Tracing values in party politics on higher education

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IV
Abstract

This thesis investigates the prominence of the values equity and quality in Norwegian party politics on higher education. This topic is interesting as it addresses how core values develop among key stakeholders for higher education. The methods used are document analysis of the party programmes of the Labour party (Arbeiderpartiet), the Conservative party (Høyre) and the Socialist Left party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti/SV) for the election periods 2001–2005, 2005–2009, 2009–2013 and 2013–2017 and interviews with representatives on higher education from the three parties. Historical and normative institutional theories are applied in order to analyse the how prominence of the values develop within and between the parties. The values equity and quality are coupled to functions of higher education and the co-existence and possible contradiction between the values is discussed.

The findings show divergence on equity and convergence on quality between the three parties in the time period. The observed convergence on quality is partly due to the influence of Høyre on Arbeiderpartiet and SV with respect to this value. The discussion shows that historical institutionalism can explain the divergence in equity, but normative institutionalism can explain changes in both values. Yet, both analytical frameworks have limitations when they are applied on the findings in this investigation. The findings show that quality entails elements of equity. Furthermore, there is no dominant contradiction between equity and quality, although the co-existence between the two values is not free of conflict.
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Dear Jon Harald – thank you for the many hours and days of effort accompanied with academic interest in my project. You are such an exemplary man.

To Julia and Jenny for being the wonderful creatures that you are.
“Values in higher education is the best of topics and the worst of topics. […] Values is altogether the right topic.”

Burton Clark (1983b: 1)
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1 Introduction

*Equity* and *quality* are two core values in politics for higher education. This thesis analyses the prominence of equity and quality in the four most recent party programmes on higher education of the political parties the Labour party (Arbeiderpartiet), the Conservative party (Høyre) and the Socialist Left party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti/SV). Possible patterns of prominence, explanations for and consequences of these patterns will be analysed and discussed. Furthermore, the thesis will address the co-existence of these two values within the political realm of higher education in Norway.

The investigation is relevant out of at least three reasons. *First*, this investigation gives sought after knowledge on the general development of policies for the higher education sector (Bleiklie & Michelsen 2013; Jungblut 2015; Neave 2012; Pinheiro 2014). Bleiklie and Michelsen (2013) state that there is substantial research on the market-orientation of higher education on the one hand and the effect of reforms, regulations and similar steering instruments on the other hand, but that there is a lack in literature on policy formation for higher education. The investigation is a contribution to this literature gap. *Second*, the study will give insight into how important values for the higher education sector develop within and between political parties over time. Although they are among the main goals within higher education politics, it is repeatedly stated that equity and quality in the Norwegian higher education system should be strengthened (e.g. Regjeringen 2007; 2009; 2015a; 2015b). It is interesting to study how political priorities are emphasised in party programs and how and why important values for higher education that potentially bridge time and political constellations prevail or succumb. *Third*, literature within the field of higher education identifies a movement towards a ‘new social contract’ for higher education, where the relation and contribution to society is revised (Maassen 2014: 34). Consequently, higher education sectors will need to cope with expectations to the system from a wider range of stakeholders (Kwiek 2009). Equity and quality are core elements of the social contract between higher education and society. It is important to study changes in the prominence of these values since this might alter the contract between higher education and society.
1.1 Values in higher education politics

A common denominator between higher education and politics is that they both are based on values. For higher education, Clark argues that values are important to address because they turn our attention to basic concerns and help to understand how education has evolved from the past to the present (1983b: 1). Furthermore, he describes how in and around the higher education system, “various groups press broad values upon the system” and the most important values are social justice, competence, liberty and loyalty (Clark 1983a: 240).

Political parties, on the other hand, are also vital carriers of values and the values they represent spring out of ideology (Vassallo & Wilcox 2006). Furthermore, the developments of political parties can be described by presenting the lines in their political and ideological message (Heidar & Saglie 2002: 32). Election research from Norway shows that ideology continues to have a large influence on people’s political orientation and on the development of the identity of the political parties (e.g. Aardal 2007). Party programmes are common for all political parties and are the basis for party politics. Hence, it is possible to detect political similarities and differences between parties and changes in higher education politics.

