Tall Poppies in Two Education Systems
- Cut, Conserved or Cultivated?

*How do contextual factors influence the official educational approach towards gifted and talented children?*

The case of Norway and Victoria (Australia)

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to uncover the conditions for gifted and talented children in the Norwegian and Victorian (Australian) education systems. More specifically it discusses how contextual factors influence the official educational approach towards gifted and talented children.

Methods: In order to provide information about the two cases, literature review and analyses of policy papers and curricula were conducted.

Results: It was found that the role of gifted children was determined by ideology such as egalitarianism, curriculum traditions, political changes and cultural factors such as the degree of individualism and collectivism. Secondly, there were found indications of global changes in education policy that are improving the conditions for gifted to a certain extent in the two geographical areas. Moreover, the document analyses show that gifted children are not acknowledged as a group in the Norwegian papers, but are included in the general principle of ‘Adapted Education’. However, some ideological changes the last decade have opened up for greater degree of organisational differentiation measures. Victorian education policy does not state specific goals for gifted education. Nevertheless, the public school together with private initiatives are organising several education programs and school provisions for gifted pupils in the state. There are also national initiatives for an improved and more consistent approach to gifted education throughout the Commonwealth of Australia. Finally, the study of policy papers shows that education for social equalisation is a main purpose of the Norwegian school system, whereas there is great emphasis on standards and achievement of the individual pupils in Victorian policy.

Conclusions: The results of this study has shown that the Norwegian school system has moved from a collectivistic to a more individualistic approach to gifted children towards individualism, whilst an individualistic approach has been and is still dominant in the Victorian school system.
Preface

One day in October 2004, I was searching through the endless rows of books at the library of Oslo University College. An old book with a red cover, entitled *Evnerike barn i skolen* (Gifted Children in School, Hofset 1970), suddenly caught my interest...

After three years of teacher training, I was struck by the fact that no one had ever mentioned the children that were able to achieve above average in the Norwegian school system, while other pedagogical issues were thoroughly discussed. The issue of gifted children seemed more like a taboo. After a discussion with my professor in science of education about the matter, I decided to write a minor paper on the issue. I soon came to realise that there was not a lot of information about gifted children in Norway except for the tiny, red-coloured book in the library. This observation inspired me to search for information about education for gifted children in other countries to see if there are lessons to be learned for the Norwegian setting.

Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations

AAEGT: Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented
CFS: Curriculum and Standards Framework
HC: Human Capital
IQ: Intelligence Quotient
MCEETYA: Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NPM: New Public Management
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment
VELS: Victorian Essential Learning Standards
VCE: Victorian Certificate of Education
1. Introduction

The education of children with high learning capacity is a highly controversial issue that has been debated for years by educators, policy makers and parents alike. Traditionally, these children have been provided for in a school setting and stimulated so that they can develop to become a resource for the society they are growing into. Nevertheless, one has observed great diversity between countries in relation to the degree education is adapted to gifted children’s particular needs. The view upon the matter concerning gifted children is influenced by several factors such as national history, school traditions and political ideologies. The concept of giftedness, and what it comprises, has in many countries been through a considerable process of change during the past decades. My research aims to reveal how the issue of gifted children and their education is addressed in Norway and the Australian state of Victoria, focusing on the following questions:

*How do contextual factors influence the official educational approach towards gifted and talented children?*

To limit the scope of my investigation there will be a focus on gifted pupils in primary and lower secondary education. As each Australian state has its own curriculum and ministry of education, the Australian case will mainly centre on Victorian policy.

1.1 Context and Rationale

In broad terms, the debate on gifted children in school concerns whether special provisions, such as modification in pace, level and abstractness in the curriculum, are regarded as socially segregational or a necessity for the development of the potential for the individual. The term 'gifted' is a contested concept and a clear definition is somewhat hard to provide. Researchers in the field of gifted education rather advocate a description of typical characteristics of gifted pupils as more adequate in this context. The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development emphasises the following attributes:
“Many teachers would agree that gifted students show advanced development (or the potential for advanced development) when compared to their peers. These students are often characterised by an advanced rate of learning, quality of thinking or capacity for remarkably high standards of achievement compared to students of the same age. Gifted students therefore may be described as having high potential.” (State of Victoria 2007)

The gifted children issue touches upon fundamental questions about the philosophy of education and the function of education for the individual pupil and the society as a whole. In Norway, gifted children are rarely mentioned in educational debates, and there is close to no research on this issue. There are some doctoral theses, but no further work with the exception Arnold Hofset’s book Evnerike barn i skolen (Gifted Children in School) from 1970. In my opinion there is now a need to establish a theoretical knowledge base of the opportunities for gifted children within the Norwegian school system. This thesis aims to address this concern. The main purpose of the thesis is to find the reasons for the lacking research on the issue and provide an outline of what is already stated about the matter in official documents. Uncovering the underlying assumptions that influence the policies and practices may afford a starting point for further research and debate about gifted children in Norway. Such a knowledge base will hopefully provide a useful resource for policy makers and practitioners in the future, and give children with high intellectual abilities greater opportunities to develop their potential.

Contrary to Norway, the education of the gifted pupils in Australia is an issue of continuous research and is frequently debated. The Australian case provides therefore a useful basis for comparison. Even though the United States has developed the field of education for gifted to a larger extent than Australia, the latter shares more common features with Norway when it comes to egalitarianism and organisation of education than the American system.

The term ‘gifted education’ is understood as differentiated educational provision for children who differ from their age-peers in their capacity to learn. This is upon the belief that

“(…) there are children who, because they have manifested potential for outstanding achievement in a socially valuable area, require differentiated education experience adequate or appropriate to their special needs” (Passow cf. Rudnitski 2000:673)

The term originates from American educational policy, and is used to a certain extent in the Australian context. In Norway the term does not have any reference points. These differences will be discussed further in coming chapters.
My investigation aims therefore to show how educational policy and curricula deal with the issue of gifted children and their needs. Despite the gap between intentions and actual practices in the classroom, such documents influence pupils’ school experience in several ways. The curriculum is the formal obligation that the teachers have to take into account when they plan their classroom activities. The educational policies have a significant impact on the economical priorities to schools and the organisation of teaching and learning at schools. Policy is understood as a “plan that provides guidelines for action” (Passow cf. Rudnitski 2000:673) which in this case means regulations for educational functions. Curriculum may well be defined as “all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school” (Kerr cf. Kelly 1983:10). In this thesis, only the core curriculum, a written text that tries to communicate the most important principles and characteristics in education (Bø & Helle 2002:148), will be taken into consideration.

Comparing educational policies in Victoria (Australia) and Norway may provide interesting information beyond a knowledge base for Norwegian research on gifted children, e.g. in the way the two countries respond to pressures from globalisation on education. There are complex processes involved in forming educational policies, but by seeing them in conjunction with political ideology, national history and curriculum theories might deem it possible to find the rationale behind some of these decisions. Analysing the policies and curriculum might therefore contribute to more knowledge about the underlying assumptions in the education systems both in Norway and Victoria (Australia).

A possible challenge in this investigation is obviously the limited amount of Norwegian research on the topic. This thesis will therefore provide information about the premises of educating gifted children, and does not deal with the actual classroom practices. Furthermore, the conception of giftedness is in continuous development and revision, thus making a uniform definition of gifted children difficult to provide. Consequently, since the education of gifted children is controversial; there is a wide range of views upon what the most adequate practice should be. In order to surmount these obstacles, this dissertation will focus on describing a development on the issue in addition to the point of view set forth in formal documents, rather than making recommendation for current practices.

In addition, radical changes in educational policies the last few years have been observed in both Norway and Australia. The continuous shifts in the political landscape may overshadow the debates about education for gifted and make it difficult to decide the current
status of these children. However, there are reasons to believe that the newly implemented policies, e.g. the Norwegian Knowledge Promotion (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2008) and Victorian Essential Learning Standards (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005), may also improve the conditions for gifted children in Norway and in the Australian state of Victoria.

**1.2 Principle Research Questions and Clarifications**

Clarifying the main problem statement “How do contextual factors influence the official educational approach towards gifted and talented children”, has given rise to four research questions:

1. What national-contextual factors that may explain the differences in the role of the gifted in these respective areas?

2. In which respects are the possibilities for educating gifted changing due to current international educational trends?

3. What kinds of possibilities for differentiation of educational provisions are to be found in current policies and curricula?

4. What are the main purposes of education related to giftedness as expressed in current policies and curricula?

The research questions relate to the main problem statement in each way. Sub-questions one and two are dealing with the possible reasons for different views upon giftedness and gifted children in Norway and Victoria (Australia). Research questions three and four aim to uncover what kind of educational opportunities there are for gifted children in the Norway and Victoria stated in official documents, including core curricula.

In the following, the four research questions will be clarified in further detail.

In the first principal research question I will examine the possible historical, educational and political explanations for the role of the gifted children and the different educational practices in Norway and Victoria. National history, curriculum traditions and ideological changes are especially important in this concern.

Secondly, the conception of the gifted children is not static, but is in constant change concurrently with external influence and internal pressure. The question is twofold; firstly, in which respects may recent development of policies and curricula indicate a response to
international educational trends, and secondly, what international trends have an effect on the education for high potential learners?

Principles of differentiation will be elaborated in regards to the third research question. Choice of teaching methods and organisation of pupils will be studied to see what differentiation propositions there are to be found. In this connection both pedagogical and organisational differentiation are included. Pedagogical differentiation entails efforts to adjust education amongst the pupils, whereas in organisational differentiation the pupils are divided into groups according to level, skills or interests. Scrutinising factors that indicate special provision for pupils with a high learning capacity is important, e.g. early entrance to school, acceleration and special programs where intellectual abilities are fostered.

The final question aims to detect main rationales for education related to giftedness that may be found in policy papers. The purposes of schooling often stem from underlying assumptions about what to learn and for whom, what teaching methods that are accepted and so on. Herein indications of ideological factors in the policy papers that, directly or indirectly, are influencing the provisions for gifted children will be considered. In this connection, traces of egalitarianism, individualism and current influences of globalism are particularly interesting. The actual discourse on gifted children in educational policies or the absence of the issue is also relevant in the answering the sub question 4.

1.3 Assumptions

The ways in which the research questions are approached are built upon some general assumptions about gifted children and their education. The fundamental assumption for this thesis is that there is a need for an increased knowledge about this issue of gifted children, especially in the case of Norway, in order to improve the quality of their learning capabilities. A step towards a greater understanding in this issue is provided through an elaboration of the role of gifted children and their possibilities for a differentiated school provision. In the following section these preliminary assumptions will be outlined in further detail.

My first assumption is that the role of gifted children in Norway and Victoria must be understood through the historical development of schooling and the underlying ideologies that education systems in these areas are built upon. Australian curriculum traditions which
stem from English essentialism with elite schools are more likely to focus on gifted learners than Norwegian educational traditions with its traces of French encyclopaedism, Russian polytechnicalism and finally American pragmatism, all focusing on education for all (McLean 1995). Different political orientations often vary in the degree to which they embrace individualism, implicitly also education for gifted learners. I assume that that social-democrats tend to favour equity in education and the social aspect of schooling whilst right/liberal parties often defend the individual outcome of education, including the economical benefits of a high educational level of the population. The specific educational traditions in a country do have an impact on the possibilities for education for gifted pupils.

Implicit in the second sub-question is the assumption that international trends have an impact on the view upon gifted children in the two education systems. This is exemplified in the shifting political orientations and issues of globalisation that are influencing the degree of acknowledgement to giftedness in society. It is presumed that a current shift towards increased individualism has come about because of globalism, entailing privatisation, more national/state competitiveness and public choice. These trends are all to a certain degree likely to be beneficial for gifted learners as they justify special educational provisions to a larger extent, e.g. in opening up for organisational differentiation.

Thirdly, individualised or collective learning approaches in the classroom are determined by what principles of differentiation are to be found in the curriculum. Organisational differentiation is assumed to be the most efficient way to provide an adequate educational provision for gifted learners, as they can work together with peers at the same level. Pedagogical differentiation might also be a good way to ensure ability development for gifted children as well, but the practices are heavily dependent on factors such as teachers’ time, knowledge of differentiated learning approaches, and the motivation to give these particular children extra challenges. In integrating pupils at all levels in the same classroom, there is also a risk that gifted pupils spend more time in helping their peers than developing their own potential. It may however be useful for the meta-understanding of what they ‘teach’ their peers, and to develop social skills.

An assumption underlying the final research question is that the main purposes of education have an impact on the status of gifted children in the school system, e.g. whether there is a focus on the social aspect of schooling or the individual learner. Even though social learning is evidently important for gifted children, an individual approach embraces the particular needs of high potential youth to a greater extent. Thus, strong influences of
individualism legitimate gifted education whilst special provision for gifted pupils is less compatible with collectivistic approach. Furthermore, the willingness to approach the issue of giftedness is related to the attention it receives in actual policies and curricula. I believe that the degree to which the issue is discussed in these documents has an impact on educators’ conceptions of gifted children, also in terms of acknowledgement of gifted children as a specific group.

1.4 Operationalisation

Essential in preparing the investigation is the search for the most adequate way to answer the principal research questions. The assumptions presented prior lead the way, but there is a need for more concrete research methods for conducting further research. As the educational policies and curriculum are the main concern of the thesis, the methods will rely basically on official secondary data analysis. Other sources, such as country analyses and literature on the issue, will provide information about the role of the gifted children, historically as well as current tendencies. The specific research question I am addressing will be related to different analyse procedures:

The first question looking for the possible reasons for different views on giftedness and gifted education, will be based mainly upon literature reviews on the issue. The observations obtained through the review will be related to the analysis of the former questions, to sum up some of the contextual differences between the two cases. The main question I would like to answer is: How are educational policies influenced by the dominant educational traditions and ideological orientations in a country? Furthermore, the two following questions are also worth considering: Why is it more acceptable to be gifted in one country more than in the other? The aim is not to give any fixed answers to these questions, but provide reflections and hypotheses for future empirical research.

The second question aims to reveal indications of changed conceptions of educating gifted children as a result of new global trends within educational policy. To find the answer to this question, there will be a qualitative content analysis of policy documents from Norway and Victoria (Australia). Indications of such issues as human capital development and choice of educational provision is particularly interesting to seek out. Furthermore, it is also relevant to see if the rationale or purpose of education has undergone a change.
The third question, dealing with the possibilities for differentiation of educational provision, will be addressed through a combination of literature review and qualitative content analysis. Previous differentiation practices and attitudes to such measures will be dealt with through the literature review, whilst the theoretical possibilities and rights stated in the documents will be revealed through qualitative content analysis. I will identify indications of encouragement, dissuasion or absence of features such as pedagogical differentiation (including adjusted education), organisational differentiation or special provisions for the gifted in the official documents.

The final principle research question, concerning main purposes of education expressed in policies and curriculum, will mainly be processed through qualitative content analysis. The aim is to reveal traces of historical traditions and political views that the documents are based upon, and what the documents communicate implicitly or explicitly in relation to educational rationale. To consider whether some of the guidelines in policies and curricula may have any influence on gifted pupils and their education is essential. Therefore, the main question in this concern is: Do the documents advocate an individualistic or a collectivistic approach to school provision and learning? The approach to teaching and learning will be measured by the emphasis on personal versus communal goals. Furthermore, I will compare to which degree the specific needs of gifted pupils are mentioned in the different official documents, as well as indications of societal benefits of developing talents in any of the two countries.

1.4.1 Key Literature

In order to build up a theoretical framework as well as approaches to the two latter research questions, literature covering a wide range of topics has been studied. This literature includes topics such as conceptions of giftedness, curriculum theory, general educational issues and country specific policies, and practices of educating gifted children.

To provide a thorough understanding of the term giftedness: the book *Conceptions of Giftedness* by Sternberg and Davidson (Eds.) (2005) has provided a wide spectre of views on giftedness, through articles by educators and researchers in the field. The collection of articles in *The International Handbook of Giftedness* (Heller et al. 2000) has given useful insight in general issues of giftedness, as well as policies of education for gifted pupils in both Australia and Norway.
Curriculum traditions are amply covered in Cummings’ *The Institutions of Education* (2003) and Holmes and McLean’s *The Curriculum – A Comparative Perspective* (1992). Both books give an account for the main country-specific traditions of curriculum history and how they have been spread internationally.

Essential literature has also included selected articles from Burbules and Torres’ *Globalization and Education: Critical Perspectives* (2000) and *Education. Culture, Economy, Society* (1997) by Halsey et al. These writings provide a broad view concerning educational policies and recent transformations in education. Issues such as human capital theory, globalisation, curriculum issues, meritocracy and equity in education have also been studied. Triandis’ (1995) framework has been employed to elaborate on the issue of individualism and collectivism.

Most of the literature that is to be found on the subject of gifted children and their education is written by American researchers touching upon the issues related to the specific American context. These articles bring up interesting aspects of education for gifted, but they have a limited value in regards to the situation of gifted children in Australia and Norway, since these school systems are very different with respect to organisation and curriculum. However, some studies of the Australian context are found, most importantly Gross’ study “*Exceptionally Gifted Children*” (2004), and Bragget and Moltzen’s article *Programs and Practices for Identifying and Nurturing Giftedness and Talent in Australia and New Zealand* (2000).

Information about the Norwegian case has been provided in study of different sources, especially books on educational sciences, such as Imsen’s *Lærerens verden. Innføring i generell didaktikk* (The Teacher’s World. Introduction to Basic Didactics, 2002) and *Skolen for barnas beste. Oppvekst og læring in eit pedagogisk perspektiv* (The School for the Children’s best. Childhood and Education in a Pedagogical Perspective) (2004) by Befring. The only study that deals specifically with gifted children in the Norwegian school by Hofset; *Evnerike barn i skolen* (Gifted children in school) (1970), has been a useful approach to the topic. However, the study is too old to give a proper picture of the situation today. Hofset’s study has nevertheless provided some interesting perspectives, especially concerning the ideological resistance towards providing differentiated education for gifted learners. A brief evaluation of the Norwegian schools system is provided by Persson et al. in the article “*Gifted Education in Europe: Programs, Practices, and Current Research*” (2000).
1.5 Research Methodology

1.5.1 Frame of Reference
There are several ways to ascribe meaning to the information that I face in this investigation into the status of gifted children in Norway and Victoria. It is important to be aware of the frame of reference which is used when approaching new knowledge and interpreting it.

1.5.2 Four Paradigms in Social Theory
Burrell and Morgan (1992) provide a theoretical basis for the underlying assumptions that the different views are built upon, and an understanding of the frame of references of the theorists I am studying. It may also provide a map that facilitates the orientation in the jungle of social theory and research. The scheme is useful to categorise the parallels and dissimilarities of different intellectual traditions, and put isolated disciplines into a greater context.

The authors claim that social theory can be categorised into four distinct paradigms based on different assumptions concerning the nature of social science and the nature of society. The authors define a paradigm as “basic meta-theoretical assumptions which underwrite the frame of reference, mode of theorising and modus operandi of the social theorists who work within them” (Burrell and Morgan 1992:23). The radical humanist, radical structuralist, interpretive and functionalist paradigm, represent four mutually exclusive, but still logically and intellectually valid ways to view the social world. The authors claim that the following model provides a useful analytical tool to understand reality within the field of social sciences (ibid. 1992:22):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radical humanist</td>
<td>Radical structuralist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretative</td>
<td>Functionalist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sociology of radical change

The sociology of regulation

Model 1.1 Four paradigms in Social Theory (Burrell and Morgan 1992:22)
Subjectivist and Objectivist Dimensions of Social Science

In relation to the nature of social science, four main sets of philosophical assumptions are outlined; ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology. When Burrell and Morgan took these four perspectives into the same account, they found two distinct dimensions (1992:7). On the one hand there is an objectivist approach which advocates a view of an external and objective reality which is best investigated by using a natural science approach. On the other hand, the subjectivist perspective claims that individuals are the sole factor that create the social world and that the individual point of view is essential in social research.

Contrasting Views upon the Nature of Society

Based upon Dahrendorf’s order versus conflict distinction, the authors distinguish between two dimensions of the nature of society (Dahrendorf 1959 cf. Burrell and Morgan 1992:10). On the one hand, the sociology of regulation is characterised by social order, consensus and need for regulation of human affairs. The sociology of radical change, on the other hand, concerns structural conflict, modes of domination and deprivation of the individual.

The Four Paradigms

The four paradigms are distinguished by the view upon the nature of science and society.

The functionalist paradigm is the dominant framework in organisational studies. It is characterised by an objective view on knowledge and a gradual view concerning social change. The search for rational explanations concerning social affairs and order are important measures.

The interpretive paradigm combines the sociology of regulation with a subjectivist approach towards knowledge. The aim is to understand the world as it is through subjective experiences, in the context of a stable social structure. The concept of organisation is not recognised. Kant was an important theoretician who asserted these assumptions.

The radical humanist paradigm represents an anti-organisational theory, which rejects any fixed form of knowledge and social regulation. A radical change is necessary for the individuals to be released from the superstructures. The young Marx fits into this paradigm.
The radical *structuralist paradigm* reflects sociology of radical change from an objectivist standpoint. It is an attempt to explain interrelations of social formations and prompts a structural conflict. Some organisational theories containing these assumptions exist, but they are not fully developed. Marx (in his later years) and Darwin advocated this perspective.

**Application**

In approaching social theory, I believe that reservedness and humility towards epistemic judgement is vital, and that subjectivity must be taken into account. I do, however, trust that some objective reality may also be found in the realm of social science. Because of my limited experience in the field of educational science, I am humble in regards to drawing conclusions about reality. The findings and conclusions of the paper are the conceptions of gifted children and their education derived from a literature review and document analysis, and do not take into account their actual position in Norwegian or Australian education. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, often referred to as triangulation, is the best way to give a clear picture about the issue. This paper is therefore, as mentioned earlier, only a starting point for further research on the issue.

Furthermore, I adhere to the regulation of human affairs as the most reasonable way to approach the nature of society. Therefore, a middle way between an interpretive and a functionalist paradigm will be employed in this investigation. The Norwegian and Australian society have changed in several ways the last 10-15 years due to external influences. I believe, however, that national factors have had a buffer effect preventing radical changes of society. Regulation of society has therefore preserved the social order in the two geographical areas.

1.6 Assessment of the Research

1.6.1 Research Design

This research work will entail a comparative design where the cases of Norway and Victoria (Australia) will be contrasted. The aim is to “seek explanations for similarities and differences or to gain greater awareness and deeper understanding of social reality in
different national contexts” (Hantrais 1996 cf. Bryman 2004:53). Based on the principles of cross-cultural research, identical data collection methods will be used in Norway and Victoria to get an insight in the different intentions stated in policies and curricula concerning giftedness and educational differentiation.

This particular design is useful in discovering similarities and differences in the two cases. However, there are several challenges related to such a comparison. The two areas might operate with quite different definitions of fundamental concepts of this thesis. Furthermore, there is a marked absence of Norwegian research resources on the topic of gifted children, making parts of the comparison impossible. Finally, there is a danger of researcher biases because of my Norwegian nationality. Sensitivity to national and cultural context is therefore extremely important (Bryman 2004:53).

**Sampling**

In the search for documents that provides relevant and meaningful information about my field of interest, there has been a purposive sampling of data. Documents are selected by way of certain criteria, requiring them to be official policy papers and must deal with the issue of differentiation or gifted children in some way or the other. Policy papers that are related to the implementation of curricula will be of special interest. In addition, the two most recent curricula from both geographical areas are selected to compare the development in the course of the last decade. As mentioned, only the core curriculum will be analysed. These specific characteristics, based on my research questions, limit the ‘population’ of documents considerable. Where there have been several documents, *snowball sampling* has been used to trace the most relevant document through references or other information in the pages of the official policy documents. The research questions have been the main guide in the document selection in a rather limited information base. The preliminary sample include official policy documents less than ten years old, concerning differentiation and gifted children, as well as statements about organisation of teaching and learning, and discussions about the implementation of new curricula. The present and the former curricula in both Victoria and Norway will also be investigated (e.g. the Adelaide Declaration, Victorian Essential Learning Standards, the Norwegian curriculum of 1997 and Culture for learning).

To gain some insight into the Australian context, I held group interviews with two families with gifted children in Melbourne. They provide me with interesting information
about the actual practice, links to important Internet sites, and ideas for further approaches to
the issue. Furthermore I have been in contact with Arnold Hofset who has introduced me to
his work on Norwegian gifted children in the years after his doctoral thesis.

**Assessing Qualitative Research**

The issue of the quality of the investigation must be taken into consideration from the outset.
There are several ways to assess qualitative research, often connected to the method of data
collection and analysis.

In content analysis, which is one of the analysis techniques I will be using in my
research, the issues of reliability and validity are normally emphasised. However, Lincoln
and Guba’s alternative assessment measure, *trustworthiness*, might be more adequate for this
research. They claim that qualitative research cannot be assessed by quantitative measures
such as reliability and validity, as these include assumptions about an objective truth of
reality. Social science must rather be based on subjective experiences. Trustworthiness is
assured by four criteria, *credibility, transferability, dependability* and *conformability*
(Bryman 2004:30).

