding of democracy.	4.69	.570	–2.324/8.495	.731

All teachers are responsible for nurturing democratic values in their students.	4.74	.520	–2.789/12.900	.821
In order to learn about democracy, you need to learn about racism and/or other forms of discrimination.	4.62	.588	–1.756/4.190	.660
It is my school's responsibility to help increase the number of young voters in elections.	4.07	.865	–.830/652	.685
Critical thinking is essential for participating in a democracy.	4.51	.686	–1.720/4.354	.726
Citizenship activities for students				
To participate in political discussions	5.39	1.425	–.718/.238	.617
To engage in activities protecting the environment	5.65	1.310	–.756/–.175	.667
To participate in peaceful protests against unjust laws	4.44	1.629	–.207/–.820	.707
To work for the betterment of the local community	5.65	1.169	–.602/.212	.806
Being active in human rights efforts	5.44	1.408	–.713/.023	.867
Support from home				
When the students' families are unable to provide enough support for their children academically, it is unreasonable to expect the school to meet those same needs.	2.15	.936	.725/.436	.910
When the students' families are unable to provide enough support for their children's basic health and wellness needs, it is unreasonable to expect the	2.19	.898	.510/–.006	.910

school to meet those same needs.				
My hands are often tied when it comes to motivating students from unsupportive family backgrounds. There is nothing more that my school can do for those students.	2.10	.851	.621/.449	.581
Teacher experience				
How long have you been a teacher?	2.78	1.171	–3.14/–1.423	.924
How long have you been a teacher at this school?	2.21	1.059	.420/–1.038	.924
Gender				
What is your gender identity?	1.34	.475	.673/–1.563	
What subjects do you teach?				
Science	.40	.490	.429/–1.835	
Language	.51	.501	–.051/–2.018	
Art	.41	.492	.385/–1.871	
Civics	.47	.500	.113/–2.008	
Elective subjects	.44	.497	.258/–1.953	