The notion of ‘value’ is a complex one, embarking on a “terminological jungle” scarcely deriving from theory (Halman 2007: 6). However, a general definition of values can be the “prescriptive beliefs which signify that certain end-states or modes of conduct are personally or socially preferable compared to other end-states or modes of conduct” (Rokeach 1973: 5). Moreover, political values can be defined as perceptions of preferences and whether a societal or political state or situation is preferable or not. Hence, a political value entails a political judgement. Telhaug, Kjøl, Tønnesen and Volckmar (1999) and Volckmar (2014) have shown that there has been change in the politics and values specifically for higher education over longer periods – an observation that this investigation builds on.

When investigating equity and quality in the party programmes, it is relevant to characterize the possible perceptions and give definitions of these two values as is done in the text below.

1.1.1 Equity

Equity in higher education and especially equity in access to higher education is a value that stands strong in many higher education systems (Clark 1983a; Castells 2009; Council of Europe 1998). Clark describes how social justice is a value that higher education systems are
expected to deliver and that equity in access is an important part of social justice (Clark 1983a: 241). This value has been one key driver of the so-called ‘massification’ of higher education (Trow 1970), where large and previously unrepresented groups have been included into the public good of higher education. In Norway, there has also been a massive growth in enrollment into higher education, parallel to developments in other Nordic countries (Börjesson, Ahola, Helland & Thomsen 2014). Equal access has been a pillar of Norwegian politics and policies for higher education for decades, manifested throughout white papers, national budgets and political party programmes. Such documents have stressed that access to higher education should be equal irrespectively of individual background (e.g. Regjeringen 2007). The Norwegian higher education system has opened up to hitherto new groups of students, resulting in greater diversity in higher education enrollment and inclusion of groups such as minorities and students with low socio-economic background (Aamodt & Kyvik 2005; Askvik & Helland 2014; Herne & Knudsen 1976).

Yet, even in societies that generally are viewed as equal, like the Norwegian, inequality is also associated with the higher education system. Although the higher education systems have opened up to new groups, research shows social reproduction in educational choices (e.g. Aamodt 1982: 105; Opheim 2004; Caspersen, Hovdhaugen & Karlsen 2012), that educational choices are influenced by students’ socio-economic background and that prestigious study programmes are dominated by young people with high socio-economic background (Hansen 2011). On a global level, equity in access and enrollment to higher education has been researched for decades (e.g. Willis 1977). Today, researchers call for increased attention to a socially skewed distribution of higher education in the population (e.g. Busemeyer & Trampusch 2011; Fonseca, Encarnação & Justino 2014). Norwegian higher education policy repeatedly states that the system secures formal equity right to access education, but equity in output of the education system is still skewed, in terms of equal representation of candidates from different social, economic and educational backgrounds (Regjeringen 2007: 22).

**Definition of equity**

The general meaning of the word ‘equity’ refers to being equal and fair, deriving from the Latin ‘aequus’ with the same meaning (The Oxford English Dictionary 1989).

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1 To distinguish from ‘equality’ which refers to “The condition of being equal in quantity, amount, value, intensity, etc.” (The Oxford English Dictionary 1989), i.e. referring to quantitatively measurable phenomena. ‘Equality’ entails being at the same level and equal sharing, whereas ‘equity’ refers fairness and evenhandedness.
the traditional debate on equity concerns result equity or equity in opportunities (Caspersen et al. 2012; Hernes & Knudsen 1976). Result equity entails equity in the distribution of higher education in the population and chance equity entails whether all parts of the population will have the same opportunities to enroll into and attain higher education. Caspersen et al. (2012) point out that it is harder to measure chance equity than result equity. The political parties investigated for this thesis might operate with slightly different definitions of equity or perhaps operate with both versions. Yet, the phrase ‘lik rett til utdanning’ translated to ‘equal right to education’ has been a strong-standing value in policy for higher education in Norway for the last decades and normally means chance equity. In an international context, equity in higher education is generally also linked to equal access to higher education (Bensimon 2016).