*Credibility*, which parallels internal validity, is related to how believable the causal
directions are. Using several data collection methods improve the credibility. Preferably, I
would have used methods such as questionnaires or qualitative interviews. However, because
of limited time and resources I have decided to concentrate on documents analysis. I am in
this respect, aware of the fact that my results will present quite a narrow picture of the issue
of education of the gifted in the two areas.

The qualitative way of ensuring external validity, *transferability* concerns the question
of how applicable the research findings are in other contexts. Therefore, detailed descriptions
of the actual context that I am studying will be given. The conceptual framework will
concentrate on general issues and provide enough information so that it might prove possible
to use in other cases than Norway and Victoria.

Whether the findings are applicable to other times, is a question of *dependability* which
replaces the usual reliability measures. Keeping track of the stages of the research procedures
is therefore important. I will explain the logic of my analysis sufficiently so that the
procedures are possible to replicate later on.
Finally, *conformability* takes objectivity into consideration, assessing the values and biases of the researcher. Awareness of the cultural ‘glasses’ I am wearing is critical in this regard. My investigation might for example be affected by the fact that I have grown up in a school system with a strong egalitarian tradition and have never experienced the strengths or the weaknesses of a school system that had special educational provisions for gifted children.

### 1.6.2 Analysis – Principles and Procedures

*Contextualising and Assessing Documents*

Prior (2003:2) states that documents are defined through fields of action, involving creators, users and settings. Furthermore, documents are set as a social product “*produced by humankind in socially organized circumstances*” (Prior 2003:4). The final product is determined by some specific rules and structures of how to produce this particular type of document and the educational discourse at the time the document was written. Therefore, using documents requires awareness of the context in which the document is produced and used. For example, the language and accessibility of the documents are related to who uses them.

One challenge is to contextualise official text, such as policy papers. Some advice from Miller’s work *Analysing Institutional Documents* are: to demystify the texts, link the documents to other sources, understand how and why the documents were produced, and determine the accuracy of the content of the document (Miller 1997 cf. Patton 2002:498). Another pitfall of using documents as a primary data source is that it might neglect a real life perspective. However, documents provide useful information about how the state or their officials formally present a certain topic. An advantage using documents as a source of data is that it is an unobtrusive method. In addition, as the documents are composed for other reasons than research, there is no reactive effect because of the researcher (Bryman 2004:381).

Bryman outlines four elements that are important for the assessment of the quality of a document: *authenticity*, whether the origin of the document is questionable or not, *credibility*, whether the document contains errors or biases, *representativeness*, whether it is typical of its kind, and *meaning* whether the document is clear and comprehensible (*ibid.*
These elements are useful to have in mind when selecting and evaluating the official documents that I will be investigating.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

According to Krippendorff, qualitative content analysis is a useful approach in describing trends, developments, international differences, cultural patterns and focus of attention. These features are all relevant for my research questions, particularly for the third and final questions.

A main task in qualitative content analysis is to search for underlying themes in a document, which then are coded and analysed. Content analysis is defined as “*any research technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages*” (Holsti 1968:601 cf. Titscher *et al.* 2000:57). In other words, my aim is to decode the structure of meaning in the official policy papers and the curricula.

There are several approaches to content analysis. Most of the procedures related to content analysis have its origin in classical content analysis based on quantitative principles. Important steps are to detect units of analysis, e.g. particular words or units of meaning which are allocated into a system of categories. There are distinct classifications of categories, each with explicit definitions. The coding process is then to classify the units of analysis into one of the categories (Titchser *et al.* 2000:58). In the classical approach, the analysis is based on the frequency of the occurrences per category.

In the later years, alternative content analysis approaches, including grammatical or semantic aspects, have become accepted as valid methods (Titscher *et al.* 2000:61). Thus, in my research I will primarily use qualitative content analysis focusing on meaning rather than just simple frequency. Mayring has outlined three analytical procedures for qualitative content analysis, *summary, explication* and *structuring* (1988 cf. Titscher *et al.* 2000:62). I will use a combination of *summary*, with the processes of paraphrasing, abstracting and reducing the volume of text, and *structuring*. The latter shares features with classical text analysis procedures and aims to “*filter out a particular structure of the text*” (Mayring 1988). In qualitative content analysis *coding* means to index data content, e.g. finding categories of items in the documents. There are several steps to follow while coding a document, e.g. detecting recurring themes, compromising essence and excluding overlapping categories.
(Bryman 2004:408). There is a danger of fragmentation of the document, so constant awareness of context is important (Bryman 2004:411).

### 1.6.3 Limitations

The issue of gifted pupils is a vast one, and there are a lot of aspects that will be neglected due to time and practical limitations. First of all, this is mainly a desk study, so the practical implications of education for the gifted will not be touched upon. Considerations of an economical character, e.g. resource allocations to special needs education, for the implementation of adjusted education and so on, will not be touched upon. The two countries are OECD members and allocate large sums of money to educational purposes. Therefore, there is more a question of the prioritising of resources than an issue of affording to provide differentiated education for gifted learners.

Teachers attitudes towards and knowledge about gifted children are decisive for the school experience for these children. They are an important ‘environmental factor’ (cf. Gagné), for developing potential into talent. Within the teachers’ practical framework for teaching and learning, books and other resources are important facilitators, also in order to differentiate the material. However, teachers’ attitudes and available learning material are both outside the scope of this thesis.

Consequently, the thesis will only provide an analysis of some of the theoretical possibilities of special provisions for gifted pupils, as they are stated in the curriculum and educational policies. Even though the education for gifted within the private school provisions in many cases may be well-developed, the main focus will be on public education.

As a final remark in this connection I would like to point out that that the term ‘giftedness’ in this thesis goes beyond the notion of solely academic giftedness. The conception of giftedness will be defined in a broad manner so as not to exclude or emphasise one type of giftedness in relation to the other.
1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the reasons for writing this paper, the main research questions and the strategies used to answer these. The background and rationale for writing about educational approaches towards gifted children stem from an observation of the lacking research on the issue in the Norwegian context. After studying Australian school history and its ideological background, I found it an interesting matter for comparison.

The problem statement “What contextual influences determine the official educational approach towards gifted and talented children?” and its four sub questions have been outlined. The research questions are concentrated on the issues of what theoretical possibilities for gifted education are to be found in the official policy papers and curricula and why there are different views upon giftedness and gifted children in the two geographic areas. My preliminary assumptions related to the research questions have also been presented.

Finally, there is a brief description of the how I intend to answer these questions; my way of interpreting the literature, how to collect data and strategies for the document analysis. The main approach to the policy documents is qualitative data analysis. A qualitative research method is used because structure of meaning is more important than just frequency in the coding procedures. The main idea is to detect recurring themes that may be related to the research questions.

1.7.1 Structure of the Following Chapters

The paper is divided into three main section; I: Background, II: Context, and finally III: Fusion of findings. The first part (I) consists of the introduction and a conceptual framework for the paper. In the next chapter, chapter 2, the conceptual framework will be outlined. The following three chapters (II) present the findings deriving from studying national country-specific literature and policy documents. Chapter 3 and 4 elaborate respectively the Norwegian and Australian contexts, and chapter 5 presents the results of the document analysis. The two final chapters (III) are a fusion of all the findings in the paper. Chapter 6 discusses and elaborate the problem statements and the four research questions, and chapter 7 summarises all findings and concludes the paper.
2. Conceptual Framework

This chapter aims to go through the theoretical concepts that underlie the problem statement. The preconditions for gifted education will be elaborated, together with the current influences on educational policies that may have an impact on the conceptions of giftedness. This includes theories about giftedness, curriculum traditions and global development within educational policy which are all important factors in defining the role of the gifted child in Norway and Victoria. The essence of the theoretical concepts will finally be related to the conditions for gifted children and their education. Based on the elaboration, a common frame of comparison will be outlined and then summarised in a model which will be the main tools for the analysis.
2.1 Conceptions of Giftedness

“It is important to realise that ‘giftedness’ is a construct and is not directly measurable. What this means is that the instruments used to assess giftedness and to identify gifted persons attempt to measure the behaviours and characteristics which we associate with the construct.

Different communities may view giftedness differently, reflecting their cultural values. While characteristics of giftedness may be consistent across cultures the way these characteristics are manifested and valued may vary significantly”
(Department of Education Victoria 2008)

To be able to compare the conception of the need of gifted children in the Australian and the Norwegian school system, the different views of giftedness and the development of the field of giftedness have to be elaborated. As the quote of the Victorian Department of Education suggests, giftedness is far from being a straightforward concept. There have been several definitions, theories and models proposed to define giftedness and what characteristics a gifted person possesses.

Traditionally, the term ‘giftedness’ has been related to the Intelligence Quotient (IQ), a number denoting intelligence determined by dividing mental age by chronological age. The most common mark of gifted intelligence has been IQ of two standard deviation units above the population mean, usually an IQ above 130 (Borland 2003:9). Such a measurement gives a more or less clear definition of what giftedness consists of and how to measure it.

However, the traditional definition of giftedness has been pointed out as being too narrow (Borland 2003:9). It is also argued that the IQ-tests are biased in favour of the Western white middle or upper class, and do not cover the more socially complex population in a school context. A sound definition of giftedness therefore has to acknowledge a broader spectrum of characteristics than simply demonstrating high intellectual ability in psychometrical tests. According to this view, intelligence and giftedness are perceived rather as multidimensional identity (Sternberg & Davidson 2005)

As the definitions of giftedness related to IQ have been fundamentally challenged, new conceptions have emerged. Sternberg’s (1985) ‘Triarchic Theory’ and Gagné’s (2000) ‘Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent’ provide two important contributions for the field of gifted education, and have been widely accepted in educational circles in later years.
In accordance to the current development of the theories of giftedness, both theoreticians take a greater scale of human capabilities into account (Borland 2003:13).

Sternberg proposes that there are three distinct forms of intelligence; academic (IQ), practical and creative (Sternberg 1998 cf. Borland 2003:13). All three have equal status, and every person possesses these, but in varying strength. A person may be gifted in one of these or possess a mix of all these (Borland 2003:13).

Françoys Gagné (2000) provides a useful model in the field of gifted pupils’ education, where he points out four major domains of human ability: intellectual, creative, socio-affective and sensori-motor ability (Gross 2004:26). His model of giftedness has been influential in Australian education and has provided a common terminology for the learning communities (Department of Education Victoria 2008). Gagné distinguishes the concepts of ‘giftedness’ and ‘talent’, and defines them as follows:

“(...) giftedness corresponds to competence which is distinctly above average in one or more domains of ability” and “(...) talent refers to performance which is distinctly above average in one or more fields of human performance”


Hence, he differentiates innate or natural abilities on the one hand and systematically developed ability on the other hand. In his model (q.v. Appendix 1), personal and environmental factors function as catalysts that may help or hinder the potential to turn into performance, e.g. motivation.

Another theorist within the field of education for gifted children, Joseph S. Renzulli, distinguishes by broadening the categories of giftedness; schoolhouse giftedness and creative-productive giftedness. The first category consists of the pupils that traditionally have been selected for specialised programs such as in the case of the United States, as their potential is easily measured by standardised assessment tests. The other category is however also important, as they imply applied knowledge and potential for innovation. From his point of view and research upon giftedness, Renzulli provides a three-ring conception of giftedness (q.v. Appendix 2). Instead of focusing on the term “gifted”, he is rather interested in what gifted behaviour is all about:
“Gifted behaviour consists of thought and action resulting from an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits, above average general and / or specific abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity. Children who manifest or are capable of developing an interaction among the three clusters require a wide variety of educational opportunities, resources, and encouragement above and beyond those ordinarily provided through regular instructional programs” (Renzulli 2005:267)

With his innovative theories, Renzuilli tries to include all aspects of giftedness. This might have major consequences for pupils that show giftedness in alternative ways, and who are not challenged in traditional gifted programs.

The theories of Sternberg, Gagné and Renzulli have given a more diverse picture of the term intelligence, and question the link between IQ and giftedness. The current definitions of giftedness are not synonymous, and even imply contradictory perspectives on the construct. Nevertheless, they provide different ways to understand and to recognise behaviour that indicate giftedness.

In consequence, education of gifted children is not only an educational issue, but also involves ideological and political questions. The controversies are related to the conception of giftedness, definitions and identification of gifted children and how to organise teaching for this group of pupils. In some countries the main discussion concerns whether to provide gifted education at all.

It is difficult to find a yardstick by which giftedness may be measured, especially as the understanding of giftedness has been broadened. Moreover, the link between giftedness and IQ still seems to be deeply ingrained in the field of gifted education, favouring psychometric tests of ability. Nevertheless, in order to identify these children according to the multidimensional definition of giftedness, a combination of techniques, observations, standardised tests and professional judgement are preferable.

The field of giftedness has been internally developed, but there are external factors that challenge the conception of the term as well. Changes within the field of education as a whole which indirectly change the views on giftedness or the need to develop giftedness will be presented in the following sections.

To facilitate the reading for the coming sections, I have decided to employ the following broad working definition of giftedness: “Giftedness is an individual potential for exceptional or outstanding achievements in one or more domains” (Mönks and Katzko 2005:191).
2.2 Curriculum Traditions

In cross-cultural comparisons of the organisation of teaching and learning, the curriculum tradition of the country is useful to take into account. Curriculum may be defined as “consensus among stakeholders concerning what should be taught, why, how and where” (Cummings 2003:142). The question of ‘how’, notably methods and education for which pupils are included, is of most interest in this paper.

By the work of Apple and other curriculum theorists of broadly neo-Marxist orientation

“(...) it has been claimed that the curriculum serves important ideological and political functions – for example, it serves to sort students into categories, each with different intellectual skills and dispositions, and it helps to perpetuate the class and power structure of society” (Phillips 1998:169)

Even though this quote might be somewhat radical, it draws attention towards the impact that the curriculum may have in a society. In addition to, and in many cases also related to, national ideology and political traditions, a country’s view upon curriculum has an impact upon the practices of streaming according to different standards, special treatment of gifted children and elitist ideas. These are essential factors to explain the status of the gifted children in any country.

In the following, Holmes and McLean’s (1992) theories about four main curriculum traditions in the Western world are outlined to trace several approaches to practices of differentiation and inclusion of gifted children. The traditions have their origin in different countries and are to a certain extent still predominant in those countries. Therefore the traditions are often referred to as English essentialism, French encyclopaedism, Soviet polytechnicalism, and finally American progressivism. How Norway and Australia in their own particular was have been influenced by these four curriculum traditions will be dealt with in the two next chapters.

2.2.1 Essentialism

Essentialism is derived from Plato’s ideas about public services, where the main purpose of education is to maintain a stable, hierarchal society. The aim of the selective, elitist school system was to educate future political and administrative classes, mainly in England, for the expansion of the empire and maintain a national bureaucracy. Political leadership is
exercised by the elite, the so-called ‘philosopher-kings’. The next step on the socio-political ladder, consisted of ‘auxiliaries’, supporting the elite, and on the lowest step, the ‘workers’. This hierarchal model is build upon ‘Plato’s theory of individual differences’ with the conception that intellect is biologically dependent, hence inequality among men is a biological fact. The three classes were to receive an education provision or training within the class structure. These beliefs have had a major influence upon educational thinking as they “persisted among many European educators in the decisive influence of innate intellectual ability of the educability of individual children” (Holmes and McLean 1992:9). Such beliefs have certain similarities to theories about gifted children. However, the link between educability and class is not evident in current conceptions about giftedness. In addition, taking Renzulli’s work into account (see 1.1), giftedness is more than educability.

A common curriculum for English schools was established in 1988 to secure the equality of opportunity. However, “even democratic essentialism had elitist purposes” (Holmes & McLean 1992:38). Challenges of a school system which has a dominant essentialist paradigm may include the socialisation function, underachievement for certain groups, and that pupils conceive the curriculum as alienated from their daily experiences. In relation to gifted children, giftedness must be seen as independent from socio-economic background. Therefore, only a limited proportion of gifted children might develop their potential in an elitist school system, neglecting gifted children with disadvantageous backgrounds.

2.2.2 Encyclopaedism

Comenius, a Czech educator, challenged the views of essentialism in Europe, especially on the continent. There are three important aspects in regard to Comenius’ way of thinking: the principle of rationality, universalism in the sense of knowledge about ‘everything’ as well as synchronising all pupils (same time – same subject), and finally utility for the improvement of society. The encyclopaedic school was traditionally subject-based. In contrast to elitist essentialism, the encyclopaedic paradigm based on statements such as Condorcet’s (1743-94) that “all men are capable of reason and the acquisition of moral ideas, from which it follows that men should not be sharply divided into rulers and the ruled” (Holmes and McLean 1992:11). The purpose of the national school system was to give all citizens an appropriation in democratic rights, but also to “select out and educate an aristocracy of talent to provide national leadership” (Holmes and McLean 1992:12). Encyclopaedism has had a major
influence on the French school system, leading to a model with one national curriculum and standardised exams from primary levels. There are pre-ordinate standards for each year for the pupils to attain. If a pupil does not reach the standard, the year must be repeated. Differentiation of provision has been of less importance. The standards have tended to be quite high, giving somewhat of an advantage to the academically gifted students. From the secondary school the pupils have been streamed into three different ‘collegès’. The streaming practices were a kind of compromise between encyclopaedic rigour and the range of abilities in democratised schools.

The encyclopaedist principles have met great obstacles as the amount of knowledge available has grown voluminously. There is more to acquire, but the same amount of time to accumulate the knowledge. Existing elements of curriculum seem hard to abandon and this increases the pressure on pupils and forces them to treat the learning material in a superficial way. This has led to an overloaded curriculum and high dropout rates.

### 2.2.3 Polytechnicalism

In the beginning of the 20th century, Soviet educators provided an alternative to European curriculum tradition. Polytechnicalism was based on Lenin’s views upon school curricula where “the whole socioeconomic and historical experience of mankind should be included” (Holmes and McLean 1992:13). The purpose of the educational process was to develop good communists, ‘the new Soviet man’, eliminate of the capitalist class consciousness of Tsarist Russia, and the creation of a new socialist consciousness (Holmes & McLean 1992:109).

A cornerstone in Soviet educational policy is the unified schools system, with a compulsory system for all, including universal secondary education. The socialist revolution of 1917, aimed to decrease individual differences and establish equity for all. However, the Russian society “has always been interested in identifying and utilizing outstanding abilities of gifted and talented for the societal “common good”, especially in math and sciences” (Jeltova & Grigorenko 2005:172). Schools were to provide the same educational environment, except special schools for children with serious brain damage and gifted children. The Soviet system has given value to the hard work of the individual, as a key to success (Cummings 2003:180). The Soviet model relating curriculum to the nation’s need for the production and development has been difficult for teachers to internalise in practice, and has also faced difficulties related to overload due to many subjects.
2.2.4 Progressivism

Progressivism was developed in the United States due to a desire to adapt education to the changes of modernisation. A major promoter of the new curriculum theory, the American philosopher and psychologist John Dewey, aimed to provide the future generations with the adequate knowledge and skills to face problems and make sound decisions in a democratic society. According to progressive view, knowledge should not be pre-digested and the pupils should also learn not to be critical towards established knowledge. The ideal was to present only the principles of a subject with an open-ended, pupil-centred and interdisciplinary approach. The slogan ‘learning by doing’ is an attempt by Dewey’s followers to summarise these ideas. Pragmatism has had great influence in American and European pedagogy, implying focus on project methods and process learning.

These thoughts lead to a universal system of education based on the principle that education is a human right. The pragmatic curriculum aimed to embrace the individual needs of pupils accommodated within a broad framework. The pupil-centred approach aims to give each child an individual learning experience according to their needs, features that could easily be integrated into a framework of gifted education. However, these are well-intended ideas, but difficult to put into practice. It is a proven fact that there are great inequalities in the American educational provision, and despite several ‘equality of opportunity’ reforms, discrimination is still an issue. A major issue among American educators has been to reconcile child, society and a knowledge-based approach to curriculum.

2.2.5 Differentiation vs. Integration of Educational Opportunities

Among the curriculum models there are several efforts to accommodate group differences. The English model of essentialism was developed to meet the need of the elite. Educational systems building on this model has a segmented structure, separating children from different social groups into distinctive school routes. These systems have faced difficulties in filling the gap between the routes whilst democratising their school provision. Furthermore, pupils in the French school system have to struggle with achievement in the yearly standardised tests, and are finally divided into three tracks in secondary schools. The Soviet system aims to unify all students and tries to tone down the differences between the pupils, unless talent was outstanding. Meritocratic selection has nevertheless been practiced. Finally, American pragmatism focuses on giving all students an adapted educational provision according to
their needs. Tracking at different levels, and picking out gifted pupils for special programs are quite common. According to Cummings, tracking is practiced where

“(…) two more or less distinctive curriculums are offered and young people are placed in the respective curriculum based on some form of testing of their motivation and/or ability” (Cummings 2003:106)

Streaming or tracking have been established to accommodate the variety of pupils’ potential or ambition to focus on learning. The assumption that these practices are a “strategy for optimizing human resource development” (Cummings 2003:106) has been heavily criticised in the later years. One of the great pitfalls of streaming is that some socio-economic groups or minorities have been neglected in the higher level tracks for reasons such as lack of information, lower expectation from the social environment and so on. The way pupils are divided into groups, especially in the development of testing measures, must be handled with great care so as to secure equality of opportunities for all kinds of students.

From the growth of individualism in the Enlightenment, there has been a change of conception of the possibilities of what an individual can obtain. Social background was not the only determinant factor; effort was also decisive. Some education systems, e.g. the above-mentioned Soviet system, have focused on hard work as a key to success. This is often referred to as meritocracy, connecting effort in school and return in professional life. Meritocracy is based on the idea that “intelligence + effort = merit” (Halsey et al. 1997:632).

One important factor in the enlightenment agenda was to create an education to provide the “technical skills for the modern society and in selecting the talented for upward mobility” (Halsey et al. 1997:632). Thus, meritocracy challenges the importance of socio-economic background as the main impact on professional earnings.

The ideas of meritocracy might well be compared to Gagné’s differentiated model of giftedness and talent (2003) (see appendix 1). However, the link between intelligence and effort only represents a small proportion of Gagné’s model. In his model abilities consist of more than intellectual gifts, but also creative, socio-affective and sensori-motor elements. Self-management is vital for the developmental process from gifts to talents. In addition to effort he includes physical/mental characteristics and different forms of environmental factors. Gagné illustrates that the concept of meritocracy may be a too simplistic a view in regards to success in professional life, and that more factors must be taken into account to get a grasp of the complexity of these processes.
2.3 Global Trends Changing Educational Policy

The field of gifted education is not only changing from within, but the whole political landscape of education has faced radical changes in the last decade. Due to the acceleration in the field of communication and information technology, there has been a development of global exchange at such a pace and force that has never before been part of the human experience. This tendency, often referred to as globalisation, has currently a great impact on the field of education.

With its origin in market economy, the concept has been broadened to comprise a variety of global interconnectedness and influences. Robert Arnove defines globalisation as

“(...) the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa” (Arnove et al. 2003:2)

These trends must be considered in getting a grasp of the situation of gifted children in Norway and Victoria, mainly because the policies are affecting their schooling and the “public” view upon giftedness. The global distribution and adaptation of ideas bring new agendas for educational policies in the two geographical areas. More specifically the question for this section will be as follows, which of the current trends may have an influence upon gifted children in school?

2.3.1 The Power of Knowledge and the Development of Human Capital

Since the first oil chock in the early 1970s there has been a radical transformation of Western societies, in terms of social, political and economical life. A global economy in development also increased the competition in the economic sphere. The educational sectors were influenced by these changes, as the quality of a nation’s education and training system was seen as the key to future economic prosperity (Brown and Lauder 1997a:172). A major conception in the global times is that “knowledge, learning, information, and technical competence are the new raw materials of international commerce” (Brown and Lauder 1997a:174). In other words, knowledge has become an important resource in the global society. Manuel Castells’ three volumes entitled The Rise of the Network Society (1996-1998), also emphasise the power of knowledge.
How is such a change of conception influencing the view upon education? And furthermore, how should providers of educational services respond to such a shift? Will the increased value of knowledge introduce a new era for gifted and talented pupils? Increasing the power of knowledge gives new imperatives to education, as institutions and businesses call for changes in educational policy. One reason is that the labour needs are changing as “the new global economy requires workers with the capacity to learn quickly and to work in teams in reliable and creative ways” (Morrow and Torres 2000:33). As a result of this new conception of knowledge, education has become essential.

Closely related to the above-mentioned issue of knowledge, human capital is stressed, considered a means of securing economical growth of a country. Human capital may be defined as an investment in “education, training, experience and other qualities that increase their [people’s] productivity and thus their worth to an employer” (Abercrombie et al. 2006:186). Hence, education of high quality is seen as crucial as it became a means to increase the productive capacity of workers. The concept of human capital was introduced by Theodore Schultz in the 1960s and has since then been developed and modified. Much controversy associated with this notion and its effects on educational policy are still debated.

It is important to have in mind while considering human capital in relation to gifted children, that the concept of human capital development does not signify the fulfilment of human potential for only a small proportion of the population, but aims in reaching the masses. An increased human capital development may for example imply widening the access to tertiary education and creating the institutional framework necessary to offer lifelong learning for all or to improve overall educational standards so that a country does not fall behind in international comparative tests. The principles of meritocratic competition are decreasing in importance compared to the question of how “to upgrade the quality of education system as a whole” (Brown and Lauder 1997a:187). Paradoxically, the pupils with extra potential seem to be of less interest in the knowledge society, at least in terms of human capital development. Nevertheless, gifted children are still regarded as important resources for the innovation of society in many countries, as they could well have the ability to learn more and faster than their peers or apply the knowledge they acquire in new and creative ways.
2.3.2 Shifting Powers of Educational Policy-Making

A State Monopoly in Trouble

After the Second World War the welfare state, has in many countries faced difficult times. In the case of Norway and Australia, the state is the founder and regulator of education, as well as the main provider of educational services. The economic restructuring one has witnessed in the last decades has “resulted in the reduction of the welfare state and increased privatization of social services” (Burbules & Torres 2000:7). A greater reliance on the free market and the global competitiveness has had a major impact on the state provision of educational services, finding “more appeal to individual self-interest than to collective rights” (Burbules & Torres 2000:9). As a consequence, there has been increased pressure upon public functions to become more competitive. In the educational context, this means increased quality on educational provision, often measured by the academic standards that the pupils or students acquire.

The assumption that the state allocated resources fairly and was able to ensure all pupils an equal opportunity of education has also been under attack. One of the main reasons is that one has found “systematic class inequalities rooted in the structures of society for which education (...) could not compensate” (Halsey et al. 1997:254). Successful efforts to reduce the link between socio-economical background and educational outcomes cannot be neglected. Nevertheless, inequality is still widespread.

Another critique is that the educational institutions are not succeeding in giving the upcoming generations enough skills and knowledge to meet the society they grow up into. The rhetoric of sinking standards of education seems to have enough effect in gaining ground for reforms and restructuring of the educational sector. Many educators, especially in the teachers’ unions, are sceptical of introducing free choice of educational provision and competitiveness into the school sector. Common arguments are that education involves more complicated processes than noticeable forces can account for, e.g. that education is more than academic results, and that the public school ensures the democracy of opportunity.

Apple (2000) warns against making hasty crisis solutions following the current rhetoric;

“Behind all of this is an attack on egalitarian norms and values. Although hidden in the rhetorical flourish of the critics, in essence “too much democracy” - culturally and politically - is seen as one of the major causes of our declining economy and culture” (Apple 2000:58)
The urgent necessity of adapting “educational policies to sustain international competitiveness” is also questioned (Morrow and Torres 2000:48). The core of the problem is related to what the primary focus of education really is, whether it is continuously higher academically achievements or a social equilibrium of results.

As a result of the current developments, the role of the state has changed in the post-war era. Several countries have seen a rise of market-choice institutions as competitors, privatisation and the decentralisation of decision-making. However, the state still remains the main founder, regulator and provider of educational services. The implication of all this is the increased accountability of the state provision of education (Dale 1997:281 cf. Halsey). The state monopoly of education has been challenged, and there is a tendency of shared responsibility for education among several institutions, public as well as privately funded. Despite global demands for competition, the state institutions are still necessary in providing for the marginalised groups of society, and offering shared experiences in relation to the population through common education.

Rise of Marketisation?

There are several explanations of the current changes in the public sector. One way of approaching the issue is to regard the rise of New Public Management (NPM), a management philosophy particularly prominent in Australia. Other notions of the changes at hand are neo-liberalism and managerialism, terms mostly used by critical voices. NPM aims to give more responsibility to the private sector, as it is claimed to be more cost-efficient than what the state offers (Peters et al. 2000: 109). The management theory implies a decentralisation of management control, permitted by a new doctrine of self management, coupled with new accountability and funding structures.

The practices of NPM are based on the assumption of “fundamental principles of freedom and choice” (Peters et al. 2000:121). Introducing market competition for all sectors, including schools is important for the NPM philosophy. Furthermore, developing educational institutions into self-managing competing businesses and giving the parents the right, but also imposing on them to choose the best education for their child, is incorporated in the NPM. Thus, a consequence is increased competition between different public providers, and between public and private providers.
The issues of choice of educational programs according to individual needs and interests have an impact on the field of gifted education. Such “customer-style choices” are however determined by the structures of the free market (Peters et al. 2000:122).

**Increased Influence of Supranational Organisations**

Parallel with the state facing difficulties, supranational political organisations, such as the World Bank (WB), the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have increased their influence in the times of globalisation (Lindgard 2000:92). As both Norway and Australia are members of OECD, it is likely that these countries are influenced by the educational policies that the organisation promotes. According to Lindgard, OECD functions as an

“(...) international think tank that helps governments to “shape policy” by exerting influence through “mutual examination by governments, multilateral surveillance and peer pressure to conform or reform” (Lindgard 2000:95)

The organisation systemises and provides comparable indicators, such as the PISA testing (Programme for International Student Assessment), which, in the organisation’s own terms, “provide insights into the human capital of OECD countries and their progress in creating fair and equitable education” (OECD 2007). Furthermore, the organisation’s policy formulation calls for a focus on the “economic benefits of education to nations and individuals in a global economy” (Lindgard 2000:96). This is an example that global educational policies are not set forth by an invisible voice, but are formulated in organisations such as the OECD. Questions for later parts of the thesis, is whether Norway and Australia are following the recommendations of this organisation or if the countries have chosen national solutions for their educational challenges.

**The Changing Role of the State and the Individual**

Based on Jürgen Habermas’ theories, Martin McLean provides a framework for the understanding of the changing role of the state and the turn towards individualism in educational policy-making (McLean 1997:78). He explains the logic of the shifting powers of education, where the market mechanisms increase in power. His article originally
concerns educational leadership in post-communist Europe, but the framework is useful to illustrate global trends influencing a wider educational context.

According to McLean, educational leadership faces considerable challenges due to globalisation. He claims that there are three main elements of the current crisis of educational leadership: crisis of the state, crisis of rationality, and crisis of motivation (McLean 1997:78). They all illustrate different ways the current development has an impact on educational policies.

Firstly, nations around the world are experiencing a ‘crisis of the state’ due to an increasing transnational consolidation of market and economy. As international trade becomes more dominant and national boundaries begin to blur, the functions of the nation state become less significant. Parallel to these transformations, whilst people’s demands in many countries are steadily increasing, the state is accused of not being capable to offer adequate social services. Consequently, there has been a turn towards market mechanisms (McLean 1997:78-79). These tendencies have already been presented at length.

Furthermore, McLean points out that the modern state faces a crisis of rationality. The power based on legal-rational principles and bureaucratic administration has been challenged. Governmental institutions fail to maintain legitimacy for their rationale, resulting in a “difficulty in justifying a powerful and interventionist role in social affairs” (McLean 1997:79-80). The national states try to compensate for this development by recognising privatisation to a greater degree, and consequently, more power is given the market (McLean 1997:81).

As a result of the two above-mentioned processes, a crisis of motivation has developed. Social motivation has turned from collective drives towards policies benefiting individualism. The state intervention based on arguments of the common good, has been replaced by the individual’s right to choose social services from the market place:

“Governments adopting marked strategies have emphasized the opportunities for individual choice provided by the shift from the public to private expenditure” (McLean 1997:82).

People have lost their faith in the system’s capability to share social goods fairly. In addition, the state has also been criticised for not being able to account for the ever-rising standards of educational quality in the global knowledge society.

Crises emerge when the nature and efficacy of the system are questioned. McLean argues that the crises of the state, rationality and motivation have led to a transformation of the role of the nation state. “The market principle and the various axioms associated with it
recognize the declining capacity of the state to transform society” (McLean 1997:82). In losing their faith in the underlying values of a system, people are searching for alternative solutions.

The changing role of the public education system leading to more private intervention in education, both in educational policy and provision of educational services, have put pressure on the system to adopt more to the global, often neo-liberal trends. These trends, such as increased choice and competition, imply restructuring education as a means to keep up in the global economic race in the knowledge society.

2.3.3 Legitimacy of Differentiation Practices Challenged

Meritocracy - a Failing Ideology?

The idea of meritocracy has been the main justification for the selection process of the school systems, linking intelligence to effort as the way to success:

“Meritocratic competition has been a means of legitimating occupational and social inequalities because the doctrine of meritocracy is based on the idea of giving everyone an equal chance to be unequal” (Brown et al. 1997b:13)

However, in later years the practical application of meritocracy has been criticised. According to studies by Goldthorpe, the privileges of the white middle-class still remain and the selection practices in the educational systems have not been adequate (Halsey et al. 1997:632). He claims that

“(…) meritocracy is of doubtful value as a sociological concept, because the notion of merit is social, and is constructed in diverse ways in a market economy, and there is no one standard of ‘merit’ ” (Halsey et al. 1997:633)

Interestingly, the critique of subjective judgement is parallel to the critique concerning the notion of giftedness.

Another critique is that education has not been efficient in finding talent or providing it with greater opportunities for achievement through selection procedures. Tracking is claimed to be a means to preserve the privileged position of the middle-class élite parents. However, in the case of de-tracking, there is a danger of a middle-class flight from the public schools. In the final outcome public schools can find themselves in a situation of losing the potential to raise overall achievement levels (Halsey et al. 1997:635). Meritocracy is claimed to be a mechanism of exclusion operated by the middle-class to exclude the working class and
ethnic minorities, linked to issues of class and socio-economic background. Thus, the concept of meritocracy is too simplistic as a justification for selection, especially in a pluralist society.

**Changing Conceptions of Ability**

In the new global economy the demands of skills have undergone a process of change. There is a greater need for flexibility and ability to change according to a continuously shifting society. Good personal and social skills are in many professions just as important as or even more important than technical skills. Nevertheless, academic credentials remain as an important principle to ensure objective credibility (Brown *et al.* 1997b:7). Essential for pupils of today’s schools is not only to learn by heart, but to process knowledge, being critical and creating new concepts and ideas. Schoolhouse giftedness (cf. Renzulli) seems to lose ground to creative-productive giftedness, interpersonal skills and ability to cooperate.

As a result of the shifting demands of the labour market, fundamental changes in education have been proposed. Curricula all over the world are in continuous change in order to create a new global worker. As Burbules’ analysis goes;

“In part, this requires making a sharp distinction between academic and vocational routes, thus reversing previous movements against streaming and tracking, developed in the name of equity. Some of the most dramatic and self-conscious reform of this kind have been undertaken in Britain, and especially Australia”

(Morrow and Torres 2000:46)

It is claimed that the practices of streaming is increasing due to global trends. However, there is a need to find a better legitimacy for such practices since meritocracy has failed as an ideology. A greater aspect of abilities, a multidimensional conception of giftedness and talents, has to be considered as well.

**What about Equality of Opportunity?**

The notion of giftedness has been criticised throughout history, often with good reason, to select pupils from a certain socio-economic background. This is not compatible with equality of opportunity, which is a highly valued issue in both Norwegian and Australian educational policy. Equality issues are also on the agenda in current gifted education debates. Ideally, pupils with different background should have an equal opportunity to develop their talents. A
main task for educational institutions is to accommodate differentiation practices in accordance with this issue.

An important question related to giftedness is how it is developed. Why do some pupils succeed in school and some do not? Gagné, as mentioned earlier, emphasises environmental factors in developing ability to talent. Considering the issue of gifted and talented in a macro perspective, it is not enough not to look at the human capital, but also take the cultural capital into consideration. Bourdieu argues that “ability and talent is itself the product of an investment of time and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997:48). Bourdieu claims that cultural capital may exist in three forms, embodied state (mind and body), objectified state (cultural goods) and institutionalised state (educational qualifications etc). In other words, innate abilities, background and educational provision are all important for obtaining cultural capital. The first two factors are difficult to modify, but the educational institutions have a great role in providing equal chances for the latter. A major challenge is to incorporate a broad perception of giftedness, and not limit the institutions’ function only to develop schoolhouse giftedness (cf. Renzulli 2005).

2.3.4 Global Influence upon Gifted Education

Even though the processes previously described focus on the national level, they have led to practical implications when considering classroom practices. Global trends influence local educational traditions in profound ways by challenging the conceptions of what education is all about. Education systems world-wide have implemented new educational reforms and decrees to respond to the current trends. Increased international trade and a shifting role of the state, have led to increased focus on human capital development and competitiveness among countries. Furthermore, the turn towards individualism as well as pluralism, has opened up for more differentiation and freedom of choice. All these changes have specific implications for the field of gifted education.

Firstly, to secure economical success, countries around the world are trying to develop human capital resources among its citizens. As gifted children possess a natural source of human capital, it is advantageous for a country to motivate this group of pupils to fulfil their potential. The increased power of knowledge therefore gives more credibility to gifted children and their education. However, human capital development focuses on educating the masses, and might as well give less attention to the needs of the individual child.
In relation to neo-liberal drives in education, the global competition among education systems is becoming more and more important than ever before. The state monopoly is being challenged and thereby giving more power to the supranational organisations. The new forces in educational policy press to adapt to these global trends. Comprehensive international tests are conducted, measuring and comparing the achievement of the nations’ up-and-coming generations. The increased competitiveness has given knowledge and achievement greater significance. Developing human capital of the gifted is not only important for economical reasons, but also promotes a nation in the international ranking. As in the case of the issue of human capital development, a country’s competitiveness is measured in terms of overall achievement.

Neo-liberal reforms also press towards freedom of choice of educational provision. Levin contrasts two alternatives: a market choice turning the “production of education to a marketplace in which both public and private schools would compete for students”, and a public choice “producing social benefits beyond those that benefit only individual students and their families” (Levin 1991:187). The market approach favours private benefits whereas a common education for all and social benefits are ensured in the public alternative. The shift towards individualism, has advocated the parents’ right to choose the most adequate educational offering according to the need of their child. Moreover, in an attempt to address the issue of whether the state is capable to ensure a quality education there has been a turn towards more privatisation of education. Schools that offer special programs or adjustment for gifted children may consequently be a more accepted alternative.

The political and economical changes in society have also changed the perspective on what skills are important to acquire through education. Along with these changes, the conception of giftedness has developed to embrace more abilities and talents. With such a multidimensional approach the legitimacy for differentiation practices, such as meritocracy, is challenged. The main issues are finding alternatives to provide a sound education for pupils with a wide range of abilities and also finding ways to optimise their potential.

The turn towards a more individualistic approach to education might to a certain extent justify the practice of organisational differentiation according to skills. Permitting achievement groups would make an important difference to the education of gifted children. However, at the classroom level, the tension between the need of the individual versus the need of the class as whole, is still an issue.
2.4 Individualism vs. Collectivism

Underlying the national ideologies and the current changes in gifted education, there is a fundamental debate whether to serve the needs of the collective or the individual. Should a small group of children be offered special educational provision at the expense of the rest of the group? Alternatively, should society waste the potential of the gifted children by not allowing them to fulfil their potential? Philosophical assumptions concerning the primary task of the school system influence the answer to questions like these i.e. the school as a social institution or service provider. The degree to which a country has a dominant individualistic or collectivistic approach to education has an impact on the role of the gifted child in any country. Individualism and collectivism may be seen as two kinds of lenses in viewing the rights as well as the duties of the society and the individual.

2.4.1 Triandis’ Framework of Individualism vs. Collectivism

Triandis (1995) provide a framework for the understanding of individualism and collectivism in relation to gifted child and their education in Norway and Victoria. His work is partly based on the analysis conducted by Hofstede (1980) on several societies according to value preferences. One of Hofstede’s main distinctive factors in his cross-cultural research is the degree of individualism, e.g. whether the individuals are integrated into social groups or if the ties between them are rather loose.

Triandis defines collectivism as a

“(...) social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives (...); are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives over their own personal goals; and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives” (Triandis 1995:2)

Furthermore, individualism may be initially defined as a

“(...) social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others; and emphasize the rational analysis of the advantages and disadvantages to associating with others” (Triandis 1995:2)

Triandis makes a distinction between collectivistic societies and individualistic ones, but acknowledges that individuals in these respective cultures may not necessarily agree with the
common culture. Even though there is by no means a clear dichotomy between these notions, it might illustrate some major differences in the approach to the issue of gifted education. Such a distinction creates a foundation for further elaboration of a country’s preference of individualist and collectivist approach for teaching and learning in the education system.

**Distinguishing Different Types of Individualism and Collectivism**

Individualism and collectivism may be divided according to four universal dimensions of construct (Triandis 1995:40); definition of self (interdependent vs. dependent), personal and communal goals (compatible vs. incompatible), social behaviour (norms/duties vs. attitudes/needs), and finally relationships (emphasised vs. constantly evaluated whether they are advantageous or not). It is possible to consider the school as a micro society, and hence transfer these dimensions to a classroom level. For the education of gifted children, there are no clear-cut answers to the matter of defining advantageous practices, specifically pertaining to the current multidimensional view upon giftedness. However, gifted education as a field tends to focus on an interdependent child whose needs are incompatible with the communal goals.

Individualism and collectivism may also be divided into horizontal and vertical categories, depending on whether it is a culture of sameness or hierarchy. In cultures of horizontal individualism, people do not like to “stick out”, and do not like to be unique in contrast to other kinds of individualists. Some individualist cultures, e.g. Australia and Sweden, are more horizontal individualistic than others (Triandis 1995:46). Because of cultural parallels with Sweden, it is likely that Norway is a horizontal individualist country as well. On the other side, the US is an example of a vertical individualist society. Americans often prefer to be distinguishable and have an “emphasis on being the best” (Triandis 1995:46). These observations may explain the reason why the gifted and talented have more to say as a group in the American school system. Similarly, collectivistic societies can be hierarchal or have a dominant culture of sameness. Triandis framework may be illustrated by the following model:
Implications of Individualism and Collectivism

Being different is acknowledged, and in different degrees appreciated, in vertical cultures. In contrast, in same-self cultures there is more a struggle to be a part of the crowd. Triandis brings up the example of the high suicide rates in horizontal cultures, as in Sweden. His speculation is that “people in a same-self culture are prone to embarrassment when they are not able to remain invisible” (Triandis 1995:109). This is most evident in collectivistic cultures, where the norms and the goals of the collectives are essential.

According to Yamaguchi (1994), the members of a collectivistic culture do what their social groups want them to do. He has developed a collectivist scale where he measures affiliation, sensitivity to rejection, public self-conceptions, self-monitoring, social anxiety and need for uniqueness. Cultures “high in collectivism wanted people to be equal in intelligence and did not like individuals who were too competent” (Yamaguchi 1994 cf. Triandis 1995:109).

Some advantages of collectivism are high morality and parents’ expectation to a high, some argue even a too arduous achievement of their child. But there is a risk of low well-being, pitfalls when state goals are more important than individual goals, a tendency of extreme nationalism, and in some totalitarian systems, a de-emphasis on science because dictators do not accept competing sources of truth. If the society is too tied to the past, it is difficult to promote economical progress (Triandis 1995:178-182).

Advantages of an individualistic approach are the promotion of human rights, multiculturalism and democracy. There is often still a high need for achievement, a desire to connect to a larger entity, and a need for individual satisfaction. Some of the disadvantages
may be loneliness and poor social support, including the likelihood of family conflict and divorce; furthermore a danger of narcissism, and extreme competitiveness, often related to vertical individualism, may lead to anxiety and frustration. Individualistic societies have far too often a ‘culture of complaint’ where rights are more significant than duties (Triandis 1995:172-177).

Triandis has drawn parallels between horizontal individualism and social democracy, vertical individualism and free market thinking (e.g. right-wing section of the Republican Party), horizontal collectivism and Kibbutz (Israel), vertical collectivism and communalism, and finally, extreme collectivism and totalitarianism.

2.4.2 Global Pressure Towards Individualism?

The later years, one has observed a shift from collectivism to individualism in many societies. Some of the reasons for this change are affluence, mass media exposure, and modernisation. Whether a society is collectivistic or individualistic also depends on the amount of resources available. Where there are a limited amount of resources the great collective advantage are more evident. Furthermore, rural areas tend to be more collectivistic than urban areas (Triandis 1995:82).

Earlier on in this chapter, the rise of the global economy and its implications in educational policy was outlined. As a final remark in this regard, there seems to be a connection between sociologists’ accounts of American individualism in the 1980s and the current global trends:

“Individualism was seen as emphasizing hedonism, competition, self-reliance, utilitarian pursuits, and open communication with the community only if it serves the person. Most important, it emphasizes freedom, equality and equity, participation, trust of others, competence, (...), independence (...) self-improvement, and the desire to be distinguished”

(Bellah et al. 1988 cf. Triandis 1995:29)

Global competition indicates a pressure toward vertical individualism. However, in the times of pluralism, more co-operative and communitarian perspectives seem to be on the agenda (Phillips 1998:169). Based on these observations, there seems to be more than a turn towards individualism; modernist individualism is also challenged by collective drives.
2.5 Frame of Reference for Comparison

The theoretical concepts outlined in this chapter show the variety of factors that may influence the conditions of gifted children. These concepts are intertwined with the research questions, and then broken down into guiding questions with related assumptions, as a means to elaborate a frame of reference for comparison. Due to contrasting views upon what constitutes ‘best practice’ of educational provision for gifted children, the frame of reference will be based on my own assumptions and conclusions deriving from literature review on the topic.

Firstly, the overall approach to teaching and learning is decisive for the conditions for education for gifted children. The following questions concern whether a country is collectivistic or individualistic from the outset, related to the Triandis’ four dimensions and the questions about horizontal or vertical organisation of society:

- Does the education system have a collectivistic or individualistic approach towards teaching and learning, e.g. focus on personal goals or communal goals?
- To what degree is it acknowledged to be different?

The main assumptions in this context are that an individualistic approach embraces the needs of gifted children to a greater extent than the collectivistic does, and that difference in pupils’ potential has to be accepted to provide a sound education for these particular pupils.

Secondly, the role of gifted children in particular will be dealt with, especially whether their needs are discussed or acknowledged, in terms of:

- How much attention do gifted children get in the public debates, research or in educational policy?

The logical assumption is that gifted children have a more favourable position in a country that address their needs and discusses aspects about their learning progress in school.

The third set of questions aims in searching for indications of global trends in educational policy in Norway and Victoria that are relevant for the issue of gifted children:

- Is the country’s human capital development focusing on a smaller percentage of the population or the masses?
- In which respect has public education changed character due to increased global competition, e.g. increased public choice of educational provisions?
- What is the primary focus of public education, e.g. providing equal opportunities or securing higher standards?

The increased value of knowledge and focus on developing the educational standards in a country also has an impact on the issue of gifted education, especially if it is valued as such that these children in particular are an important resource for the nation’s future. Another assumption is that greater choice of educational provision and private alternatives in education may legitimate special programs for gifted pupils. It is, however, important to be aware of the fact that the consequences of the implication of the trends are not always obvious. For example, even though higher standards of education may be seen as preferable in relation to gifted pupils, equality of opportunity is essential to secure proper education for gifted children from different socio-economic groups.

The final set of guiding questions concerns the principles of differentiation that are found in the curriculum. These principles are often based on the different curriculum traditions that have been predominant in the two areas.

- How is the school system organised and in particular: to whom are the educational provisions aimed at?

- What kind of differentiation practices are the most common?

The organisation of the school system, whether it has a segmented structure with streaming practices or if there is a common standard for all, influence the provisions for gifted pupils. If there are some kinds of differentiation practices, either pedagogical or organisational, it is clearly advantageous for developing their potential.

Based upon these guiding questions and its assumptions, a model relating the conditions for gifted children to the key concepts can be developed.