With the above elaboration as a backdrop, the definition of equity used in this investigation refers to the traditional ‘equal right to access higher education’, in Norwegian ‘lik rett til høyere utdanning’. This value entails the meaning that all individuals should have the same possibility to access higher education irrespective of social, political or economic background. This is the commonly used variant of equity in relation to higher education in Norway.

1.1.2 Quality

Quality in higher education is also a large field in contemporary research with literature ranging from the critical tradition to more applied work on how to enhance quality in higher education (e.g. Frølich et al. 2014; Westerheijden, Stensaker & Rosa 2007; Stensaker 2007). The last decades have been described as dominated by an international quality agenda in higher education (Westerheijden et al. 2007). In Norway, quality has become a benchmark for the higher education sector and institutions, especially after the launch of the Quality Reform in Norway in 2003 (Stensaker 2014). Several white papers in Norway have also been dealing with quality in higher education in itself (Regjeringen 2001; Regjeringen 2015b) and the need for quality in higher education has been voiced in white papers on other subjects (e.g. Regjeringen 2009). A new white paper on quality in higher education will be launched in 2017 (Regjeringen 2015a). In addition to numerous policy documents dealing with quality in higher education, there is substantial scientific research and literature on the emergence of the value of and instruments for enhancement of quality in higher education in general (e.g. Stensaker 2007; Frølich et al. 2014).
Definition of quality

The meaning and origins of the word ‘quality’ are multiple, and the relevant dictionary reference to the word will be as in ‘excellence’ and ‘superiority’ (The Oxford English Dictionary 1989). Also for higher education, an objective meaning of quality is not given since the concept in itself has many potential meanings (Clark 1983a: 241; Wittek & Kvernbekk 2011) and politics on higher education has been occupied with increasing quality along many axes. Yet, the most common meaning is that of ‘excellence’ (Clark 1983a: 245). Also Harvey and Green (1993) acknowledge the multiple meanings of quality and propose that these meanings can be divided into the following groups: uniqueness, certain standards, relevance, economy/efficiency and change/development. Parallel with equity, the political parties investigated are expected to operate with different – and perhaps numerous – definitions on quality.

Moreover and specific for higher education, the definition of quality that is applied refers to quality as in ‘excellence’ and ‘certain standards’ (Clark 1983a; Harvey & Green 1993: 11-12).

1.2 Research questions

Based on the above introduction, this thesis will investigate the prominence of the values equity and quality in party programmes on higher education. The thesis will attempt to explain why changes in the prominence of the values occur and possible consequences of these changes. Furthermore, the investigation will address how the values co-exist in the political realm of higher education.

The following questions will be addressed:

(1) What is the prominence of the values equity and quality in party programmes on higher education?

(2) How can possible patterns of prominence be explained and what may be the consequences of these patterns?

(3) How do political parties perceive the co-existence of the values equity and quality in the political realm of higher education?
In order to answer research question (1), document analysis is conducted of the party programmes from the Norwegian political parties Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV for the four consecutive election periods 2001–2005, 2005–2009, 2009–2013 and 2013–2017. Interviews are conducted in order to nuance findings in research question (1). These interviews are also used in order to answer research question (2) and (3). Institutional theory is used in order to answer research question (2). Theory on functions of higher education is used in order to answer research question (3).

When mapping the party programmes, a plausible expectation is that there is no change in the development of the values, and that equity and quality are stable values for the political parties in question over the four election periods. Yet, research question (2) entails an assumption of patterns and consequently an assumption of change in the prominence of the values over the time period. This assumption is purposeful for at least two reasons. First, it is based on extensive literature on change in institutions generally (e.g. Allern 2010; Thelen & Steinmo 1992; Panebianco 1988) and in political party programmes specifically (Allern 2010; Telhaug et al. 1999; Volckmar 2014). Second, the documents that were analysed stretch over four election periods, and the party programmes are intended to represent the respective party’s political baseline for 16 consecutive years from 2001 until 2017. It is not likely to expect total stability for all parties over this time period since changes are likely to occur in voters’ preferences and in the political and empirical context for higher education. Such developments are expected to influence the prominence of the values over the long time span that we are investigating. Both from a theoretical and empirical stance change in the prominence of equity and quality in the party programmes is a plausible expectation when carrying out this investigation.