### 2.5.1 Model 2.1: Conditions for Gifted Pupils Related to Key Concepts

Model 2.1 aims to summarise the factors that may have an impact on gifted children and their education. As the degree of any of the factors mentioned previously increases the better conditions there are for the implementation of gifted education. The model will function as the main framework for the analysis. As mentioned earlier, some of the factors are difficult to be made part of such a dichotomy, e.g. purpose of education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Low degree</th>
<th>High degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Acknowledge of difference</td>
<td>Desire of being invisible (same-self cultures)</td>
<td>Desire of being best (hierarchical cultures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Focus on individual needs</td>
<td>Communal goals prioritised (collectivism)</td>
<td>Personal goals prioritised (individualism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Attention to gifted children in particular</td>
<td>Low degree of attention in public debates, research and policy</td>
<td>High degree of attention in public debates, research and policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Pedagogical differentiation (incl. adapted education)</td>
<td>Unification (polytechnicalism)</td>
<td>Individualised education (pragmatism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Organisational differentiation (incl. tracking)</td>
<td>Unification (polytechnicalism)</td>
<td>Several tracks of education (French encyclopaedism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Acknowledgement of gifted children’s natural source of Human Capital (HC)</td>
<td>Human capital development for the masses (broad view upon HC)</td>
<td>Human capital development for gifted children in particular (narrow view upon HC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Choice</td>
<td>Few options in educational provision (state dominance)</td>
<td>Several competing educational options (NPM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Purpose of education</td>
<td>Education for social equilibrium</td>
<td>Education for achieving educational standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model 2.2 Conditions for gifted education related to key concepts
2.5.2 Visualised Model as an Analytical Tool

The model summarises the different factors that influence the conditions for gifted children and their education, and forms the frame of reference for comparison. This frame of reference directs the course for contextual background and is the main tool for the analysis. In the background chapter that follows, the factors will be related to the historical background of education, curriculum traditions and current differentiation practices, seeking answers to some of the guiding questions. In the study of the country-specific official documents the model is an aid to filter out the essential features for the analysis. The model will also provide an outline for the qualitative content analysis.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has aimed to provide a conceptual framework for the thesis. First of all, different conceptions of giftedness have been presented, from the traditional IQ measures to present ideas of multidimensional intelligence. The view upon gifted pupils of this paper has mainly been influenced by theoreticians defending a complex conception of giftedness.

Secondly, there is an outline of four of the main curriculum traditions of the Western world. The traditions of essentialism, encyclopaedism, polytechnicalism and progressivism have provided different answers to questions about what, who and how to teach.

Global trends within education have also been taken into account. Tendencies toward increased competitiveness, attention to human capital and shifting powers within educational systems have also been observed. It is observed that renewed conceptions of giftedness have challenged the legitimacy of traditional differentiation practices. These changes have effects on gifted education, hence changing the role of the gifted children in a society.

In order to provide a larger perspective upon the issue of gifted pupils, Triandis’ framework of individualism and collectivism has been presented. There are reasons to believe that traditional gifted education is more likely to occur in a vertical, individualistic society. Yet, with new conceptions of giftedness, such distinctions are no longer clear-cut.

Finally a frame of reference for comparison has been presented, by way of model 2.1. The model provides a dichotomy of different factors related to the key concepts that have been presented in this chapter, in order to find out what kind of the conditions there are for gifted pupils in a specific area.
3. The Norwegian Context

The conditions for gifted children and their education are dependent on the specific characteristics of the national school system. This chapter will therefore provide an overview of Norwegian education history, ideological context and the country’s curriculum traditions. Of particular interest is the acknowledgement of the issue of gifted children shown in model 2.2, such as differentiation practices throughout history and the purposes of education. The chapter also includes the degree of individualisation vs. collectivism in Norway, and finally some of the recent trends within the field of education.
3.1 The Norwegian Ideal of a Unified School

While the field of gifted education internationally is undergoing a debate about the fundamental changes of the conceptions of giftedness, the discourse in Norway is strikingly mute. In fact, Norway does not have any traditions for having any special offerings for gifted children, and hence a term such as ‘gifted education’ is irrelevant. Nevertheless, there have been some efforts of differentiation in times past.

3.1.1 Developing a Unified School

There are several factors to take into consideration in order to fully understand the Norwegian policies toward gifted children, including school history and ideological conceptions. A distinct characteristic of the Norwegian school system is the Unified School tradition.

Comenius, introducing the encyclopaedic ideas, is also seen as the founder of the idea of the Unified School (Befring 2004:162). In Norway, the idea of a universal school rose as a reaction to the 19th century’s class division of the school system. The Prime Minister from the Liberal party, Johan Sverdrup, launched in 1884 his vision of a “(...) a common school for all children, irrespective of social layers, geographical location, gender, ethnical group or many of the idiosyncrasies that pupils may have” (Østerud 2003:149, my translation). A common compulsory school of seven years became a reality in 1920. Ideological and economical motives were important for its implementation, especially as a means to fight class division (Østerud 2003:150).

The Unified School reached a success peak in the decades following World War Two. Notwithstanding, the confidence in the system declined as soon as the right of education was taken for granted. This school model faced a lot of criticism especially in regards to the practice of mainstream education (Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002:674).

3.1.2 Efforts of Differentiation

The question of differentiation became a hot topic in 1960, at the time the Norwegian compulsory school was expanded from seven to nine years. At first there were attempts at grouping into distinct courses of study. These streaming practices were, however, exposed
for just continuing the old distinction of a “continuation school” (framholdsskolen) and a “Realschule” (realskolen), falsely named “Unified School”.

The next differentiation effort, separating the pupils into three different course-plans in the subjects, was tried out from 1960. Pupils of the lower secondary school chose courses at different levels recommended by teachers and their parents. However, for the entry to higher education it was necessary to complete the highest course-plan in all subjects, leading in theory to limited future possibilities for the ones on the lower course-plans. Another problem that occurred was that the lower level was criticised strongly for producing ‘losers’. Consequently, the higher levels became crowded. Some schools resisted to offer course-plans, educating all pupils at the same level. This tracking practice was abandoned in 1974, when a new national curriculum was implemented. Since then, all pupils have been taught in the same class, without any form for streaming during all the compulsory years of school (Imsen 2002:274).

There has since the testing out of ‘course-plans’ been a great resistance towards organisational differentiation in Norway. In the Law of Education §8.2 it is stated that “Pupils may be divided into groups when needed (…). The groups should normally not be divided according to level, gender or ethnicity” (Lovdata 2006). Pedagogical differentiation, through giving the gifted child alternative tasks, enrichment of material and a greater work load, is considered to be a better alternative (Imsen 2002:277). The problem is, however, that pedagogical differentiation is extremely time-consuming and requires great cautiousness in regards to planning and organising. During teacher training, differentiated education for gifted children is not a subject of attention. Due to the lack of knowledge in combination with other more urgent challenges in the classroom setting, these children are often neglected. The general attitude is that these children get by in the education system without any special treatment. It is questionable whether there is room for academic winners in the school of ‘sameness’ (Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002:681).

An influential Norwegian educator, Befring, has in his book The School for the Children’s Best (Skolen for barnas beste) pointed out seven principles for education and upbringing. The second principle focuses on that education should “create conditions for individual variation” (Befring 2004:21). By including this principle he acknowledges that children are different, and that education should be adjusted according to each child’s character and needs. He is, however, critical to a competition-oriented system of evaluation in school that creates winners and losers. He claims that competition may cause deep injury
in young minds, and calls for a greater protection of integrity of self-value, self-esteem and motivation (Befring 2004:118). To accommodate differences he embraces modern notions including “learning style”, “empowerment” and “enrichment” within the classroom setting (Befring 2004:21); in other words pedagogical differentiation.

3.1.3 Egalitarianism and the ‘Law of Jante’

The ideology of the Unity School is based on egalitarian principles.

“No European nation, and few in a global perspective, is likely to display and enact egalitarian convictions and policies as do the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and to a lesser extent, Finland” (Persson et al. 2000: 718)

Egalitarianism was also observed by Hofstede (1982) in his monumental research on international differences in work-related values. He developed a system of measurement to compare 39 different countries; Masculinity Index (MAS). High MAS indicated among other factors, an independence ideal, an achievement ideal and a propensity for embracing and promoting individual excellence. In his research, Norway received one of the lowest ratings (MAS 10). In comparison, countries like Japan and the U.S. rated respectively 87 and 62 at the MAS index (ibid. 2000:718).

The resistance towards intellectual excellence that is integrated in the minds of Norwegian people can be explained by the usage of the egalitarian ethos, frequently designated the ‘Law of Jante’. This is an expression that was introduced by the Danish writer Axel Sandemose in 1933. The first law states that “You are not supposed to think that you are something special”, illustrating the impropriety of self-pride (ibid. 2000:718). There is an integrated suspiciousness towards high-achievers, making it hard to bring up issues such as giftedness in the Norwegian school setting. Nevertheless, in the areas of sports and music excellence are accepted and special provision to develop talent has been found ‘socially valuable’.

3.1.4 Adjusted Education also for Gifted Pupils?

As a means of compensating for individual differences in a common school for all, the concept of ‘Adjusted Education’ has been included as a main principle in recent curricula.
According to the Education Act § 1-2, Adjusted Education implies that all pupils have the right to receive an education in accordance to their abilities and aptitudes (Lovdata 15.05.08). The principle includes all children, implicitly including those with high learning potential. However, gifted children do not seem to be the centre of attention when it comes to adjusted education.

The focus in Norway is on mainstream education with adjustment within the education system. In the report *Special Educational Measures to Promote All Forms of Giftedness at School in Europe* published by Eurydice, Norway is pointed out to be the most extreme country when it comes to an ‘integrated’ policy for gifted young people:

“No particular term is used officially to denote them and there are no criteria for determining whether someone is ‘gifted’ or not. From the educational point of view, no special measures are implemented. The needs of gifted children – just like those of other pupils – are addressed via a general policy of education based on a differentiated approach and on attention paid to individual pupils in mainstream classes” (European Commission 2006:26)

Central to the Norwegian school policy since 1970 has been what the former Minister of Education, Gudmund Hernes, has called ‘Likeness of Results’ (Hernes 1974). It implies that the public system should compensate for the different gifts of the students, both innate potential and social capital. The aim of school is to reduce the differences in society, and hence support the intellectually weakest pupils (Imsen 2002:125). Hence, equity measures were at an early stage implemented to help those that lagged behind the ‘standard’ to catch up. Special allocation resources are aimed to facilitate the education of these pupils.

For children who are above average the situation has been quite different. Imsen, Professor in Pedagogy, and author of essential books in Norwegian teacher training, explains the dilemma of educating gifted children in Norway in the following:

“In our country we have had an egalitarian culture that says that one should not be conspicuous in order to gain an advantage, coupled with a deeply ingrained consideration for the weakest in society. These elements are instrumental in explaining why we do not have any traditions for special development programs for the most gifted pupils” (Imsen 1999:205, my translation)

These attitudes may be the reason for the lack of attention in regards to giftedness among pupils. This was also observed by professor Arnold Hofset in his book *Evnerike barn i grunnskolen* (Gifted children in school), based on his doctoral dissertation from 1968. He claims that the Norwegian school system has been wasting the potential talents of its pupils (Hofset 1968:18).
3.2 Norwegian Curriculum Traditions

3.2.1 Origin of the Norwegian School

The democratic view on school provision in Norway has long traditions. The Reformation had a great impact in Norway especially in the political and economical realm. Luther challenged the hierarchic system in the Catholic Church, by stating that all Christians should have a personal and direct relationship to God. By consequence more power was given to local authorities (Cummings 2003:76). Due to a pietistic view that all children should take part in confirmation preparations and be able to read the Bible, a school duty for Norwegian children introduced as early as 1739. All children between the ages of 7 and 12 were by law supposed to receive an education in Christianity and reading, and in some cases writing and simple mathematics (Befring 2004:179).

After a number of decades more subjects were included in the public elementary school with the idea that all academically respectable subjects should be represented. The encyclopaedic model was to become dominant, with a focus on general education (Baune 1995:64). However, the ideas of Grundtvig (1783-1872) came to have great influence on the Norwegian school. He fought for a democratic, popular school based on progressive ideas (Befring 2004:155)

In general, only the peasants and the poor attended this kind of school, whereas the middle and upper class sent their children to private schools. The class-divided school system was kept until the Unified School was implemented in 1920. From then on all pupils were expected to be a part of a universal school system within the public school model.

3.2.2 Shifting Influences

A Progressive Craze

Influenced by Grundtvig and the increasing flow of radical pedagogic ideas from the continent and the United States, great debates about the encyclopaedic “book-school” arose at the beginning of the 20th century. There was a call for replacing knowledge control and subject-centred approach in education with a focus on the active individual. The reform movement aimed for more group work, creative development of the pupils and project work
These ideas came to influence the Standard Curriculum for the Compulsory school, published in 1939 (N39), with an open-ended, pupil-centred and interdisciplinary approach. The curriculum consisted of minimum achievement standards as a compromise for the academic standards required for higher education and progressive ideas. In the curriculum as a whole, it was vaguely stated whether the standard was set for all pupils or only for the average pupil (Baune 1995:105). The practical implications for the Standard Curriculum of 1939 were rather weak (Befring 2004:167). Hence, responses to individual needs and programs for the gifted and students with abilities did not become a reality, as it did in the United States.

**Interest in Upgrading Intellectual Standards**

The Sputnik shock in 1957, the symbol of the technological superiority of the Soviet power, created a crisis in the American schools and fear of sinking scientific standards. The political consequences of the Sputnik shock also had a major influence on Norwegian education. The dilemma between a general education for all with common elements versus maintenance of standards of achievement was hard to reconcile. The progressive approach was pointed out as an explanation for the sinking standards. Hence, a behaviouristic approach to education, often related to the term ‘instrumentalism’, became an important feature in the school development in the 1950-60s. Within the behaviouristic means end model, there was breakthrough for school psychometrics and using standardised intelligence tests in this period of time. Upgrading the intellectual standards was also on the agenda:

> “The main task of school requires the helping of all children to fully develop their intellectual capabilities, something that is important for democracy in a technological and socially complex society” (Befring 2004:172, my translation)

The main purpose was to strengthen education and raise knowledge levels through efficiency measures, with the idea that the individual pupil could be formed through external inputs (Befring 2004:172). In this climate, the system of three course plans was developed. But as already noticed, this practice did not last long, and in fact did not have any long-term impact on the provision for gifted and talented. From now on all children were to be exposed for the same educational input in order to create an equal society. The failure of the course plan system signalised that community and class level were more important than the education of the individual child.
Resistance Towards Instrumentalism

There was by no means a unison agreement of adapting the new discourse of academic standards and intelligence testing. After the World War Two, Soviet models of education were diffused in socialistic countries (Holmes & McLean 1992:128). Norway adapted a few of the socialistic ideas as a means of emphasising education for the masses in a unified school provided by the state. Many educators advocated a social education, focusing on the collective side of school, with solidarity and equality as the ideological core. This pedagogy stressed human learning as an interactive process with an active person growing up, and qualities for pupils’ learning development in a social context, where the individual takes responsibility for his or her own learning (Befring 2004:173-4). These educators aimed at a greater implementation of progressive ideas, including aspects of polytechnicalism.

3.3 Individualism vs. Collectivism in Norway

The Norwegian compulsory school has strong collectivistic characteristics, propounded in the ideal of providing education for all, eliminating social differences, and securing equality between different groups. Focus on co-operation between pupils through group work and pupils’ influence on school decisions are also important traits. Nevertheless, the “Aims of Education” (formålsparagrafene) express the importance of creating a balance between individual and collective interests, where the individual should have the opportunity to develop according to their own particular qualifications within the scope of community considerations (Imsen 2002:132).

Collectivistic characteristics in a country are enforced by bureaucracy, e.g. through the willingness to create restrictions by regulations and laws. Triandis states that Scandinavian countries have a dominant bureaucratic tradition, “thus, the greater collectivism regulates behaviour more tightly in family and social settings than behaviour in the United States” (Triandis 1995:98). In his comparative studies, Naroll also found that Norway has strong collectivistic characteristics, but does also puts great value on independence. He observed that there is a “generally tight culture in which parents expect achievement, but peers distrust those who achieve” (Naroll 1983 cf. Triandis 1995:99). In terms of Triandis’ divisions of collectivism and individualism, Norway has a moderately individualistic culture, with several horizontal collectivistic elements.
3.4 Recent Developments in Norway

3.4.1 Norwegian Responses to Global Trends

The Norwegian compulsory school has been developed parallel to industrial and economical growth. The public commitment in providing quality education has increased through the whole 20th century. One important factor, also in regards to Norway, was the introduction of the concept of Human Capital Theory in the 1960s. Introducing an economical aspect into education has lead to a greater focus on general education for all (Imsen 2002:141).

The Demise of the Unified School

The critics of the Unified School reached a peak in the 1990s, due to ideological shifts and political influences within and outside Norway. The population was losing confidence in the state and questioned the quality of its educational provision (Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002:675). The Unified School was criticised for not fulfilling its goal of equity:

“In a study of ‘distributional justice of resources’ in the municipality of Oslo, Holm (2002) concluded that doubt could be raised about some key assumptions of the Unified School model, expected to produce equality, justice and learning quality” (Holm 2002 cf. Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002:676)

The Unified School failed to ensure a quality education for all through giving everyone, despite ability or motivation, the same educational input.

At the beginning of the millennium, there were fundamental changes in the political climate in Norway. The social-democrats, the stalwarts of the Unified School during years past, were in 2001 replaced by a right-centred government. Shortly after, the Unified School was abandoned by the government. Instead, this government advocated what they called the ‘Quality School’ embracing individualism and market mechanisms (Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002:679-680).

Increased Marketisation?

In 2003 a new agenda for Norwegian education, Culture for Learning, was published (Det kongelige utdannings- og forskningsdepartement 2003-2004). This paper clearly embraces
the new trends of globalisation by stating that “schools must change when the society changes” (Odin 2003-2004). Accountability and competition are mentioned as important measures to enable the education system to face the current challenges and to secure the place of Norway in the global community. Norway’s mediocre ranking at international tests, such as OECD’s Programme of International Student Achievement (PISA), has significantly heightened the motivation to take the quality of education.

As a consequence of this one has raised the question of parents’ right in choosing the best education for their children. In this discourse, the parents and pupils are considered as a market buying ‘school offerings’, and the schools are required to compete by improving their educational qualities (Imsen 2002:161). However, widespread school choice and competition among all Norwegian schools are not entirely feasible. A major obstacles to the so-called ‘free school-choice’ is a well-ingrained scepticism towards private schools, due to a fear of greater class division in society (Imsen 2002:161). Marketisation of Norwegian schools seems incompatible with the traditions of likeness and social equality.

The development in the last decade has shown, however, tendencies in favour of the opposite. The Culture for Learning report take the gifted pupils into account by acknowledging difference in pupils’ abilities and stating that “Both pupils who are ‘fed up with theory’ and those ‘thirsty for knowledge’ must be met with respect. If we treat all pupils in the same way, we create greater differences” (Odin 2003-2004). This statement may provide a new rationale for educational provision for gifted children in Norway.

**New Attention Towards Giftedness**

For many decades, gifted children have scarcely received any attention in books, papers or research in Norway except for Hofset’s contribution in the late 1960s and some thesis works. However, in the report Læringsmiljø og utvikling (Learning Environment and Development, 2002) Birkemo has provided some useful data concerning gifted children in present-day Norway. He found that gifted pupils had a slower academic progression than the weaker learners during lower secondary school. Whilst as a group the weaker pupils approached the average level during the last two years at the compulsory school, the group of gifted children did not have the same development (Birkemo 2002:346). Birkemo’s research illustrates what an important challenge the situation for gifted learners represents for the Norwegian school. Birkemo’s rhetoric is as follows:
"How can gifted pupils be stimulated enabling them to develop their inherent abilities? It seems like a long time ago since such an issue has been a central focus in Norwegian school politics. The average level of academic achievement amongst Norwegian pupils in international comparisons might be due to the lack of interest in stimulating this group of pupils to perform their best” (Birkemo 2002:346, my translation)

In the public debate nobody has dared to front the issue until recently. In 2003, former president of the Mensa Organisation, (a forum for intellectual exchange among members, Mensa International 2008), Martin Ystenes, puts the issue of gifted children on the agenda. Ystenes is also father of two gifted children. In the years following, hundreds of persons have contacted him to thank him for speaking out about this taboo (Ystenes 2003). In the last two years, gifted children have been given renewed attention through the establishment of the organisation “Lykkelige Barn” (Happy Children), and several publications treating these pupils, e.g. the issue of Pedagogisk Profil, a magazine for the Students of Education in Oslo, entitled De intelligente barna (The Intelligent Children) (Pedagogisk Profil 2006) and the headline article in Aftenposten 02.05.08 For smart for skolen (Too Smart for School). These publications indicate a radical change in terms of the acceptance of pronouncing the needs of gifted children in the public debate. This may have a serious impact on the educational provisions for gifted children in Norway in the coming years.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents Norwegian context deriving from the literature review. The ideological base of the school system including differentiation practices, curriculum theories and recent development in Norwegian education policy have been elaborated, in addition to the different features of individualism or collectivism. The ideal of the Unified School and the bearing principle of egalitarianism, are among several explanation for why gifted children are not or have been the centre of attention in the Norwegian school system. The country has been influenced by several different curriculum traditions, encyclopaedic, progressive and, to a certain extent, polytechnicalism which all focus on ‘education for all’. Recent developments in Norway show that there is a turn towards neo-liberal thinking within education and a growing interest for gifted children. In terms of Triandis’ framework of individualism and collectivism, the Norwegian school system has mainly horizontal individualist features, although there are several collectivistic elements.
4. The Australian Context

The specific characteristics of the Australian school system will be presented in this chapter. As in chapter 3, an overview of education history, ideological context and the country’s curriculum traditions will be provided, but this time with Australia in focus. Australian approaches to gifted education and other differentiation measures, in addition to recent educational trends will be the subject of special attention.
4.1 Australian Egalitarianism and Gifted Education

As education is a state right in Australia, the education system varies greatly across the states and territories. Each of the eight states has different organisational structures and curricula, influenced by the political ideologies that are dominant there. Around 28% of Australian pupils are taught within church or private schools, which provide an independent alternative (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:780). All states have provisions for gifted children, but to varying degrees. Nevertheless, traces of the anti-elitist ideology can still be detected in the field of education. Even though gifted education programs have been offered at Australian schools for decades, they are continuously under attack by teachers’ unions, community groups and politicians (Gross 2004:23).

4.1.1 The Influences of Egalitarianism

In the same way as Norway, Australian education has been strongly influenced by egalitarianism. This tradition has its roots in the settlement history of the late 18th century, when Australia was a British penal colony. The society was split into two distinct classes, the aristocracy and the nobility on the one side, and the convicts on the other. These conditions developed class hatred and a resistance towards inherited privileges among common people. Instead, honest labour was favoured. High intellectual ability was associated with social and economic privilege, and faced consequently distrust (Gross 2004:31). The historian Katherine West puts the national intolerance towards intellectuals compared to sports heroes like this:

“In Australia, by contrast, intellectual superiority is not a source of national pride. Instead, it invokes feelings of personal inferiority among those who fear that they will be shown up in society whose dominant national mythology is that people are and should be equal” (West 1987 cf. Gross 2004:23)

West’s observation illustrates the similarity between the Norwegian and Australian context.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the aim of the Australian education system was twofold: to provide mass education for children up to the year of 15, but also to prepare a chosen number of them for higher studies. There were no efforts to differentiate the educational provision for the children above average, with the exception of some special

Due to the expansion of secondary education from the 1950s, there was a call to provide a more differentiated curriculum to account for the increasing diversity among pupils. In the 1960s and 1970s several reforms were implemented, opening up for practices of grouping pupils according to their intellectual abilities (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:779).

These streaming practises were, however, criticised for being elitist and neglecting disadvantaged social groups. In the 1970s a movement emerged advocating a shift from “equity of educational opportunity” to “equity of educational outcomes”. The validity of the intelligence tests for the selection for special programs for gifted pupils came also under attack. On the grounds that high academic achievement was related to social and environmental circumstances rather than to ability, it was argued that gifted education led to social injustice (Gross 2004:32). In a response to this, the school curriculum was broadened and became less selective, emphasising the social function of education (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:779). Consequently, the teaching was set to an average level. Equity measures became increasingly important, allocating more resources to pupils with special needs, but that did not include pupils with special abilities (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:780). An Australian expression, similar to the ‘Law of Jante’, is the ‘Tall Poppy Syndrome’ (see Michell 1991, Thompson 1994 cf. Persson et al.:718). The ideal of ‘cutting down the tall poppies’, captures the essence embodied in the movement working against gifted education.

“It is often asserted, for example, that students with special abilities do not require assistance beyond what is provided by the comprehensive primary or secondary school and that additional provision is tantamount to unwarranted privilege” (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:780).

The ideal of ‘sameness’, similar to the one of the Norwegian Unified School, was prevalent both among politicians and teachers.

4.1.2 The Increased Acknowledgment of Giftedness

From 1975, there was a growing reaction from a variety of educational groups and many parents who believed in more appropriate provision for gifted pupils. The question of needs of highly able pupils and the adequate education for such as these was addressed in Victoria, along with several other Australian states. The fact that New Zealand and Australia sent 30 representatives to the World Conference on Gifted Children in London in 1975, illustrates
the growing interest in the issue of giftedness (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:780). The concept of giftedness was, however, adapted into the egalitarian framework, “seeking to provide individualism and excellence but striving to avoid the disparaging claims of elitism and privilege” (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:779).

**The Changing Conceptions of Giftedness**

During the 1980s and 1990s, the issues of equity were still a strong educational concern, particularly concerning indigenous pupils, girls, children with disabilities and others. Due to fear of elitism and the Tall Poppy Syndrome, the education for the gifted was absent from the agenda for rather some time. Despite these obstacles, the gifted pupils were not completely neglected. There are three main reasons for this.

Firstly, influenced by theorists such as Sternberg and Gardner, an alternative rationale of giftedness was developed during the 1980s. The concept of giftedness was expanded to include a wider range of abilities and achievements. As a means to downplay the concept of ‘giftedness’, it was replaced by alternative terms such as ‘highly able’ or ‘children with special abilities’. A differentiated curriculum became more accepted, emphasising provisions for gifted within the regular classroom. However, there occurred a mistaken understanding that all children were potentially gifted and everyone could achieve excellence if enough resources were provided (Gross 2004:24).

Another explanation for the role of the gifted children during the 1980s and 1990s was the political shifts in Australia. It has been observed in this country that “there has been a relationship between the political ideology espoused and the degree to which giftedness has been targeted and provided in government schools” (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:781). The social-democratic parties that were in power throughout most of the 1980s have been ones aiming at equalising social outcomes and overcoming social barriers. In the name of equity, teacher support for pupils with learning difficulties was provided, but not for the gifted. At the end of the 1990s the more conservative parties traditionally geared towards a free-market economy gained support, favouring wider choice and diversity of school provision (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:781). Conservative governments have by consequence been more willing to embrace the issues of the gifted and talented. There are examples where these governments have adopted policies that have lead to special schools, special classes or additional training of staff.
In addition, Australian politics have increasingly been reflecting an economical rational approach, intertwining outcomes of education with goals for the national economy. The government-funded schools have not kept up pace with the private educational sector in relation to the issue of gifted children. As a consequence of this, private or independent schools are more likely to cater for academically advanced students. However, the labour-oriented political parties have recently modified their approach to educational provision. There is a new preference for widening the benefits of education, promoting high quality schooling within the normal classroom and recognising that teaching accounts for a wider range of abilities (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:781).

### 4.1.3 Gifted Education in Australia

Despite an educational lobby fighting against organisational differentiation, the field of gifted education grew slowly but surely during the 1980s. Thanks to dedicated teachers, academics and parents alike, several gifted education programs were developed during this decade (Gross 2004:85). Organisational differentiation has in the later years been more accepted; acceleration according to ability level, enrichment of learning material and grouping gifted children together are common practices at most schools. Across Australia, seven types of provisions are to be found, including acceleration, enrichment and supplementary programs (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:785).

Despite a widespread selective school system at the beginning of last century, there are few special schools left for gifted children. Except for a few schools with competitive entrance requirements in the state of Victoria, all selective schools were closed down in the 1990s. Extension courses in the senior year of high school were presented as an alternative where the academically capable could study subjects on a different level (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:785).

In the 1990s, the practices of acceleration were broadened in scope and hence became accepted to a larger degree than before (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:787). It is observed that subject acceleration, where pupils work in their own pace within the class, is more common than skipping a whole grade. Still, there are some opposition towards these practices at some schools because of supposed negative socio-emotional outcomes or tight restrictions in the timetable. There are examples of accelerated learning programs allowing students to finish secondary school one year earlier, e.g. at the University High School in Melbourne (Bragget
Alternative extension programs allow selected secondary students to study first-year university subjects as part of the final year (Bright Futures 1995 cf. Bragget & Moltzen 2000:788).

Enrichment is the most widely used strategy across Australia. The fragmented nature of the approach is, however, common; it is referred to as enrichment activities rather than enrichment programs. The great advantage of enrichment is that it can be well-integrated within the regular classroom instruction and causes less disruption to the normal school organisation than the other approaches. A major question in regards to this is whether or not the enrichment should be for selected groups within predetermined groups (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:788).

There are also supplementary programs coordinated by the State Department of Education, district or school authorities, and occasionally by parents associations. The increasing use of information and communication technology has had an impact on the delivery of services for gifted and talented education, e.g. opening opportunities for students in rural areas. Gifted education in Australia also involves organisations such as: institutions, business companies, museums, specialist groups, universities, and colleges that provide programs for gifted children as well as professional development of teachers. Furthermore, local teacher networks to assist teachers and parents in both public and private schools to meet the needs of highly able children, e.g. through the ‘Bright Futures’ program.

**National Association for Gifted and Support Groups**

In Australia there are two important groups promoting gifted education, Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT) and devoted academics at several universities and colleges. AAEGT has several functions, such as organising conferences and workshops, publishing ‘Australasian Journal of Gifted Education’, conducting national competitions for students, acting as a lobby group, and co-operating with all State Associations. It contributes to National Conferences hosted in various states every two years. In 1989, the AAEGT organised the 8th World Conference on the Gifted and Talented in Sydney. The second group includes academics who work in universities and colleges across Australia. They are at the forefront of the movement in many states and at the national level provide strong support in teaching, writing, and research on giftedness (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:790).
4.1.4 Gifted Education in Victoria

The state of Victoria has devoted great attention to the needs of gifted children and “proved to be an early leader in gifted education” (GCTF 1983 cf. Bragget & Moltzen 2000:782). The gifted education policy is influenced by the Marland Report (1972), whereby the Renzulli model is adapted as a basis for enrichment within class (pedagogical differentiation). There have been enrichment and extension programs provided through cluster groups, mentoring, and a highly differentiated acceleration program at a high school in Melbourne where pupils were able to finish six years of secondary education in four or five years (GCTF 1983 cf. Bragget & Moltzen 2000:782).

In recent years the state has been revising its policies and adapting them to the changing view upon giftedness, aiming to embrace more inclusive approaches (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:783). Gifted education in Victoria of today includes local gifted networks, special programs, enrichment, extension and mentoring, in addition to professional development for teachers (Bright Futures 1995 cf. Bragget & Moltzen 2000:784).

4.1.5 Efforts of Developing National Strategies for Gifted Education

Even though each state has autonomy in regards to educational concerns, there have been efforts to develop a national policy on gifted education. A Senate Select Committee (1988) urged the Government to “make a clear statement that special educational strategies should be provided for gifted children throughout Australia”. The Committee published the same year the ‘Report of the Senate Select Committee of the Education of the Gifted and Talented Children’ (Commonwealth of Australia 1988). This report dealt with the programs and provisions for gifted children in Australia, concluding that “gifted children are arguably among the most disadvantaged of educationally disadvantaged groups in Australian Schools” (Gross 2004:37). Yet, it was observed that the report did not materialise until seven years after it being published. There have been several influential moves in trying to bring this topic back on the government agenda (Geake 1995 cf. Bragget & Moltzen 2000:784).

During the 1990s, the attitude towards gifted children in Australia has been moderated. It has been quite accepted by teachers that this group of children require modification in pace, level and abstractness in the curriculum. However, there is a continuous debate going on concerning how gifted education should be offered (Gross 2004:227).
4.2 Australian Curriculum Traditions

As Australia was an English colony from the end of the 18th century, many ideas have been transferred from the host country’s school system. The first European settlers were British prisoners and their guardians, but in the gold rush from the 1850s, more immigrants found their way to this southern continent (National Library of Australia 2000). The settlers’ colony acquired local autonomy and their own constitution in the first half of the 19th century, but was still influenced by philosophies present within the British Empire (Holmes & McLean 1992:124).

The first Australian schools were private initiatives or church schools. At the end of the 19th century, public education laws were implemented laying the ground for a public school system at the primary level (Australian Government 2008). The English curriculum model of essentialism was transmitted, but also adapted to the Australian context. Unlike England, the Australian society was built up by the “middle class”, favouring the egalitarian ideal, which differs from traditional English ideas.

The public secondary schools, however, had a slower development than the private/church schools (Australian Government 2008). In the first half of the 20th century, the secondary school attendance was a privilege reserved for the intellectual elite. These were selective and mainly urban schools that were designed for students who aspired to enter university. In most states, schooling was from the ages of six to fifteen by 1939, but the secondary education provision remained limited (Australian Government 2008). Elitism, however, became less evident after the education reforms in the 1960s and 1970s, when secondary schools came to include children of all levels of abilities. These comprehensive schools experienced rapid growth in the 1970s, but there still remained some selective schools with competitive academic entrance requirements. Yet, due to political changes during the 1990s, all selective schools were abolished, with a few exceptions in the state of Victoria (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:785).

Despite formal independence and a developed economy in Australia, the country maintains curricula that show similarities corresponding to their institutional counterparts in Great Britain (Holmes & McLean 1992:136). An example of this is the emerging degree of uniformity in the traditionally decentralised school system of Australia, which is also evident in the former imperial power of Great Britain.
4.3 Individualism vs. Collectivism in Australia

The education system of Australia has been through phases of collectivistic and individualistic influences. The elite secondary school system was evidently individualistic, but softened up with the mass education provision from the 1960s. The fact that there are several types of educational provisions for gifted children shows that the individual needs, not only for the ones who struggle, are also taken into account.

Within the Triandis’ framework, Australia is labelled as a horizontal individualist culture (Triandis 1995:46). The main reason for the horizontal traits is that members of the upper-class were a distinct minority when the Australian society became organised, e.g. unlike the creation of the United States’ constitution. The Australian society was built upon an egalitarian ideal stemming from the dominant middle class.
4.4 Recent Developments in Australia

4.4.1 New Public Management

Similar to the United Kingdom and a number of other Anglophone areas, Australia has been strongly influenced by New Public Management (NPM) in the later years. NPM has opened up for more responsibility to the private sector and emphasises public choice (Peters et al. 2000:121). Despite increasing support for the new “managerialism”, the Australian public system has not forfeited its authority in educational matters (Morrow and Torres 2000:37). The state is still the main provider and regulator of educational provision, even though there has been greater room for private enterprises to offer competitive educational alternatives.

The unification of the Australian education system may also be seen within this framework;

“In Australia there have been ambitious attempts to reconstitute federalism so as to create an efficient national economic infrastructure in the context of a neoliberal reading of desirable responses to globalization of the economy. This strategy is evident in the moves toward national approaches in schooling, which still remains the constitutional prerogative of the states and territories.” (Lindgard 2000:101)

In a response to the processes of globalisation, power structures in Australian education have changed, giving more power to private institutions.

4.4.2 Towards a National Approach for Gifted Education?

After some years with heavy resistance to gifted education in Australia, the attitudes were moderated during the 1990s. It has been quite accepted by teachers that this group of children require modification in pace, level and abstractness in the curriculum. However, there is a debate concerning how gifted education should be offered (Gross 2004:227). There are still great variations in the gifted education practices from state to state. In most states special classes, high schools and programs have been established. Acceleration is used more comprehensively in some states than others. Several universities offer subjects in gifted education in Master of Education degree programs (Gross 2004:277).

In 2006, an extensive rapport by the states and territories was published, entitled The Future of Schooling in Australia. The paper proposed a new national framework for Australian schooling, based on the assumption that “the quality and performance of teachers,
schools and jurisdictions are central to the life prospects of every student and to national prosperity” (The State of Queensland 2007). There is an awareness of the importance of schooling to future economic prosperity. In other words, human capital development in schools is considered as important for both the child and the society. Even if gifted education is not explicitly mentioned in this paper, there are some measures that may influence the field.

Furthermore, the report deals with Australia’s comparative international education performance concerning the changes made, and further challenges to take into account. Even though Australia has scored well on the PISA test, the importance of continual development of quality is acknowledged to ensure the country’s competitiveness.

To ensure the delivery of high quality school education, the rapport proposes a greater degree of uniformity in the Australian school system. A strategy document called the ‘Action Plan’ will be implemented by the departments of education in understanding with stakeholders in both private and public sector. This plan compels all states and territories to make the same commitment to Australian education.

One of the commitments of the Australian school is “equality of opportunity” i.e. providing all students the chance to succeed. The report emphasises that there is no contradiction between equity and quality. The aim is not to remove individual differences among students in educational performance, but rather to weaken the link between social background and performance (Council for the Australian Federation 2007:17). Thus, it is acknowledged that levelling down is not a satisfactory measure in assuring equity. Personalised learning for full development of the particular capabilities of the pupil is considered as a pathway to success for the individual and the national prosperity (Council for the Australian Federation 2007:10).

In addition the governments are committed to

“(…) foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations (…) and uphold the contribution of schooling to a socially cohesive and culturally rich society” (Council for the Australian Federation 2007:32)

These are means to improve the quality of the Australian education. Hereby provisions for gifted children and choice of educational alternative are justified to a large extent.

As the education systems in the different states and territories are converging, it is likely that the practice of gifted education will be more standardised across regional borders of Australia. It is difficult to know what impact the uniformity of education in Australia will
have upon gifted education. Taking the current policies favouring individualism into consideration, it is likely that this development will be beneficial for gifted pupils in Australia.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter deals with the same elements as the previous chapter, although this information covers the Victorian or/and Australian context. Hence, the ideological background, curriculum theories, recent education policy development and traces of individualism vs. collectivism have been presented. Despite strong egalitarian traditions, Australia has developed a variety of approaches towards gifted and talented children. Victoria is one of the states with a range of opportunities for these children, within and outside the public educational system. The dominant curriculum tradition in Australia is essentialism, a more elitist approach than the three other traditions. Furthermore, New Public Management has been a dominant concept in the Australian educational policy the last decade, despite a growing scepticism towards increased neo-liberalistic influence on the school system. Another trend within the policy debate is an aim for a national approach to education. According to Triandis’ study of individualistic and collectivistic societies, the Australian school system may be placed within the horizontal individualistic framework.
5. Document Analysis and Findings

In order to answer the problem statement: “What contextual factors influence the official educational approach towards gifted and talented children?”, it is necessary to find what the official approach to this issue really entails. The two previous chapters presenting the country-specific context of Norway and Victoria (Australia) provided some useful information about this matter. However, it is time to take a closer look at the curricula and policy documents produced in the two geographical areas. The intention of this chapter is to consider the possibilities for differentiation and ideological orientations. More specifically, the focus on gifted pupils in particular, acknowledgement of uniqueness and difference, differentiation strategies and main purposes of education are taken into consideration. In the following the sample will be presented, succeeded by the main findings of the content analysis. Finally the results from the analysis will be elaborated in further detail.
5.1 Sample of Documents

Purposeful sampling procedures were employed to select relevant policy papers and curricula for the analysis. All the documents are official papers that deal with differentiation, adapted education or principles of education. The documents range in time from 1997 to 2008. The following sample of document has been studied:

5.1.1 Australian Sample

From the variety of Australian policy documents, there are eight documents that are regarded as particularly relevant in answering the research questions in this thesis. Firstly, the follow-up to the 1988 report by the Senate Select Committee on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children, *The Education of Gifted and Talented Children* (Commonwealth of Australia 2001). The report thoroughly discusses the issue of gifted children and their education, and is therefore of particular interest.

Secondly, The Adelaide Declaration on *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* (Australian Government 1999), consists of nationally agreed goals, where the states and territories have found areas of common concern. This declaration will be taken into account as it has been significant for the development of Victorian education after 1999.

Thirdly, policy documents connected to the ‘Curriculum and Standards Framework’, *CFS II* (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2002, second edition), and the principles of this curriculum, *About the CFS II* (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2004b), will be included in the sample. The *Blueprint for Government Schools* (State of Victoria 2003) states future directions for education in the Victorian government school system (the government’s reform agenda) and *Curriculum Victoria: Foundations for the Future* (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2004a) is a report of an analysis of national and international curriculum and standards documents for the compulsory years.

The ‘Curriculum and Standards Framework’ was replaced by the ‘Victorian Essential Learning Standards’ (VELS) in 2006. Policy and principles are presented in: *Victorian Essential Learning Standards, Overview* (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005) and *Principles of Learning and Teaching P-12* (State of Victoria 2007), which also will be analysed.
5.1.2 Norwegian Sample

Of the Norwegian policy documents and papers linked to the two recent curricula, six documents are of particular interest. The first two chapters of the national curriculum of Norway from 1997 will be analysed: including the *Core curriculum* (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997a), and the *Principles and Guidelines for Compulsory Education* (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997b).

Furthermore, some of the policy documents related to the reform ‘Knowledge Promotion’ are important: A report from the Committee for Quality in Primary and Secondary Education in Norway (Kvalitetsutvalget) *I første rekke* (Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003), the report to the Norwegian parliament no. 30 (Stortingsmelding nr. 30) *Kultur for læring* (Det kongelige utdanning- og forskingsdepartement 2003-2004), and *The Quality Framework in the Knowledge Promotion* (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2008).

As there are no policy documents dealing with the issue of gifted education, a document dealing with the issue of ‘adapted education’ in Norway has been selected instead: the report to the Norwegian parliament no. 16 (Stortingsmelding nr. 16) *...Og ingen sto igjen: Om livslang læring* (Det kongelige kunnskapsdepartement 2006-2007).

5.1.3 Process of Analysis

These findings attempt to provide some of the answers to the research questions, especially questions 3 and 4. The dichotomies illustrated in model 2.1 have been of major help to extract the essential parts of these texts. The different dichotomies have functioned as categories to classify the different units of analysis (e.g. words or units of meaning). Firstly, the documents were summarised, then recurring themes related to the research questions were detected, and the essence was extracted. Only the essence of the results is presented in this chapter, as the whole analysis would be too extensive. While analysing the document there has been a great effort in being aware of context.

As all the documents have been published by official authorities, the quality of the sample is assumed to be high. According to Bryman’s four elements of document assessment (2004:381 or point 1.6.2), the origins of the documents are not questionable, they should not contain biases, they are typical of its kind and they are all comprehensible.
5.2 Findings

5.2.1 Summary of Findings

Finding 1:
The needs of children with particular abilities or talents are scarcely mentioned in the Australian or in the Norwegian educational policy documents. However, there is one major exception in the Australian sample.

Finding 2:
Norwegian and Victorian (Australian) policy documents and curricula do both acknowledge differences in children’s abilities and aim to cater for the various needs, yet in different ways.

Finding 3:
Victorian (Australian) policy documents and curriculum give greater flexibility in terms of organisational differentiation than Norwegian documents. However, the most recent curriculum reform in Norway has opened up for more local decision making, also when it comes to organising teaching and learning.

Finding 4:
Victorian (Australian) education policy and curricula has a greater emphasis on standards, achievements and outcomes than do the Norwegian policy and curricula.

Finding 5:
Norwegian and Victorian (Australian) policy documents state aims for equality of educational opportunity. In contrast to Australian education policy, the societal purpose of education is explicit in Norwegian policy documents.
5.2.2 Finding 1: Attention to Gifted Children in Particular

The sample of documents that has been analysed show that the needs of gifted children is not the centre of attention in Norwegian or Victorian (Australian) policy. Norwegian and Victorian curricula do not mention gifted children, and the policy papers contain only a couple of references to the issue of children with particular abilities. However, there are two exceptions. The Norwegian report from Committee for Quality in Primary and Secondary School has brought up the issue (Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003), whilst the Australian Senate Committee’s extensive report from 2001 discusses and comes with recommendations for future gifted education in Australian states.

Results from the Norwegian Sample

There are no policy documents explicitly dealing with the issue of gifted and talented pupils in Norway. The word ‘gifted’ is mentioned, twice, although in a broad sense of the word:

“Society’s progress is not only dependent on extraordinary contributions from a gifted few, but on countless contributions over long periods of time by a large number of ordinary people”

The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs (1997a:12)

In this quote the “gifted few” stands in opposition to the notion of “ordinary people”, whose numerous contributions are as valuable as the extraordinary work of the ones of the gifted. The next quotation refers to gifted learners while defending the impact of social well-being in school classes irrespective of abilities:

“Research reveals great variations in the impact of school classes on pupils, but not that there is any opposition between doing well and feeling well. Classes which are most congenial socially, are often most conducive educationally, for gifted as well as for weaker learners” (ibid. 1997:23)

However, the report of the Quality Committee, I første rekke, is the only Norwegian policy documents that brings up the issue of gifted children. This report refers to the previously mentioned report of Birkemo from 2002 (see chapter 3.1.):

“The starting point of today’s compulsory education is that education should be adapted to all pupils. Hence, compulsory education should be organised to include all. The educational system is, however, put to a hard test in the process, and there are difficulties related to its adaptation in regards to the weaker pupils and challenges related to the academically gifted pupils”

(Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:83, my translation)
It is a recognised fact that there are difficulties in relation to translating adapted education into practice. The gifted children are acknowledged, by indirectly implying that they have particular needs that must be met.

“When it comes to especially gifted pupils, it is assumed that these manage sufficiently well, and there are very seldom measures provided other than the ordinary class organisation. This practice has from time to time been criticised, but criticism of this practice has very seldom lead to any particular change” (ibid. 2003:84, my translation)

By bringing up Birkemo’s research, the Quality Committee claims that the education for gifted children is not sufficient and that the Norwegian school is not challenging enough.

The principles of the curriculum of 2006, the Knowledge Promotion, also account for the more able pupils by stating the following:

“When working on their school subjects, all the pupils will encounter challenges that they must strive to master and which they can master alone or with others. This also applies to pupils with special difficulties or particular abilities and talents in different areas. When pupils work together with adults or each other, the diversity of abilities and talents may strengthen the community and the learning and development of the individual” (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2008:3)

Hence, also pupils with particular abilities are expected to meet challenges at their stage of development, and they must be given task they have to work for to accomplish.

**Results from the Australian Sample**

The report ‘The Education of Gifted and Talented Children’ (Commonwealth of Australia 2001) provides an in-depth inquiry of the Australian approach to the gifted children. The committee has received close to 300 submissions from individuals and organisations, and has arranged hearings to discuss their findings. The issue of giftedness and its related problems, the schooling and identification process of gifted pupils, differentiation approaches, teacher training and the role of the commonwealth are brought up in this extensive report.

The inquiry was held as a result of a continuing concern about whether the Australian education system adequately responds to the needs of gifted children. Senator Jacinta Collins, the chairwoman of the committee, states the following in the foreword:
“There has been little progress in provision for gifted children since 1988\(^1\). All interest groups agree that there are continuing problems. Gifted children have special needs in the education system; for many their needs are not being met; and many suffer underachievement, boredom, frustration and psychological distress as a result” (Commonwealth of Australia 2001/Foreword)

Deriving from main findings of the inquiry, the report committee presents 20 recommendations for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), presented in its entirety below:

1. **MCEETYA** should expand the national reporting framework for school education to focus on not only minimum benchmarks but also high achievement targets for gifted children.

2. **MCEETYA** should commission research into the reasons for negative attitudes to high intellectual ability.

3. Peak education policy documents such as the Adelaide Declaration or State/Territory equivalents, where they refer to special needs or individual differences, should make it clear that ‘special needs’ includes giftedness.

4. Training for teachers to identify giftedness should pay particular attention to the need to identify gifted children who have disadvantages such as low socio-economic status, rural isolation, physical disability or Indigenous background.

5. **MCEETYA** should develop a strategy setting out goals for differentiating the curriculum for the gifted.

6. The Commonwealth should propose that MCEETYA develop a consistent policy encouraging suitable acceleration for the gifted.

7. **MCEETYA** should develop a consistent policy exploring the options for ability grouping and supporting ability grouping as a way of meeting the needs of the gifted, whether in selective or comprehensive schools.

8. The Commonwealth should propose to MCEETYA that states with selective schools or classes should research the effects and outcomes of selective schooling.

9. Policies on gifted education should include discussion of the resource implications and the sourcing of the necessary resources.

10. **MCEETYA** should investigate the options for wider provision of centres of excellence in the public school system.

11. The Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee, in consultation with school education authorities, should develop a policy providing more flexible university entry and study options for gifted student\(^2\)’s.

12. The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) should investigate and report on the profile of postgraduate studies in gifted education over the last five years, in particular whether postgraduate funding policies have had detrimental effects on participation in such studies. DETYA should monitor the effect of the new Postgraduate Education Loan Scheme in this regard.

13. The Commonwealth should fund targeted postgraduate places for gifted education studies.

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\(^1\) The Report of the Senate Select Committee was published in 1988 (see chapter 4.1.5)

\(^2\) The term ‘students’ are more frequently used than ‘pupils’ in Australian policy documents. In this paper, the term ‘pupil’ is employed, except for in quotations
14. The Commonwealth should propose to MCEETYA that State and Territory education authorities should require, as a condition of employment, that newly graduated teachers have at least a semester unit on the special needs of gifted children in their degrees. This should include training in identification of gifted children and the pedagogy of teaching them.

15. The Commonwealth should specify professional development on issues to do with giftedness as a priority in the Quality Teacher Programme.

16. The Commonwealth should propose to MCEETYA that State and Territory education authorities should require that teachers in selective schools and classes have suitable gifted education qualifications. The authorities should ensure that the necessary professional development is available. The Commonwealth should support this through the Quality Teacher Programme.

17. MCEETYA should develop a national strategy on education of the gifted.

18. The Commonwealth should fund a national research and resource centre on gifted education.

19. The Commonwealth should amend the guidelines for targeted programs for schools to confirm that the disadvantage suffered by gifted children whose needs are not met is within the meaning of ‘educational disadvantage’.

20. The Commonwealth through MCEETYA should support development of national curriculum materials to differentiate the curriculum for gifted children.