1.3 Thesis outline

After this introductory chapter, chapter two will present a framework of how to analyse patterns of prominence of equity and quality, drawing on literature from historical and normative institutional theory. Chapter two will also draw up the link between notions on the contradictory functions of higher education when describing the co-existence of the values equity and quality. Chapter three will present the chosen methodology in order to address the research questions. Chapter four will give a brief overview of the empirical political context for the study. In chapter five, the findings from the document analysis of the party
programmes and the interviews will be presented in order to answer the research questions. In chapter six the findings will be discussed from the perspectives of historical and normative institutionalism and the line back to the analytical framework in chapter two will be drawn. Furthermore, the co-existence between the two values related to notions of functions of higher education will be addressed. Finally, a conclusion of the thesis and possible further research will follow in chapter seven.
2 Analytical framework

In order to analyse change in the prominence of the values equity and quality, an analytical framework is required. Institutional theory is frequently used when investigating higher education systems, institutions and politics. For investigating changes in the political party programmes, branches of institutional theory will be used. Moreover, notions of functions on higher education will be used in this investigation in order to analyse how the values equity and quality co-exist in higher education politics.

2.1 Change in political parties

As Olsen states: “Change is an ordinary part of political life. It is rule-bound and takes place through standard processes, as institutions interpret and respond to experience through learning and adaptation” (2009: 4). Within social science, the study of change in political parties is manifold. At the same time, there is a common assumption in research on political parties that they can be compared and analysed according to cleavages in the political landscape, being center vs. periphery, state vs. church, market vs. civil society and more (Lipset & Rokkan 1967)\(^2\). For higher education, both the re-distributive dimension in equal access (Jungblut 2015) and differentiation may serve as political demarcations. Volckmar describes how “parties on the left wanted to create equal opportunities for participation in the educational community, the parties on the right were more preoccupied with differentiation and freedom of choice” (2014: 484) and how increased differentiation is instrumental for enhancing quality. The quotes above confirm that political demarcations, differences and changes in the two values are interesting topics to study within the field of higher education.

In order to study change in party programmes on higher education, a definition of a political party is in place. Edmund Burke (1770, quoted in Sartori 2005: 8) defines a political party as “a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed”. This quote stresses the unity within the party on certain principal ideas and values. For a modern context, Vassallo and Wilcox frame political parties as the first and foremost representatives of political ideas, manifested in how they “package and promote ideas for the political system” (2006: 1-2). The authors state

\(^2\) When investigating the two concepts equity and quality, political party division lines may be observed (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Aardal 1994), but will not be the given extensive attention in this study.
that the political party programmes “serve as repositories for ideologies, but they are also the short-term carrier of ideas” (ibid.). Since parties also serve as carriers for more narrow policy areas, standpoints on areas such as equity and quality in higher education are more easily changed in general politics and party programmes compared to ideologies (ibid.). Hence, changes in political ideas might also be reflections of adjustments and changes in the ideological direction of parties.

In institutional theory, change in political parties is regarded as caused neither entirely by external nor internal forces. Political parties will create elements that foster order, predictability and legitimacy to external surroundings when they as institutions “organize actors, issues and resources in or out of politics and structure patterns of political struggle” (Olsen 2009: 5). In other words, we see political parties that operate beyond the sole influence of environmental determination and strategic choice. Allern (2010) describes three main institutional approaches for analysing change in political parties; rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism and normative institutionalism (also called sociological institutionalism). Historical and normative institutionalism will be applied to analyse developments in prominence of the values and consequences of these changes. These two analytical perspectives will not be elaborated on to a great extent, but core elements of these branches of institutional theory will be singled out and applied for the analysis. One important common denominator and basic assumption for both institutionalisms is that “political actors do not generally behave as rational utility-maximisers of well-defined goals” (Allern 2010: 92). On this point, these two analytical directions stand opposite to the named rational-choice institutionalism. As the description below will show, both institutionalisms add other rationales than utility-maximisation when explaining actions and changes in political parties. A rationale for using two analytical approaches in this investigation is that it might give richer insight into the same phenomenon, which in this case is change in the values equity and quality in higher education politics (Allison 1971).