(Commonwealth of Australia 2001/Summary)

Recommendation 5, 6 and 7 concerning differentiation practices are particularly noteworthy, as well as recommendation number 17 dealing with a national strategy for gifted education in Australia.

The report has also listed the gifted education provisions in all Australian states, according to Dr McCann’s submission\(^3\). She has found that there are four Mentor schools that were founded in 1999 which provide exemplary programs, and established thereby a model for other schools at primary level, which are linked to a tertiary institution for research purposes. There are also a number of ‘Host schools’ that have indicated readiness in putting gifted as a priority. At secondary level there were 17 schools offering select entry accelerated learning programs with a coordinator for the program in each school at the beginning of 2000, in addition to a University High School commenced in 1981. The state has also a Manager of Gifted Education, three Project Officers and Local Gifted Network Coordinators in all regions, to provide support for teachers and parents of gifted pupils (Commonwealth of Australia 2001/Appendix 6).

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\(^3\) Gifted Education Coordinator and Senior Lecturer at Flinders University, South Australia
5.2.3 Finding 2: Acknowledgement of Difference

Individual differences are acknowledged in policy documents from both geographical areas. The importance of implementing efforts to meet the needs of all children is mentioned in most of the sampled documents. Australian policy documents rely on flexible learning programs to meet the variety of learning needs, while Norwegian policy relies on the principle of adapted education to cater for the different abilities.

Results from Norwegian Sample

Norwegian curricula and policy documents indicate several times that differences in children’s abilities are acknowledged:

“Learners come to school eager to learn and wanting to be taken seriously, to be esteemed for being who they are, with a need to be uplifted and challenged, with a desire to test their powers and stretch their muscles. Good teaching embraces these traits - and addresses the fact that different pupils have different needs, abilities and aspirations in different fields and phases”
(The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997a:21)

The need for challenge for pupils at school is a clear aim in this quotation from the curriculum of 1997. The need to see all pupils as well as each pupil is pointed out (ibid. 1997:7, 19). Adapted education has been a stressed principle in Norwegian education policy:

“In order to meet pupils’ different backgrounds and abilities, the school for all must be an inclusive community with room for everyone. The diversity of backgrounds, interests and abilities must be met with a diversity of challenges. Suitably adapted education is a necessary and prominent principle in compulsory school”
(The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997b:Characteristics of the main stages)

The principle of adapted education is in this quotation linked to diversity and inclusiveness. Need for challenges at different levels are also mentioned in this regard.

Adapted education as principle is also discussed in policy papers leading up to the Knowledge Promotion reform. These documents state a need for more specific differentiation as a means to adapt the educational provision:
“(...) the principle aims at covering all aspects of schooling; demanding that all aspects of education including syllabus, learning methods, organisation, and learning material are adapted to the different standings of the pupils. Adapted education calls for different treatment and in-depth study when working with the syllabus, together with variation in nature, level, amount, tempo, and progression” (LS 2001: Spesialundervisning i grunnskole og videregående opplæring cf. Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:84, my translation)

With the Knowledge Promotion reform, the need for adapting the educational provision according to children’s different learning strategies was set on the agenda. The term ‘læringsstrategier’ (learning strategies) was mentioned nearly 30 times in the report I første rekke (Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003) and 9 times in the report Culture for Learning (2003). In comparison this expression was not a theme in former policy papers in the sample.

In the Quality Framework in the Knowledge Promotion the focus is also on catering for children’s different abilities:

“The school and the apprenticeship-training enterprise shall: give all pupils and apprentices/trainees equal opportunities to develop their abilities and talents individually and in cooperation with others; (...)” (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2008:1)

The curriculum also acknowledges that: “Pupils have different points of departure, use different learning strategies and differ in their progress in relation to the nationally stipulated competence aims” (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2008:3). These quotations state that pupils prefer to learn in different ways and that their progressions vary. They all have the same right to develop their abilities. Equal possibilities are pointed out to a further extent in the 16th Report to the Storting of 2006-2007:

“Everybody should have the same opportunities for developing themselves and their gifts. A society characterised by community and equality provide the best opportunities for the individual’s possibilities to realise their own individual life projects” (Det kongelige kunnskapsdepartement 2006-2007:7, my translation)

Policy and curriculum in Norway put an emphasis on individual differences and aim to provide educational responses to various abilities, by catering for different learning styles or strategies, and adapted education.
Results from Australian Sample

The first national goal of Australian schooling in the Adelaide declaration states that: “Schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students” (Australian Government 1999:2). This principle is also emphasised in Victorian curriculum and policy documents. The Blueprint for Government Schools states for example the following:

“The Government aims to improve the learning outcomes for all students. This can only be achieved if we acknowledge the diversity of student needs in the development of local and system-wide responses. This applies obviously to curriculum and organisational arrangements, which must cater for different learning styles and challenge all students” (State of Victoria 2003:13)

This quotation expresses several features. Most important in this regard, a great variety of learning needs have to be met (see also Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2002:foreword ‘meeting the needs of all students’, State of Victoria 2003:8 ‘cater for all needs’). Furthermore, the pupils have a range of learning styles that the teachers must take into account, as well as making sure that the pupils are challenged according to their learning stage. Diversity of learning and thinking styles is mentioned several other times in this paper (See State of Victoria 2003:5, 13-15, 24).

Policies in conjunction with the VELS do also states the importance of ‘learning for all’ (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005:4). The third principle of learning and teaching states that: “Students' needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests are reflected in the learning program” (State of Victoria 2007:1). The pupil’s ability must be considered and catered for at school, and the pupils must face learning material that stretches them to learn more than they already know. The school must provide for the range of abilities through various ways:

“Determining students’ differing abilities and providing support when it is needed; acknowledging students’ progress and scaffolding learning to maximise success; (...) Providing students with realistic but challenging goals and recognising the effort they put towards achieving these goals” (State of Victoria 2007:4)

The pupils are to meet challenges at their own specific level. The importance of providing for different learning styles is also pointed out in this paper:

“Providing for a range of learning styles or modalities within teaching sessions and from one teaching session to another in terms of both teacher input and student learning experiences; Helping students to understand their own specific learning needs and providing choice to cater for the range of those needs (...)” (State of Victoria 2007:7)
In order to account for different learning styles, the schools have to adjust the teaching and learning as well as providing choices to cater for these differences. Furthermore, the VELS has general standards for each level, but there is room for development at different rates. Even though the pupils are in the same year, they might be working at different levels (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005:9).

5.2.4 Finding 3: Organisational Differentiation

Victorian policy and curriculum gives room for flexibility in terms of organisational differentiation. The organisation of pupils is decided locally, and it is possible to take courses from senior levels in years 9 and 10. Norwegian policy in the 1990s was centred on the Unified School principle and aimed for the same organisation of all children throughout the nation. The most recent curriculum reform has however opened up for more local decision making and organisational differentiation. It is even theoretically possible for pupils in the lower secondary school to study subjects, or parts of subjects, from upper secondary school.

Results from the Norwegian Sample

In the policy papers related to the curriculum reform of 1997 shows that the principle of the Unified School is alive and well:

“The compulsory school is based on the principle of one school for all. The compulsory school shall provide equitable and suitably adapted education for everyone in a coordinated system of schooling based on the same curriculum. Compulsory school follows the same basic structure throughout the country. In principle, all pupils shall follow the same course of schooling and work on the same subjects” (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997b:One School for All)

The Norwegian compulsory school is meant to provide a common education for all. In this quote, the word ‘same’ is stated four times, same curriculum, same basic structure, same course of schooling, and same subjects. Thus, the principle of ‘one school for all’ outlined in this curriculum may be seen as a contradiction to organisational differentiation. Yet, it is stressed that the pupils are entitled to an adapted mode of teaching, also in terms of the range of abilities within the class:
“The mode of teaching must not only be adapted to subject and content, but also to age and maturity, the individual learner and the mixed abilities of the entire class”
(The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997a:19)

The report *I første rekke* (Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003) report calls for adaption of all aspects of schooling, including organisational differentiation (LS 2001: Spesialundervisning i grunnskole og videregående opplæring cf. Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:84). In terms of ‘basis grouping’, the report states that, with more freedom of the individual schools, there are greater opportunities to organise the children in other groups than do ordinary classes according to age level:

“As the schools are given the freedom to organise the pupils in other groups, there will be opportunities to create new functional units that makes differentiation an option, hence making a real adaptation to the individual pupil possible. This will increase the possibilities for varied approaches to teaching and organisation
(Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:96, my translation)

Differentiation for the whole group of pupils may be a first step towards organisational differentiation for gifted children:

“Each school may organise the education in such a way that is appropriate according to the needs that exist in the collective body of pupils. Hence, this will be an organisational differentiation that includes the whole body of pupils”
(ibid. 2003:96, my translation)

The report points out that each school may organise the teaching and learning so that it fits local needs (ibid. 2003:96). Locally adapted solutions are also brought up in the report to the Norwegian parliament no. 30 (Det kongelige utdanning- og forskingsdepartement 2003-2004). The report suggests greater flexibility in organisation of education. It stipulates that 25% of the hours in each subject are optimal for the school in organising according to local conditions and individual needs (ibid. 2003-2004:9, 23, and 51).

The paper states a need for organisational differentiation, e.g. the possibility to offer practical activities or specialisation as alternatives to the normal education provision (ibid. 2003-2004:59). In addition, the report suggests introducing subjects from upper secondary education and training in the lower secondary as an ‘appetiser’ for further studies. This practice aims to challenge the pupils with academic interests (ibid. 2003-2004:10, 59 and 63), e.g.:
"The committee suggests, therefore, that pupils at lower secondary school get the opportunity to choose modules from the first year of upper secondary school. This will give pupils with academic interests more challenges, whilst pupils with practical orientations can see what they are capable of within their own particular fields of interest" (ibid. 2003-2004:147, my translation)

Furthermore, the report opens up for organising the curriculum into modules to support individual progression and facilitate adapted education (ibid. 2003-2004:35).

The most recent policy paper from the sample confirm that there is still a 25% local choice of the hours spent on each subject and that it is possible to take subject ‘appetisers’ from upper secondary school at the lower secondary level (Det kongelige kunnskapsdepartement 2006-2007:83). The idea of modules is not mentioned in this paper.

**Results from Australian Sample**

The Victorian curriculum of 2002, Curriculum and Standards Framework (CFS), is a flexible framework which does not prescribe specific ways of transmitting the curriculum:

> “While the boundaries between phases of student development are variously defined, CSF levels have been grouped in three broad stages to reflect changing priorities over the first eleven years of schooling. This grouping is not intended to constrain schools as they develop their own approaches to curriculum organisation and delivery” (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2002: Curriculum priorities and the stages of schooling)

This curriculum gave each school the chance to develop their own ways of teaching and learning, as well as organising the curriculum activities. The principles of CFS states more clearly that also the organisation of the classroom activities is decided locally at the schools and by the individual teacher, here exemplified by the framework for level 4 and 5:

> “The flexibility and range of options provided at levels 4 and 5 of the CFS allows for different organisational arrangements, grouping practices, core-option approaches, integrated curriculum and vertical and block timetabling – all approaches typically used to encourage students to exercise choices or explore different emphases within and across the key learning areas”

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2004b:6)

The paper also states the possibility of beginning the post-compulsory pathway by undertaking a VCE\(^4\) study in year 10. Such extension outcomes are provided in cases where

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\(^4\) Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE): Certificate of completed upper secondary education
pupils have already demonstrated achievement at level 6 (year 9 and 10) (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2004b:1, 6).

Flexibility of organisation in the senior years of schooling is carried on in the VELS. As it is acknowledged that pupils develop differently, the standards are adapted to the stages they are at:

“While Table 2 below outlines a general expectation of when students will achieve the various standards, students will develop at different rates. Some students in Year 5, for example, may still be working towards achieving the standards at Level 3 while others need to be introduced to knowledge and skills covered by the learning focus statement at Level 5” (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005:9)

The schools are still allowed to implement different programs so that their pupils may take higher-level programs at an earlier stage:

“The standards enable schools to construct coherent programs, which include (...) the capacity for students to pursue pathway-related studies which meet their needs, and dovetail with the programs available in Years 11 and 12” (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005:3)

Hence, it is possible to complete classes at higher levels during the last two years at compulsory school for the advanced pupils in order to reduce the workload in the post-compulsory years.

5.2.5 Finding 4: Standards

By reading policies and curricula from the two areas, it strikes me how often terms such as achievement, standards and outcomes occur in Australian policy compared to Norwegian documents. Excellence is a frequently used term in Australian documents, whereas it is scarcely mentioned in those documents equivalent in Norway. However, the Norwegian curriculum of 2006 points out the need for achievement standards to a greater degree than earlier.

Results from the Norwegian Sample

The Norwegian sample scarcely emphasis achievement and outcomes, except for the importance of challenging the pupils which was mentioned under the ‘Finding 2: Acknowledgement of Difference’ section. However, the report by the Quality Committee raises the issue of expectations of pupil performance, related the abilities of each pupil:
“(…) children and adolescents must experience in succeeding during the basic education scheme, motivating them, and stimulating their eagerness to learn. This accomplished by making demands and expecting a measure of effort, whilst supporting their effort to realise their gifts and talents”
(Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:47, my translation)

In the report *Culture for learning*, there are arguments for introducing five basic skills that are integrated in the syllabi for all subjects. In relation to this there is a call for standards at certain levels:

“To secure a continuous development of the basic skills of the student through the 13 year course of schooling, requirements to skills must be clearly stated at the different levels throughout the whole educational span”
(Det kongelige utdanning- og forskingsdepartement 2003-2004:33, my translation)

The result of such a recommendation may be that more attention is given to achievement, and therefore to the advantage for gifted learners. However, more recent papers do not emphasis standard to a great extent though.

**Results from the Australian Sample**

Keeping high educational standards, both for the national economical competitiveness and individual benefit, is pointed out several times in the *National Goals*. Common standards for the Australian school, in order to improve public confidence to the government schools, are presented as a rationale for stating common national goals of schooling:

“The achievement of these common and agreed national goals entails a commitment to collaboration for the purposes of: (…) increasing public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students’ levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated”
(Australian Government 1999:2)

The second national goal states the importance of “high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding” (Australian Government 1999:3). The Adelaide Declaration also states an expectation to the governments in each state and territory of striving for excellence, as well as providing a variety of choices for their pupils:

“Governments set the public policies that foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations, safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling (…)” (Australian Government 1999:1)
The Victorian policy in the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CFS) reflects the national goals by focusing on standards, even affecting the title of the curriculum.

"CFS promotes: an increased emphasis on standards and learning outcomes, and accountability for their achievement by students (...)"
(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2002: The CSF and National Goals)

The Blueprint for Government Schools (2003) brings in the issue of human capital building, to increase pupils’ achievement for the economical benefit of the society:

"The demands of our increasingly sophisticated economy and a more complex and rapidly changing society require us to address these poor outcomes and, indeed, to improve educational outcomes for all students" (State of Victoria 2003:2)

Furthermore, it is stated that:

"The result will be a government school system that delivers on high expectations for all, clearly articulated responsibilities and rigorous accountability to deliver improved student outcomes" (State of Victoria 2003:12)

The school system as a whole, as well as the individual pupil, is expected to perform at its best level. The paper emphasises more than once that high expectations for all, in opposition to minimal level of achievement, is required to ensure improved outcomes. The Blueprint also states the value of having of several competing options, but is also warning against unfettered competition:

"Government schools are currently administered according to the philosophy and mechanisms of self-managing schools. Victoria has one of the most devolved school management approaches among OECD nations. The previous government used this model to encourage schools to compete with each other to attract students, as a means of improving their performance. The current government has modified the approach in order to remove the worst excesses of the model"
(State of Victoria 2003:11)

The New Public Management (NPM) is a firmly rooted in Australian education. The Victorian reform agenda stated in this policy document actually modifies the principle of NPM, so that the diversity of learning needs in the state is also taken into consideration (See also State of Victoria 2003:11).

The paper Curriculum Victoria: Foundations for the Future (2004) stresses the need for a curriculum that is more adjusted for the 21st century. The increasing amount of knowledge has made it critical for the school to extract what is essential learning.
“Using the four key elements\(^5\) a curriculum for the 21st century can be conceived as: (...) identifying clear standards to be achieved by all students and higher standards for those who are more able or specialising in a particular area”
(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2004a:1)

Higher standards for the pupils who are more advanced in one or more areas are set as a goal for the development of the new curriculum of Victoria. Since pupils are different, they also need to be met with different expectations. For those pupils who are able to achieve on higher levels, the expectations in the curriculum have to be adjusted to their specific level.

The curriculum that was implemented in Victoria after these recommendations was entitled ‘Victorian Essential Learning Standards’. As the name suggest, pupils’ outcomes are put clearly on the agenda. These standards give a clear idea of what is expected of the pupils, to give feedback to parents and for the improvement of the learning program:

“The Standards identify what is important for students to achieve at different stages of their schooling, set standards for those achievements and provide clear basis for reporting to parents and for planning programs”
(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005:1)

Principles of Teaching and Learning linked to the VELS, highlights the importance of having expectations to what pupils can achieve. Principle 4.3 states that the teachers should have high expectations to the pupils’ achievement. It is suggested that the teachers show this component by, e.g.:

“Using language that implies an expectation and a confidence that students will work effectively and achieve at a high level; (...) Not accepting work that is just ‘good enough’ and encouraging students to produce work at the standard they are capable of” (State of Victoria 2007:13)

Giving the pupils the chance to be challenged, achievement is also believed to be higher.

5.2.6 Finding 5: Societal Purpose

Victorian schooling is set to be socially just; especially when it comes to achievement, in the Norwegian school the societal function of the Norwegian school is more explicit. The Norwegian Unified School principle is based on social equalisation as a rationale for education. However, this is less evident in the most recent curriculum reform.

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\(^5\) Four key elements were identified as ‘best practice’ curriculum: equity and inclusiveness, encouragement of innovation and creativity, clarity and focus in content specification and assessment for learning (Curriculum Victoria 2004:1).
Results from the Norwegian Sample

The social aspect of schooling and the concern of the disadvantaged pupils are striking features of the Core Curriculum of 1997. The learning process should be challenging for all, but the social function of schooling is especially important:

“A good school and a good class should provide enough space and enough challenge for everyone to sharpen their wits and grow. But it must show particular concern for those who get stuck, struggle stubbornly and can lose courage”
(The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997a:19)

Here the special concern of the ones who struggle at school is especially highlighted. The social aspect is pointed out several times in the Core Curriculum documents in the sample, for example:

“Research reveals great variations in the impact of school classes on pupils, but not that there is any opposition between doing well and feeling well. Classes which are most congenial socially, are often most conducive educationally, for gifted as well as for weaker learners” (ibid. 1997a:23)

Socially comfortable schooling is here linked to achievement, and pointed out as an advantage for all kinds of pupils. Discussion on standards of achievement is rather mute. In the Principles of the 1997 curriculum, the societal purpose of schooling is also the centre of attention:

“The compulsory school shall help pupils to develop their abilities by being, learning and working together. The school thus helps to reduce social inequality and to develop a sense of community between groups”
(The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997b:One School for All)

The purpose of schooling is to develop the abilities of each pupil through interaction with other pupils, as a means to reduce social inequality and strengthening the community. A more recent policy documents in the sample, the Culture for Learning (2003-2004) continues the idea of a socially just school. It is stated that the school is

“(…) expected to promote social mobility and secure economic value creation and welfare for all. School is expected to transmit values, knowledge, and skills for every individual to utilise his/her gifts and realise his/her talent”
(Det kongelige utdanning- og forskingsdepartement 2003-2004:3, my translation)

There is a double purpose of schooling, i.e. the development of the individual and securing social mobility and economic growth for all.
Results from the Australian Sample

Both equality for all in education and the importance of keeping high educational standards are pointed out in the National Goals. The third national goal states that “Schooling should be socially just”. The learning outcomes of the pupils should be:

“free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination (...) and of differences” and that “the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students” (Australian Government 1999:3)

The right for socially just education for all is stated, but at the same time a focus on ‘outcomes’ is included. The expression “for all”, which gives the idea of that all kinds of pupils are included, is in many of the policy papers connected to ‘outcomes’. Here are some examples:

“The demands of our increasingly sophisticated economy and a more complex and rapidly changing society require us to address these poor outcomes and, indeed, to improve educational outcomes for all students (State of Victoria 2003:2, see also 2003:12)

“Learning for all – proceeding on the basis that all students can learn given sufficient time and support, and that good schools and good teaching make a positive difference to student outcomes” (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005:4)

The democratic approach to schooling is in these quotations is closely linked to the human capital development for all. A socially just school system may be seen as an advantage as a means to improve the country’s competitiveness as a whole.
5.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented recurring themes concerning gifted children in Norwegian and Australian policy documents. My analysis revealed five distinct patterns. Firstly, the term ‘gifted children’ is not mentioned in the curricula, and scarcely mentioned in any of the policy documents. However, there is one major exception in the Australian sample, namely the report ‘The Education of Gifted and Talented Children’ (Commonwealth of Australia 2001), presenting a broad enquiry on the issue. Secondly, it is found that it is accepted that one can be different from the others, according to official papers from both geographical areas. In Norway, diversity is catered for through the principle of ‘Adapted Education’, whilst Victorian (and Australian) papers focus on pedagogical differentiation through providing for a broad range of learning styles. Thirdly, Norway has moved from unification to a moderate degree of organisational differentiation. After the Knowledge Promotion reform it is theoretical possible to take subject ‘appetisers’ from upper secondary school at lower secondary level. Victorian schools offer flexibility in organisational arrangements and extension for students that achieve well in year 9 and 10. Findings 4 and 5 concern the purposes of education. Victorian (Australian) policy documents differ radically from Norwegian documents because of the emphasis on standards and achievement. Norway has, however, given greater attention to these issues in the most recent curriculum. According to finding 5, the Norwegian school has put significant emphasis on education as a means for social equalisation. In official education papers from Victoria, equity is pointed out, yet not as explicit as in Norway.
6. Discussion

The final section of the thesis is presented in this chapter. The main findings of my literature review and document analysis will be elaborated by answering my principal research questions. The cases of Norway and Australia will be contrasted and compared in order to exemplify how contextual factors influence the official educational approach towards gifted and talented children. Finally, the role of gifted children in this two education system will be discussed in general terms.
6.1 Contextual Factors Influencing Gifted Pupils’ Education

6.1.1 Sub Question 1: Role of Gifted Pupils in Two National Contexts

My first and maybe most important, research question for discussion is as follows:

“What national-contextual factors may explain the differences in the role of the gifted in these respective areas?”

The question of why there are such great differences in educational provisions for gifted children in Norway and Victoria, triggered me to write this paper in the first place. This question deals with the explanations that are related to the national context in the specific geographical area. In the process of my literature review I think I have come closer to an answer to this question.

My assumptions related to this question were that the role of the gifted child is dependent on the historical development of schooling and the underlying ideologies that the education systems are built upon. Because Australian education stem from the British tradition of essentialism with elite schools it was assumed that there are greater possibilities for gifted learners than in Norwegian school system influenced by curriculum traditions focusing on education for all. Another assumption was that political parties also have an impact on the possibilities of educating gifted children, whereby social-democratic or left-wing parties are more resistant to special provisions for gifted children than right/liberal parties. The following elaboration will show whether my assumptions prove to be right.

**Ideological Factors**

It is found that the ideological foundations of the school system have a great impact on the degree to which education for gifted is practiced.

The Norwegian school system has from the beginning of 20th century been strongly influenced by the Unified School principle. This principle implies a belief that all children, despite background or ability, should be given the same educational provisions as far as one is able to, and in this way fight class divisions of society (Østerud 2003:149-150). Various attempts were made to compensate for individual differences. After a failure of trying to
implement course-plans in the sixties, the idea of the Unified School was reinforced (Imsen 2002:274). However, the need for some kind of differentiation measures was acknowledged by educators, leading to the principle of ‘Adapted Education’ for all pupils.

The Norwegian society is based upon egalitarianism, and the ‘Law of Jante’ is strongly integrated in many minds (Persson et al.:718). This has lead to a fundamental resistance towards intellectual excellence, making it hard to bring up the issue of gifted children in the public debate in Norway. In the school system, gifted children have no rights to special provisions except for what is included an adjusted education.

There have been few lobbies or special networks working for gifted children in Norway, thus the public debate on the issue has been until recently completely mute. In the last couple of years, Martin Ystenes and the organisation ‘Lykkelige barn’ (Happy Children) have fronted the case of gifted children in Norwegian schools. Speaking out the taboo and pointing at the issue of giftedness may change the conceptions of gifted children in this country. The educational policy documents that will be elaborated later on in this chapter show some of these tendencies.

As in the case of Norway, Australian education is built on an ideological fundament of egalitarianism. High intellectual abilities have traditionally not been socially accepted, and initiatives for gifted education have been met with a great deal of resistance in fear of elitism (Gross 2004:31). This reaction has been so dominant that it gave rise to the expression the Tall Poppy Syndrome, which has influenced the title of this particular paper (Persson et al.:718). The gifted education has therefore been a heavily contested issue.

The gifted children in Australia have, however, never been neglected as a whole. The interest for gifted children has grown since 1975, and today there are several opportunities for special provision within class, in special interests centres, support groups and more (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:785). Variations between the states are huge, but Victoria has well-developed programs for gifted and talented children. The alternative rationale of giftedness, with the contribution of Sternberg and Gardner, has softened the construct and made it easier to accept in an egalitarian ideology. Downplaying IQ and replacing the term ‘gifted pupils’ with ‘children with particular abilities’ have in particular made the issue of differentiation more accepted. One notes that 28% of Australian pupils attend private schools, putting increased pressure on the public system to take care of the gifted children in the publically run schools (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:780). Australian lobbies both in favour
of or warning against special provisions or treatment of gifted children, are active in the public debate (See Bragget & Moltzen 2000:790, Gross 2004:85).

**Education History Factors**

The origin of the school system and the dominant curriculum tradition has had a major impact on questions as what to teach, whom to teach and how to organise pupils. In the second chapter of this paper four main curriculum traditions of the western world were outlined in order to understand the rationale of different education systems. Different approaches to the above-mentioned questions distinguish the traditions of essentialism, encyclopaedism, polytechnicalism and progressivism. Especially the questions on the organisation and the purposes of education are important in relation to education of gifted children.

The Norwegian school system has its roots in a blend of different curriculum traditions. Starting out with an encyclopaedic fundament, influenced by progressivism after 1930 and partly polytechnicalism after 1945, the whole situation resulted in a school emphasising solidarity and equality as its ideological core (See Befring 2004:162, Holmes & McLean 1992:128). These three curriculum traditions all focus on ‘education for all’, but in different ways. Encyclopaedism represents universalism and standardisation. In its country of origin, France, streaming of pupils is widely practiced from secondary level. The pupil or student must reach the set standards not to fall outside the system. A ‘well-adapted’ gifted child with academic characteristics will most probably function well in an encyclopaedic system.

However, children with other characteristics with a need for environmental support or great creative space might have trouble in fitting into this system. Polytechnicalism represents a universal system, but award outstanding abilities as well as efforts. The focus on merit is advantageous for gifted children from all kinds of backgrounds, but it is not clear whether a variety of gifted behaviour, e.g. creative, is acknowledged. Progressivism promotes an individualistic and open-ended approach to education. There are great opportunities to adapt education to gifted children within such a system. However, this approach has shown to be lacking practical applicability.

Australian education has been strongly influenced by British traditions as it was a British colony and later a part of the British Empire (See Holmes & McLean 1992:124, 136). Great Britain had developed a curriculum tradition that was exported to its colonies, namely essentialism. Essentialism represents an elitist tradition, selecting according to socio-
economic class, but also, to a certain extent, ability. This tradition has been advantageous for some gifted pupils, but not necessarily for gifted from disadvantageous backgrounds. Essentialism has been the dominant curriculum tradition in Australia, however less elitist than English essentialism. Parallel to the essential influences, principles of egalitarianism developed as a reaction to the class division during the early years as colony.

**Political Factors**

The changes in the political scene have also proven to influence the role of the gifted child in Norway and Victoria, depending on whether the dominant political ideology contradicts or supports the rationale of gifted education.

The Norwegian ideal of the Unified School was developed and maintained by the social-democrats who dominated Norwegian politics for most of the 20th century. However, when the stalwarts of the Unified School were replaced by a right-centred government in 2001, a new school policy was formulated shortly after. This government advocated a so-called ‘Quality School’ with a greater focus on choice, competition and assessment than previous governments (Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002:679-680). There was a turn from a collectivistic to an individualistic approach to Norwegian schooling during the following years.

In Australia, frequent shifts in the political landscape were seen, especially during the 1980s and 1990s. Bragget and Moltzen observed a relationship between politics and the degree giftedness has been provided for in public schools in Australia (2000:781). Most of the 1980s was dominated by the social-democratic parties; there was an important effort in equalising social outcomes and supporting pupils with learning difficulties. Gifted children in Australian schools were not on the agenda, and all selective schools were abolished in the 1990s (Bragget & Moltzen 2000:785). However, when the more conservative parties gained support at the end of 1990s, it opened up for wider choice and diversity of school provision. Issues of gifted and talented pupils were targeted by this government by their policy-making, namely approving special programs for gifted pupils or providing additional training in gifted education for teachers.
General Cultural Factors

The educational ideology is closely related to whether the country has a dominant collectivistic or an individualistic culture, and if there is a horizontal or vertical organisation of the society. This leads up to the guiding questions: Does the education system have a collectivistic or individualistic approach towards teaching and learning. And: To what degree is it acknowledged as being different?

According to Triandis’ study from 1995, Norway can be characterised as a moderately individualistic culture, with several horizontal collectivistic elements (See Triandis 1995:98, 99). The Norwegian compulsory school has traditionally valued collectivistic characteristics as availability for all, an ideal of social equilibrium and equality between different groups. Co-operation and community at all levels and influence on decisions are also important traits (Imsen 2002:132). However, recent trends may have strengthened the individualistic side of the Norwegian school system.

In terms of Triandis’ framework of individualism and collectivism, Australia is labelled as a horizontal individualistic society (Triandis 1995:46). Individualism seems strengthened by the increased focus on New Public Management and privatisation. There are several indications that ‘sticking out’ in the crowd is still not fully acceptable, hence the horizontal, but somewhat moderate characteristics.

There are groups in both countries that are afraid to promote an elite, leading to resistance towards education for gifted. As this pressure group is particular influential in Norway, the resistance is stronger than a desire in developing special provisions for gifted pupils.

Conclusions

National factors are essential in understanding the role of the gifted pupils in the two studied countries and their possibilities for differentiated education. A mix of ideological, educational/historical, political and cultural factors have been analysed in order to trace similarities and differences between Norway and Victoria (Australia). The two geographical areas share some of the same contextual features, such as egalitarianism and observed resistance towards intellectual advancement among some groups of the society. The role of the gifted child in both countries has been influenced by political shifts, whereby social-
democrats have tended to be less willing to provide for gifted pupils than their political counterparts.

Nevertheless, there are major differences between the two geographical areas. Even if the egalitarian ethos has been strong in Australia, there have been lobbies promoting gifted education in Australia that have been more influential than the Norwegian promoters. Furthermore, the education history and dominant curriculum traditions are not equivalent in the two countries, whereby Australian essentialism may have proven to be more advantageous for gifted pupils than the dominant curriculum traditions in Norway. Political parties resistant to special provisions for gifted pupils have been much more significant in Norwegian politics than in Australia, making gifted education a practical impossibility in Norway until just recently. The national-contextual factors that have been compared between the two countries support Triandis’ theory that Australia is the more individualistic of the two countries. As a logical consequence there are greater possibilities for gifted in Australia than Norway.

6.1.2 Sub question 2: Gifted Pupils in a Globalised Society

The second research question deals with the potential changes there are for gifted children in a time where educational policy are heavily influenced by global trends:

*In which respects are the possibilities for educating gifted pupils changing due to current international educational trends?*

The first question to arise is: What changes have been seen in educational policy the recent times? And secondly: What impact may these changes have on gifted children? My assumption related to this sub question was that global trends have an advantageous impact on education for gifted in both education systems, especially through increased individualisation. The real effect of the global trends will probably not be seen for some years to come. Therefore, the following are still assumptions on how education for gifted may differ from former times, deriving from the study of recent research on globalisation. Furthermore: How are Norway and Victoria (Australia) responding to these trends in each specific way?
The knowledge explosion and the human capital theory have set education on the agenda, but also put a severe pressure upon educational systems worldwide. An increased competitiveness among countries and the augmenting quantities of information require new measures to keep up with the changing influences (Morrow and Torres 2000:33). As a result, several countries have experienced a changed rationale for education in order to develop human capital among its citizens. As gifted children possess a natural source of human capital, there are reasons to believe that these children are particularly taken into consideration these days in order to emancipate their potential. They are often able to acquire new knowledge quickly or develop innovative ideas, and therefore a future resource for society they are growing into. However, the human capital theory focuses on upgrading the education level of the population as a whole, instead of focusing on a smaller group of gifted (Brown and Lauder 1997a:187). Such a focus on educating the masses may even result in less attention to the individual.

Global competition and a following economical restructuring have challenged the welfare state in several countries. The public educational institutions have been criticised for not giving an adequate education for the upcoming generations, hence challenged by private institutions (Halsey et al. 1997:254). Supranational organisations are also intervening in national education policy. The pressure to implement global trends within education is tremendous (Morrow and Torres 2000:48).

International achievement tests and increased competitiveness has given knowledge greater significance. Hence, developing human capital is not only essential for economical reasons, but for the ranking of test scores. A country’s competitiveness in educational standards is still measured in terms of overall achievement.

As a result of global trends, there has been a call for a greater range of choices of educational provision, both private and public. McLean explains these tendencies and claim that the changing role of the state has put pressure upon the education system to adopt a more individualistic and competitive approach than before (McLean 1997:78). The market choice aims to “compete for students” for the benefit of the individual, whereas a common education for all and social benefits are ensured in the public alternative, by “producing social benefits beyond those that benefit only individual students and their families” (Levin 1991:187). The neo-liberal individualism advocates parents’ right to choose, and therefore more privatisation of education. By consequence, special programs or adjustment for gifted
children may be more accepted. An increased individualistic approach to education is also to a certain extent justifying the practice of organisational differentiation according to skills. Permitting achievement groups would make an important difference to the education of gifted children.

Neo-liberal drives give more attention to individualistic interests than collective needs (See McLean 1997:82). Yet, even if the private market has gained more influence, the state is still important as a funder, regulator of education and main provider of education. Equity in education and provisions to marginal groups seems best secured through some level of state intervention. Less state intervention may be a direct disadvantage for gifted children from lower socio-economic groups whose parents cannot afford to send their children to private schools.

**Observed Changes of Gifted Education Policy**

An increased focus on knowledge has also changed the conception of giftedness and the perspective on relevant skills in the globalised society. The multidimensional conceptions of giftedness have proved to be more adequate in the modern times. Other qualities, such as creative-productive intelligence, are more important to possess in a profession than ‘educability’ alone (Renzuilli 2005:267). Furthermore, the value of cultural capital is also a contested issue (Bourdieu 1997:48). Is a strong focus on gifted children preventing equality of opportunity because only children with great cultural capital opportunities get to develop their talents? Hereby, the legitimacy of the traditional differentiation practices has been challenged. Meritocracy has been criticised for giving privileges to the Western white middle-class, excluding the working class and ethnic minorities. This has in some cases led to a middle-class flight from the public schools, seemingly based on doubtful selection criteria (Halsey et al. 1997:635). The great challenge for education systems is to find alternatives in providing a sound education for pupils with a wide range of abilities from all socio-economic classes, as well as finding reasonable ways to optimise their potential.

**National Responses to Global Trends**

The Norwegian Unified School has met a lot of resistance throughout the years, especially in the 1960s with the increased focus on instrumentalism. The Unified School was criticised for
not equalising social outcomes or meeting the needs of the new global developments (Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002:675). Political changes in 2001, with a shift from social democratic to right-centred government, resulted in the demise of the Unified School. Instead the ‘Quality School’ was announced, responding to global trends of education by emphasising high standards, individualism and adjustment to market mechanisms. However, the ideal of the Unified School is deeply entrenched in many educators’ minds, toning down the fundamental changes of the Knowledge Promotion reform.

Australian policy-making has in the last decade been strongly influenced by New Public Management thinking (Peters et al. 2000:121). Public choice and private solutions have become more important, but the Australian public school system is still the main provider of education provision of Australia. In addition, a new framework for Australian schooling has been developed, aiming for a more uniform school offering in all Australian states and territories (The State of Queensland 2007). There are two possible scenarios for gifted children in a national education. On the one hand the educational approach for gifted children may be synchronised and resources shared among the states. On the other hand, there is a possibility that the states that resist organising programs for gifted children may refuse a national plan for Australian gifted education.

Conclusions

Global trends have influenced education policy and the also influence the role of gifted children in school. By possessing a natural source of human capital, their position in school seems strengthened. On a pragmatic level this may be correct; however education for the masses has been more valued. Giving gifted children the option to develop their abilities may be a vital strategy to keep up with the demands of the knowledge society. They have the possibilities to achieve high levels of knowledge and understanding, not only for their own good, but may also contribute to the country as a whole. There is also a question to whether gifted children have more advantages in a competitive and privatised society. The traditional field of gifted education has been radically challenged by these recent trends within education, as well as by the renewed conceptions of giftedness. Both Norway and Australia have in their own separate ways been influenced by the global trends within educational policy, leading to increased individualisation of educational provision. How the implementation of global trends has an impact on gifted children remains to be seen.
6.1.3 Sub Question 3: Possibilities for Differentiation

The third research question deals with the theoretical possibilities for pedagogical or organisational differentiation in the education policies of Norway and Australia.

What kinds of possibilities for differentiation of educational provisions are to be found in current policies and curricula?

In the introduction chapter I assumed that organisational differentiation was an appropriate way to provide a suitable education for gifted children. Pedagogical differentiation is also a good approach. It is, however, heavily dependent on teachers’ time, knowledge of differentiated learning approaches, and the motivation to give these particular children extra challenges. In any case, some kind of differentiation practices is far better than giving all pupils the same educational input irrespective of abilities. Questions deriving from the third research question are: Are the differentiation procedures legalised in the two geographical areas, and by what means? What approach to differentiation, pedagogical or organisational, is the most accepted in the policy documents?

Differentiation Principles in Norwegian Policy Papers

Norwegian policy on differentiation procedures has changed quite radically in the past decade. In the curriculum of 1997, the Unified School principle is still dominant. Based on the idea of ‘one school for all’, the emphasis is put on organising a national school based on the same basic structure, where pupils follow the same course of schooling, work on the same subjects and have the same curriculum (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997b:One School for All). One of the greatest criticisms of the Unified School is that it could not account for individual differences (Holm 2002 cf. Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002:676). The core curriculum from 1997 does, however, acknowledge that pupils in the Norwegian school have different needs and abilities (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997a:21).

As organisational differentiation does not fit particularly well into the Unified School framework, pupils’ individual needs should rather be catered for through the principle of ‘Adapted Education’. The Core Curriculum points out the importance of good teaching (ibid. 1997a:21). Good teaching may be seen as an alternative solution to ability grouping. It is the teacher’s responsibility to make sure that each pupil in class is ‘uplifted and challenged’
through pedagogical differentiation. It is quite obvious that differentiation according to the needs of 20-30 pupils within the same classroom is a tremendous challenge if the time and resources are not adequate. The dilemma between seeing all pupils as well as each pupil is pointed out several times in this curriculum (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997a:7, 19).

There was a noticeable reaction to the Unified School system when the liberal parties entered the Norwegian government. The new Education and Research Minister Kristin Clemet had quite other visions contradictory to the Unified School principle. These visions were outlined in the 30th report to the parliament in 2003, Culture for Learning, extending the principle of ‘Adapted Education’:

“(…) the principle aims at covering all aspects of schooling; demanding that all aspects of education including syllabus, learning methods, organisation, and learning material are adapted to the different standings of the pupils. Adapted education calls for different treatment and in-depth study when working with the syllabus, together with variation in nature, level, amount, tempo, and progression” (LS 2001: Spesialundervisning i grunnskole og videregående opplæring cf. Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003-2004:84, my translation)

In order to account for all kinds of needs, a more specific set of differentiation measures are necessary. According to this view, teachers may give pupils different syllabi and learning material, as well as organising the pupils in other groups than the traditional class. Pupils with particular abilities are allowed to work at a different level, pace or progression than their peers. Providing for different learning strategies is also emphasised in this policy document.

The idea of organisational differentiation is developed further by suggesting the possibilities for schools to provide specialisation opportunities (Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003-2004:59). In this regard one has opened up for introducing higher-level subjects at lower secondary school in order to challenge pupils with academic interests (ibid. 2003-2004:63). The organisation into modules has also been suggested so as to facilitate differentiation procedures (ibid. 2003-2004:35). These measures of both pedagogical and organisational differentiation give several new possibilities to account for the needs of gifted and talented pupils in Norway.

The report from the ‘Committee for Quality’ also stresses possibilities for differentiation. ‘Basis grouping’ has been suggested as a means to give greater opportunities
to organise pupils in other, more functional units, than solely according to age level (Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:96).

The most recent curriculum, the Knowledge Promotion, was developed by the 2001 government. Even when the social-democrats came to power in 2005, the planned curriculum of 2006 was still implemented. Some alternations where made, however, limiting the possibilities for differentiation. The principles of this curriculum, in the revised edition, confirm many of ideas of the *Culture for Learning* report. Different abilities and talents are acknowledged, and the school should provide challenges for all kinds of pupils, also children with special abilities:

“When working on their school subjects, all the pupils shall encounter challenges that they must strive to master and which they can master alone or with others. This also applies to pupils with special difficulties or particular abilities and talents in different areas” (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2008:3)

Among the principles, adapted teaching is well integrated, but possibilities for organisation differentiation are not explicitly mentioned. Furthermore, the 16th Report to the parliament in 2006-2007 carry on the local decision rate of 25%, as well as the possibility to take subject ‘appetisers’ in lower secondary school (Det kongelige kunnskapsdepartement 2006-2007:83). However, the suggestion from the Quality Committee about organising pupils into modules is not mentioned.

**Differentiation Principles in Australian Policy Papers**

All the policy documents in my sample acknowledge the diversity of needs, and emphasise the need to adapt the educational provision according to the pupils’ abilities. The Adelaide Declaration states as its first national goals that “*Schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students*” (Australian Government 1999:2). The Victorian curriculum of 2002 Curriculum and Standards Framework II (CFS), gives great flexibility in terms of both content and organisation to the individual school in order to cater for individual needs.

“*The Government aims to improve the learning outcomes for all students. This can only be achieved if we acknowledge the diversity of student needs in the development of local and system-wide responses. This applies obviously to curriculum and organisational arrangements, which must cater for different learning styles and challenge all students*” (State of Victoria 2003:13)
The focus on learning styles and challenges for all in this extract from the curriculum indicates pedagogical differentiation possibilities. Organisational differentiation may be carried out due to flexibility in organisational arrangements and grouping practices, through only stated for level 4 and 5:

“The flexibility and range of options provided at levels 4 and 5 of the CFS allows for different organisational arrangements, grouping practices, core-option approaches, integrated curriculum and vertical and block timetabling – all approaches typically used to encourage students to exercise choices or explore different emphases within and across the key learning areas”

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2004b:6)

In addition, it is possible to prepare for further studies in year 10, by completing VCE subjects from year 11 and 12 (ibid. 2004b:1, 6).

The recent curriculum in Victoria, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS), stresses that the school has a responsibility to cater for a range of abilities through, e.g. acknowledging progress and providing challenging at their specific level (State of Victoria 2007:4). This curriculum carries on many of the ideas from CFS, however with a greater focus on set standards. The standards are, however, not fixed to particular years of study, but opens for development at different rates. As the pupils reach the level of the standards, there are possibilities to work on the next level. The schools are expected to provide choices to cater for various needs and learning styles, in terms of both pedagogical and organisational differentiation measures. Organisational differentiation for advanced pupils may be provided by completing higher level studies at an earlier stage, as in the CFS (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005:3).

It is important to notice that organisational differentiation for more able pupils is not stated as principle in the policy papers, but as a possibility. The 2001 report on the issue of gifted and talented children states that the practices are not adequate. In order to provide sufficient education provision for gifted children, 20 recommendations to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) were outlined in the report. Several of these concern differentiation approaches in the Australian school system. Recommendation 1 states that there should be a focus on “high achievement targets for gifted children”, rather than minimum benchmarks. Strategies for setting out goals for curriculum differentiation for the gifted are brought up in the 5th recommendation, e.g.
“The curriculum needs to be differentiated to suit the different learning needs of gifted children. Ad hoc enrichment activities, or enrichment that is suitable for the whole class, are insufficient”
(Commonwealth of Australia 2001/Summary)

Furthermore, there is a call for a consistent policy of “encouraging suitable acceleration” and “exploring the options for ability grouping and supporting ability grouping as a way of meeting the needs of the gifted” (rec. 6 and 7). As the enquiry leading up to this report was carried out before 2001, it is difficult to say whether practices in Victoria have changed according to these recommendations. Recent Victorian policies, particularly those related to the VELS, shows however a greater focus on challenges for all instead of minimum standards.

Conclusions

The study of Norwegian and Victorian (Australian) curricula and policy documents show some differences in accepting differentiation measures. The Unified School principle was dominant in Norwegian policy in the 1990s, but acknowledging, however, variances in pupils’ abilities. Pedagogical differentiation, in terms of adapted education, was accepted, but the children were held together in the same organisational structure, despite ability. A reaction towards this policy came right after the millennium with the Culture for Learning report (Det kongelige utdanning –og forskningsdepartement 2003-2004). In this document, a focus on different learning strategies and possibilities for specialisation increased the options for gifted children in Norway. In contrast, Victorian policy documents put an emphasis on flexibility and choice both of pedagogical and organisational arrangements made available throughout through the past decade, e.g. through extension options in year 10. However, the Australian inquiry into gifted and talented from 2001 shows that the policy on differentiation measures are far from being consistent.

6.1.4 Sub Question 4: Purpose of Education

The fourth and final research question deals with the main intention of education found in Norwegian and Victorian (Australian) policy documents:

What are the main purposes of education related to giftedness as expressed in current policies and curricula?
Before studying the curricula, I assumed that purposes of education were decisive for the role of gifted children in the two countries. Herein; whether the country has a dominant individualistic or a collectivistic culture has resulted in different outcomes for these pupils. Another assumption was that opportunities for gifted pupil may be better through implementing an ideology linked to globalisation. Finally I assumed that the attention that gifted pupils receive in the policy papers also reflects the willingness to cater for their specific needs, also in terms of defining the gifted as a particular group. This sub question deals with educational purposes that may be related to giftedness, especially linked to concepts from model 2.1. It is therefore relevant to find out whether the policy documents focus on personal or communal goals according to Triandis’ framework of individualism vs. collectivism.

**Determining Educational Purposes in Norwegian Policy**

Findings 4 and 5 found that Norwegian policy documents focus on social aspects of schooling more than achievements and outcomes. In the curricula and policy related to the Unified School of the 1990s, social equalisation was a bearing principle as well as one of the main purposes of the Norwegian school system.

> “The compulsory school shall help pupils to develop their abilities by being, learning and working together. The school thus helps to reduce social inequality and to develop a sense of community between groups” (The royal ministry of education, research and church affairs 1997b:One School for All)

The focus on the social purposes of schooling is consistent with Triandis’ characteristics of the collectivistic society, where communal goals are more significant than needs of the individual. However, the Norwegian school has a tradition for taking care of the pupils that struggle in particular.

> “A good school and a good class should provide enough space and enough challenge for everyone to sharpen their wits and grow. But it must show particular concern for those who get stuck, struggle stubbornly and can lose courage” (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 1997a:19)

This quotation illustrates the conditions for both weaker and gifted learners. One of the main purposes of the Norwegian school is to reduce differences in society, hence care for the ones who struggle (See Imsen 2002:125). Taking care of the pupils that struggle at school shows a sound approach to the variances of abilities in society. However, in the Norwegian
egalitarian society dominated by the ‘Law of Jante’ there is no room for the ones that are above the average. Therefore most resources are given to the pupils that struggle to reach the average. The special concern for the weaker learners may be linked to the Triandis’ distinction between horizontal and vertical societies. The desire of equalising the level of the pupils is more valued than raising the achievements of the pupils that have the potential of ‘being best’, hence supporting Triandis’ theory that Norway has dominant horizontal traits.

Standards of achievement were not the centre of attention in these policy documents. Yet, as previously mentioned, challenges for all has been emphasised. The Committee of Quality raised the issue of expectation to pupils in the Norwegian school.

“(…) children and adolescents must experience in succeeding during the basic education scheme, motivating them, and stimulating their eagerness to learn. This accomplished by making demands and expecting a measure of effort, whilst supporting their effort to realise their gifts and talents”

(Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:47, my translation)

The report of the Quality Committee indicates a shift towards an individualistic approach to teaching and learning, by stating that children should be supported in order to ‘realise their gifts and talents’. Noticeably, this paper was written after the shift in the Norwegian political landscape.

The Culture for Learning report (2003-2004) has a greater focus on achievement and standards at certain levels (e.g. Det kongelige utdanning- og forskingsdepartement 2003-2004:33). The social purpose of schools is still important in this policy document, although less explicit than the documents related to the Unified School.

“(…) expected to promote social mobility and secure economic growth and welfare for all. For the individual the school is expected to transmit values, knowledge and skills for each individual to utilise his/her gifts and realise his/her talent”

(Det kongelige utdanning- og forskingsdepartement 2003-2004:3, my translation)

As previously remarked, this quotation shows a double purpose of schooling in the period after the demise of the Unified School. The school according to the Knowledge Promotion framework is supposed to realise the gifts of the individual as well as promoting social mobility and secure economic growth and welfare for the whole community. This points out that is no contradiction between focusing on equity and social aspects of schooling at the same time having higher expectations to the pupils.

According to Finding 1, the issue of gifted pupils is not explicitly mentioned in the policy papers of the sample before 2002. However, the report Iførste rekke (Statens
forvalningstjeneste 2003) and, to a certain extent, the principles of the Knowledge Promotion (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2008) brings up the issue. Supported by Birkemo’s research, the Quality Committee report claims that compulsory education is not succeeding in giving enough challenges to academically gifted pupils through the principle of adapted education (Statens forvalningstjeneste 2003:83). The findings from these policy papers indicate a new attention to the issue of giftedness in Norwegian policy, which may result in better educational provisions for gifted pupils in the future. However, as identification procedures or special programming for this group are not outlined, it is plausible to assume that particular abilities are intended to be catered for within the normal classes.

**Determining Educational Purposes in Victorian (Australian) Policy**

In contrast to the Norwegian findings, Australian policy document has in the past decade put a strong emphasis on standards. Competitiveness and individual benefits are reoccurring terms in the policy papers, indicating a greater degree of individualism in the Australian education policy. The *Blueprint for Government Schools* report focuses on expectations for Victorian pupils:

“The result will be a government school system that delivers on high expectations for all, clearly articulated responsibilities and rigorous accountability to deliver improved student outcomes” (State of Victoria 2003:12)

Nevertheless, the sample promotes on several occasions the importance of equity measures in schooling, yet not for an explicit social purpose. Interestingly enough, equity is mostly directly linked to outcomes:

“The demands of our increasingly sophisticated economy and a more complex and rapidly changing society require us to address these poor outcomes and, indeed, to improve educational outcomes for all students (ibid. 2003:2)

This quotation indicates a broad view upon human capital development: a strengthened focus on education for the masses rather than for a particular group of pupils. At the same time, this paper warns against unrestrained competition due to adapting a New Public Management framework in the Victorian school system. Hence, the mechanisms of self-managing schools competing for students have been modified by the government in order to meeting the needs of all pupils.
The policy paper leading up to the VELS, *Curriculum Victoria*, calls for specific standards for all, as well as “higher standards for those who are more able or specialising in a particular area” (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2004a:1). The following Victorian Essential Learning Standards from 2006 set therefore specific achievement standards for all stages of schooling in order to be accountable for external parties, including parents (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005:1).

As in the Norwegian policy papers, the issue of gifted pupils are not the centre of attention in the Australian sample. However, the report from the Senate Committee ‘The Education of Gifted and Talented Children’ discusses the conditions for gifted pupils throughout Australia, and provides 20 recommendations in order to respond to the particular needs of children with particular abilities. The report is also outlines a number of programs and initiatives in the state of Victoria that are currently catering for gifted pupils.

**Conclusions**

The study of the Norwegian policy papers confirms the above-mentioned assumption that Norway has moderately individualistic characters, with several horizontal collectivistic elements. The focus on communal goals, e.g. education for social equalisation and special care for the weaker learner, points to collectivistic traits. However, recent trends seem to have strengthened the individualistic character of the Norwegian school system with increased focus on achievement and a new attention towards pupils with particular abilities.

Triandis’ research on Australia as a horizontal individualistic society is supported by the findings of this paper (Triandis 1995:46). Firstly, the NPM ideology, with increased public choices (see chapter 4.4.), and the increased focus on standards indicates strong individualistic traits in the Victorian education policy. Furthermore, the focus on equity and human capital development for all may further indicate that there are horizontal aspects in Victorian policy as well. Nevertheless, there are examples of setting higher standards for the more able pupils, in addition to providing for their differences, giving reasons to believe that Victoria has horizontal, although somewhat moderate characteristics.
6.2 The Role of Gifted Children in Two Education Systems

I believe that the controversies concerning gifted children may be a result of unstated assumptions about the view of the role of the school and the role of the pupil in these two education systems. Even though both countries have education systems deriving from a class-divided society and anti-elitist ideals, Norway and Australia have developed different approaches towards education of gifted children. Whilst the Australian states have offered special provisions for these pupils for several decades, albeit to various degrees, gifted education is not an issue in the Norwegian context at all. Norway has instead focused on pedagogical differentiation, even though current practices have been proven inadequate for the most advanced students.

Findings from my document analysis have shown that the Norwegian school, especially in the 1990s, was based on the principle of social equalisation. Individual achievement standards were not pointed out to the same extent. This fact has a major impact on the educational approach towards gifted and talented in this country. Therefore, mainstream comprehensive education for all has been the ideal for many years. However, in the last decade radical changes have been observed, giving more individualistic approaches to teaching and learning, e.g. more focus on standards, room for organisational differentiation and similar measures.

Australian education has, due to its egalitarian traditions, been concerned with equity measures, and to whether differentiation leads to social injustice. However, the study of the Victorian (Australian) context confirms my assumptions that there are several options for gifted children, in terms of special programs, enrichment and more. Nevertheless, recent research on the issue of giftedness has pointed out that the Australian official approach is not consistent and therefore not sufficient to cater for the specific need of the gifted and talented learners.

There has been a low degree of attention to the education of gifted pupils in Norway, in terms of debates, research and policy. Only Hofset’s book *Gifted Children in School* (1970) has provided an in-depth study of the conditions for these pupils in the Norwegian school system. Until recently the topic has scarcely been touched upon in public debates. However, Birkemo’s research from 2002, the foundation of the organisation ‘Happy Children’ and
some journal articles, have shown that the issue of gifted children slowly but surely is being taken into account.

In contrast, gifted education in Australia is a reoccurring topic in research and public debates. Victorian education policy does not explicitly deal with the issue, but the conditions for Australian gifted pupils have been discussed thoroughly in the report *The Education of Gifted and Talented Children* (Commonwealth of Australia 2003). There are many lobbies and support groups in the state of Victoria calling for a differentiated provision for gifted learners in the public schools.

There has been an increased awareness of global trends and the importance of education for national prosperity in both countries. Despite different starting points, there are similarities to be found in current educational development. Market approaches to education, such as individualisation and competitiveness, have been implemented, despite resistance among educational practitioners. The new focus on personalised learning justifies educational provisions for gifted children to a larger extent.

Even though developments in Norwegian policy show similarities to the Victorian (Australian) systems, it is not likely that Norwegian provisions for gifted children will correspond to Victorian (Australian) practices for quite some years to come. Even if Norway opens up for more differentiation, there are still obstacles in the national mentality hindering the separation of gifted children from the average pupils in one way or another.

### 6.2.1 Balancing Individual and Collective Needs

This paper has until now aimed to give a picture of the conditions for differentiation in the Norwegian and Victorian education policy. In order to give a deeper understanding of this issue, the resistance towards gifted education and the current development must be viewed in the light of some underlying dilemmas. Therefore, the official approach towards gifted children must be linked to considerations of the primary task of the school for the individual and the society. In this relation, it is relevant to find how the dilemma of collective and individual needs is solved in the two education systems.

There are two extremes covering a range of conflicting questions: Should the social or the individual aspect of education be emphasised? What is most important: Equity or excellence? Should all children be kept together or should there be organisational
differentiation? These are all fundamental questions that mark the debate about gifted education.

There are several layers in this debate, from the national level to the concrete implications in the classroom. In schools, the choice of whether to serve collective or individual needs have implications for how teaching and learning is organised. The two following examples illustrate the contrast.

In a collective approach, the primary tasks of the school are to turn the pupils into respectable members of society and to even out the social class system. Therefore a common curriculum and learning experiences for all children is provided. The children are kept together as long as possible without streaming, the aim being to give the pupils a common foundation for life. The pupils are regarded as one unit, and the development of group mentality and solidarity are stressed. This approach is criticised for creating a school of play and not meeting the demands of pupils. Gifted education is regarded as segregating in favour of distinct social classes, and is therefore not an issue of concern. The Norwegian Unified School is a good example of an educational provision favouring collectivism. These ideas have been found in literature in the Australia context as well.

On the other hand, the individualistic position regards schools as a service provider and education as an investment in economic development. In order to fulfil the individual’s potential, a ‘customised’ education for each pupil according to its particular characteristics is emphasised. Arguing that the individual pupil has the right to adjusted education according to their skills implies that the gifted child has to have educational inputs at a higher tempo or to a larger extent than other pupils. This approach has been attacked for having too much focus upon competitiveness and leading to egotism. Australian policy makers have for years favoured this position, and in recent years Norway has adopted this view as well, but only to a certain extent.

The role of the school in society is heavily related to society’s need for skills. A pupil’s education has to be seen in a long-term perspective, beyond the present school experience. Knowledge management and innovation are pointed out to be crucial skills in times of globalisation (Carnoy 1999:14). In contrast to the craving for economic growth that is emphasised in global trends, there are collective challenges that cannot be met by an introvert approach. It is necessary to develop individualistic skills, but at the same time be able to see the greater picture and adapt to a wider social context.
The following quote touches upon the nerve of the debate on gifted children and differentiation in Norway and Australia:

“The core of the problem of gifted education is due to the fact that unless an educational policy ensures that the special educational need of every child can be met through some sort of personalization or individualization, then a policy that ensures that for only some children appears to be exclusionary to all the others.” (Passow 1993, cf. Heller et al. 2000:674)

There are several relevant issues in relation to whether the pupils should be grouped according to their skills or not. Is it necessary to separate gifted children from their age-peers to provide to them an adequate education?

In a homogenous group it is easier to adjust the teaching methods according to the level of the group than in a group with a large dispersion levels. In Norway this method has been carefully tested according to the new curriculum, while opening up for achievement groups to a certain extent. One pitfall of this practice is that pupils feel segregated. Even if there is no ‘label’ on such groups, the pupils rapidly sense who are the ones in the groups for the ‘stupid’ or the ‘bright’. The pupils have most probably sensed the level of the age-peers, but grouping according to abilities them makes it far more visible. On the other hand, social well-being may also derive from mastering the level of the group they are placed in.

Another argument disfavouring organisational differentiation is that gifted children must learn how to adjust to other people. In a homogenous group pupils do not face incompatibility in the same degree as in a mixed group. Too strong an emphasis on individualisation in schools may cause serious trouble for gifted children in their working life if they are not used to cooperating with people with a wide range of capabilities.

However, gifted children have equal value in relation to other pupils and deserve to be met with acknowledgement for their capacity to learn. Gagné’s model of giftedness focuses on creating a stimulating learning environment to develop potential to achievement. He has pointed out several hindrances on the road from aptitude to achievement; there may be personal constraints such as lack of motivation, poor self-esteem, underachievement in accordance with peer acceptance combined with environmental barriers such as unsupportive school climate, inappropriate identification procedures and general perception of intellectual prosperity. (Gross 2004:266). If this model is adapted, it has great implications for how teaching should be organised.
**Compromising the Extremes**

In search for best practices of educating gifted children, both individualist and collectivist considerations have to be taken into account, or in the words of Mönks on the principles of the Danish school system;

“A great deal of importance is attached to the fact that education takes place in a social context and that the goal is the versatile development of each individual. The individual enriches and inspires the community while the community supports the individual” (Mönks et al. 1991:189)

Searching for dialectic between the two approaches to education, is most likely the best way to ensure the interest of both individual and society.

It is possible to differentiate education, at the same time as the collective needs are taken into account. One way to secure quality education and progress of each pupil is to offer a personalisation of education, reflecting the pupil’s strengths and motivations. Gifted children may be given challenges within the context of the classroom or by grouping children according to skills in some subjects. However, personalisation of education is extremely resource demanding.

Developing adequate educational provision for gifted children must be done within a national context. Adapting trends uncritically has a totally different outcome than bargained for. Nevertheless, as the Australian school tradition has several characteristics in common with the Norwegian, especially in equity matters, there is much to be learnt through first-hand knowledge that Australia has acquired. This in turn may be used as a basis for research on gifted children in Norway and to find ways to give them more adequate educational provisions and support.
7. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to uncover several characteristics of the Norwegian and Victorian (Australian) school that may determine the role of the gifted children, by giving some answers to the research question:

*How do contextual factors influence the official educational approach towards gifted and talented children?*

Several contextual factors have been found influencing the official educational approach towards gifted children in Norway and Australia. Among the national-contextual factors and global changes, five main observations have been made explaining the current role of the gifted pupils: Firstly, in terms of ideological factors, findings show that the Norwegian Unified School principle, promoting a policy of keeping pupils together without differentiation, and resistance towards excellence, has not been advantageous to gifted pupils in Norway. However, due to political shifts, this principle has been modified. Similarly in the Australian context, there has been anti-elitism and a dominant egalitarian ideology. Due to new conceptions of giftedness and pressure from different lobbies, various differentiation measures for gifted in the state of Victoria have nevertheless been implemented.

Furthermore, it is shown that curriculum traditions dominant in Norway focusing on ‘education for all’ have not emphasised the needs of the gifted in particular. Essentialist traditions influencing the Australian school system have been beneficial for gifted learners, yet the Australian essentialism has been less elitist than in its Britain counterpart.

Thirdly, there are also political factors influencing the conditions for gifted in the two geographical areas. The dominant social-democratic party in Norway was challenged at the beginning of the millennium. This has given room for neo-liberal influences and hence an individualistic approach to education favourable to gifted pupils. Australian politics have seen more frequent shifts, whereas conservative parties that dominated in the late 1990s have called for wider choices of educational provision. In addition, the Australian Senate has been promoting gifted education.

General cultural factors, indicating the degree of individualism and collectivism dominant in a country, are also relevant. In terms of Triandis’ framework, findings show that Norway has horizontal and moderately individualistic characteristics. Strong collectivistic traits found in the Unified School have been modified just lately, leading to a greater space
for an individualistic approach to education. Australian culture has been labelled as horizontal individualistic, with strengthened individualism through the New Public Management policy.

Finally, it has been found that global influences have had a major impact on the two educational systems. The demise of the Unified School in Norway has led to the Knowledge Promotion reform as a response to global trends. Global trends are to a large extent generating advantages to gifted pupils. Similarly, in Australia global trends have been taken into account while implementing the NPM policy and national approaches to education, potentially leading to a national approach to gifted education.

The study of current policy papers and curricula in Norway and Victoria (Australia) has confirmed the above-mentioned findings. In terms of differentiation measures, findings show that Norway had a unified approach to educational provision with the principle of ‘Adapted Education’ as the only alternative for providing education for gifted. Recent policy papers show, however, that a more specific set of differentiation measures is under development, e.g. through opening up for organising pupils according to ability. Victorian education policy has provided a great flexibility for schools to develop their own approach according to local needs. In this relation there are several pedagogical and organisation differentiation measures, e.g. by taking higher level studies. The Senate report on gifted and talented pupils has also shown a search for a more consistent provision of gifted education throughout Australian states.

Finally the document analyses have indicated the overall purposes of education related to giftedness, in terms of embracing mainly personal versus communal goals. Norwegian policy states an explicit social purpose of schooling, with special care for the weaker learners. However, achievement is also taken into account in the more recent educational papers. There has been a compromise between individualism and collectivism by emphasising challenges for all. On the other hand, Victorian policy papers have devoted a lot of space to standards and achievement measures. Equality of educational opportunity is pointed out, although equity is often related to outcomes. Because individual goals are more emphasised than communal goals in Victorian papers, more so than in Norwegian papers, there are indicated greater possibilities for gifted pupils in the state of Victoria.

In accordance to the allegory in the title of this paper, there are reasons to believe that the Norwegian school system has had a tradition of both cutting down and conserving ‘tall poppies’. However, recent changes in policies and renewed attention in the public debate
indicate that the growing conditions for these pupils have changed for the better. The
differentiation measures found in Victorian school system have contributed to cultivate 'tall
poppies', albeit to various degrees.

Limitations of Study and Propositions for Future Research

The findings of this study are based on secondary data analysis, in this case literature review
and document analysis, with the intention of establishing a knowledge base for future
research. This paper only provides therefore the theoretical conditions for gifted pupils as
they are stated in policy papers, and their right to special educational provisions.

There are certainly limitations in this study due to the fact that there are no first-hand
research findings. In addition, several important aspects of the education for gifted pupils in
Norway and Victoria (Australia) have been omitted because of the limited extent of this
thesis, as well as practical restrictions. Even though questions on resource allocation to
special needs education, teachers’ attitudes and issues of private schools are relevant to this
issue, they have not been dealt with in this paper. The lack of Norwegian research proved to
be a real obstacle for writing the paper. This gave me, however, greater opportunities to
develop own measures in comparing the two contexts. Victoria (Australia) proved, however,
to be useful as a basis for comparison since the ideological context and mentality among
educators in the two countries relate to one another in many ways.

This study is relevant reading for teachers, policy makers and others interested in
knowing what national-contextual factors and unstated assumptions about educational
traditions and development that are influencing the role of the gifted children in the
Norwegian and Victorian (Australian) contexts.

During the time used in answering my research questions, several new questions about
gifted children and their education arose, e.g.: What is the best approach to the education for
gifted children? How should educational provisions for pupils with particular abilities be
organised? What are teachers’ attitudes towards giftedness in school? What consequences
are there for gifted children whose needs have not catered for by the school system? In order
to address these issues, there is a necessity for future research of the actual conditions for
gifted children, particularly in the Norwegian context.
Appendices


(Gagné 2005: 100)
Appendix 2: Renzulli's Three-Ring Definition of Giftedness

(Renzulli 2005:257)
Appendix 3: Translations

From chapter 3: Norwegian Context

Page 54

Original:

"(…) ein skole som er felles for alle same kva sosialt lag, geografisk lokalisering, kjønn, etnisk gruppe eller langt på vei individuelle særdrag elevane måtte ha."
(Østerud 2003:151)

Translation:

“(…) a common school for all children, irrespective of social layers, geographical location, gender, ethnical group or many of the idiosyncrasies that pupils may have”

Page 57

Original:

“I vårt land har vi, så langt hatt en egalitær kultur som sier at man ikke skal “stikke seg ut” til sin egen fordel, koblet med en dypt rotfestet omsorg for de svakeste i samfunnet. Dette er medvirkende til at vi ikke har tradisjoner for spesielt uvilkingsprogrammer for de aller mest begavede elevene” (Imsen 1999:205)

Translation:

“In our country we have had an egalitarian culture that says that one should not be conspicuous in order to gain an advantage, coupled with a deeply ingrained consideration for the weakest in society. These elements are instrumental in explaining why we do not have any traditions for special development programs for the most gifted pupils”
Page 59

Original:

“Den sentrale oppgåva for skolen måtte vere å hjelpe alle barn til full utnytting av dei intellektuelle evnene, noko som også ville vere viktig for demokratiet i eit teknologisk og sosialt komplisert samfunn” (Befring 2004:172)

Translation:

“The main task of school requires the helping of all children to fully develop their intellectual capabilities, something that is important for democracy in a technological and socially complex society”

Page 63

Original:

”Hvordan kan flinke elever stimuleres slik at de utvikler sine iboende muligheter optimalt? Det synes å være lenge siden en slik problemstilling har vært sentral i norsk skolepolitikk, og når norske elever presterte rundt middels faglig i internasjonale sammenligninger, kan det blant annet skuldes manglende interesse for å stimulere denne elevgruppen til å yte sitt beste” (Birkemo 2002:346)

Translation:

”How can gifted pupils be stimulated enabling them to develop their inherent abilities? It seems like a long time ago since such an issue has been a central focus in Norwegian school politics. The average level of academic achievement amongst Norwegian pupils in international comparisons might, be due to the lack of interest in stimulating this group of pupils to perform their best”
From chapter 5: Document Analysis

**Page 80**

Original:

“Dagens grunnopplæring har som utgangspunkt at opplæringen skal tilpasses alle elever. Slik skal grunnopplæringen være tilrettelagt for å inkludere alle. Utdanningssystemet settes imidlertid på harde prøver i denne prosessen, og det finnes både vanskeligheter knyttet til tilpasningen til de svakeste elevene og utfordringer knyttet til de faglig sterke elevene”

(Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:83)

Translation:

“The starting point of today’s compulsory education is that education should be adapted to all pupils. Hence, compulsory education should be organised to include all. The educational system is, however, put to a hard test in the process, and there are difficulties related to its adaptation in regards to the weaker pupils and challenges related to the academically gifted pupils”

**Page 81**

Original:

”Når det gjelder spesielt godt utrustede elever, blir det forutsatt at disse klarer seg bra, og det blir svært sjelden truffet spesielle tiltak utenom klassens rammer. Denne praksisen har fra tid til annen vært utsatt for kritikk, men denne kritikken har svært sjelden ført til spesielle tiltak” (Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:84)

Translation:

“When it comes to especially gifted pupils, it is assumed that these manage sufficiently well, and there are very seldom measures provided other than the ordinary class organisation. This practice has from time to time been criticised, but criticism of this practice has very seldom lead to any particular change”
Page 85 and 108

Original:

“...prinsippet skal komme til uttrykk i hele virksomheten i skolen, og det krever at alle sidene ved opplæringen, både lærestoff, arbeidsmåter, organisering og læremidler, blir lagt til rette med tanke på de ulike forutsetningene som elevene har. Tilpasset opplæring tilsier ulik behandling og fordypning i arbeid med lærestoffet og variasjon i art, vanskegrad, mengde, tempo og progresjon”

Translation:

“(…) the principle aims at covering all aspects of schooling; demanding that all aspects of education including syllabus, learning methods, organisation, and learning material are adapted to the different standings of the pupils. Adapted education calls for different treatment and in-depth study when working with the syllabus, together with variation in nature, level, amount, tempo, and progression”

Page 85

Original:

“All skal ha like muligheter til å utvikle seg selv og sine evner. Et samfunn preget av fellesskap og likeverd gir de beste rammene for enkeltmenneskene muligheter til å realisere sine individuelle livsprosjekter”
(Det kongelige kunnskapsdepartement 2006-2007:7)

Translation:

“Everybody should have the same opportunities for developing themselves and their gifts. A society characterised by community and equality provide the best opportunities for the individual’s possibilities to realise their own individual life projects”
Page 88

Original:

"Når skolene nå gis frihet til å organisere i andre grupper, vil det gi muligheter for å skape nye funksjonelle enheter som gjør det mulig å differensiere slik at tilpasningen til den enkelte elev blir mer reell. Det vil også øke mulighetene for varierte undervisnings- og organiseringsmåter” (Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:96)

Translation:

“As the schools are given the freedom to organise the pupils in other groups, there will be opportunities to create new functional units that makes differentiation an option, hence making a real adaptation to the individual pupil possible. This will increase the possibilities for varied approaches to teaching and organisation”

Page 89

Original:

“Den enkelte skole kan organisere denne opplæringen slik det er formålstjenlig ut fra de behovene som eksisterer i den samlete elevgruppen. Det blir dermed en organisatorisk differensiering som omfatter hele elevgruppen”
(Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:96)

Translation:

“Each school may organise the education in such a way that is appropriate according to the needs that exist in the collective body of pupils. Hence, this will be an organisational differentiation that includes the whole body of pupils”
Page 89

Original:

"Utvalget vil derfor foreslå at elevene på ungdomstrinnet får muligheten til å velge moduler fra videregående opplæring trinn 1 (...). På denne måten kan teoretisk interesserte elever få flere utfordringer, og elever med praktisk interesse får prøve ut sine evner og anlegg" (Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003-2004:147)

Translation:

"The committee suggests, therefore, that pupils at lower secondary school get the opportunity to choose modules from the first year of upper secondary school. This will give pupils with academic interests more challenges, whilst pupils with practical orientations can see what they are capable of within their own particular fields of interest"

Page 91 and 113

Original:

"Samtidig må grunnopplæringen gi barn og unge erfaring med å lykkes, gjøre dem motiverte og stimulere deres lyst til å lære – både ved å stille krav til dem og forvente innsats, og ved å støtte deres anstrengelser for å realisere sine evner og anlegg” (Statens forvaltningstjeneste 2003:47)

Translation:

“(…) children and adolescents must experience in succeeding during the basic education scheme, motivating them, and stimulating their eagerness to learn. This accomplished by making demands and expecting a measure of effort, whilst supporting their effort to realise their gifts and talents”
Page 91

Original:

"Skal man sikre en kontinuerlig utvikling av elevenes grunnleggende ferdigheter gjennom hele det 13-årige løpet, må kravene til ferdighetene være tydelige på ulike trinn gjennom hele grunnopplæringen" (Det kongelige utdanning- og forskingsdepartement 2003-2004:33)

Translation:

“To secure a continuous development of the basic skills of the student through the 13 year course of schooling, requirements to skills must be clearly stated at the different levels throughout the whole educational span”

Page 94

Original:


Translation:

“(…) expected to promote social mobility and secure economic value creation and welfare for all. School is expected to transmit values, knowledge, and skills for every individual to utilise his/her gifts and realise his/her talent”
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