Possible consequences of change are important to study because they describe the outputs of potentially large developments in national, regional and global policy developments (Bleiklie 2001). In order to answer research question (2) on what the consequences of possible patterns of prominence of the values might be, notions of divergence and convergence will be applied as they both can be associated to respectively historical and normative institutionalism.
2.1.1 Historical institutionalism

Thelen and Steinmo refer to historical institutionalism as including both “formal organizations and informal rules and procedures that structure conduct” (1992: 2). Furthermore, historical institutionalism will perceive change as a result of the institutional environment (Hall & Taylor 1996: 180). When studying the development of an institution, for instance how values in a political party develop, one has to take historical and context-sensitive considerations. Yet, due to what is coined at institutional ‘stickiness’ or ‘path dependency’, parties will not easily change in their preferences or values although they are subjected to change drivers in their environments and over time. This hesitation to change is exemplified in the following quote: “the policy choices made when an institution is being formed, or when a policy is initiated, will have continuing and largely determinate influence over the policy far into the future” (Peters 1999: 63). The historical institutional perspective enhances the distinctiveness of institutions and the differences between institutions like political parties (Hall & Taylor 1996: 170). Consequently, change will occur when the institution is at a critical juncture and the historical development radically changes course (ibid.). Examples of such critical junctures are major societal shifts or electoral shocks (Harmel & Janda 1994: 265). Another point is that actors will “adapt their strategies to the institutional frame within which they act, thereby strengthening the logic of the system itself” (Allern 2010: 89). Democracy within the party is brought forward as an example of a goal that might emphasise the institutional stickiness (ibid.: 90). Brought into this investigation, the assumption is that political parties will develop in a way that confines with the boundaries of the party they operate within.

Distinctiveness

From a historical institutional perspective, it is not likely that we will observe great movement away from the traditional legacy and values of the political party, neither mergers of ideological or political standpoints between parties. In other words, we do not expect convergence between the political parties when applying this analytical viewpoint. The consequence of lack of radical change can be characterised as ‘distinctiveness’ where we are witnessing results of institutional ‘stickiness’ and ‘path dependency’. Distinctiveness of institutions occurs as a result of that the historical-institutional context of the political party governs the political direction and development of the party politics. Hence, a possible consequence of distinctiveness may be divergence between the political parties.
2.1.2 Normative institutionalism

Theories on normative institutionalism assume that political organisations have multiple goals, values and intentions. These sets of concepts are not necessarily consistent and will often be ambiguous: “Human actions, social contexts, and institutions work upon each other in complicated ways, and these complex, interactive processes of action and the formation of meaning are important to political life” (March & Olsen 1984: 742). Although this perspective presupposes that parties are established and develop in order to realise values, the goal seeking is far from the only rationale catalysing change. External influences can also contribute to change. Furthermore, this institutional perspective assumes that the survival of political institutions depends on whether they are able to fulfil surrounding expectations and whether they manage to gain and uphold internal and external legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; March and Olsen 1984). For instance will values and actions that directly contradict the official goals of the party result in great costs for the party in question (Panebianco 1988). With normative institutionalism, we assume that the original identity of the party will weaken over time, as the party in itself becomes more institutionalised and prone to seek legitimacy beyond its own borders developing into a catch-all party (ibid.; Allern 2010: 94).

Convergence

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe how the phenomenon of ‘isomorphism’ occurs due to societal pluralism and that political parties aim at reaching over pluralistic voter groups. With this perspective, one would assume that change in the party programmes on equity and quality in higher education derives from a complex set of factors. Furthermore, if the parties develop in the same direction in giving more or less emphasis to equity and quality, this development could be due to institutional isomorphism and convergence. In order to grasp the converging tendencies of the political party programmes on higher education, Clark Kerr’s definition of convergence is used, being “the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, processes and performances” (Kerr 1983: 3).

Referring to convergence as a ‘dependent variable’ shaped by cultural, institutional and socio-economic factors, Heinze and Knill (2008) present a dichotomy of convergence: sigma and delta convergence. Sigma convergence refers to conventional convergence being the decrease in variation of particular (e.g. domestic or party-wise) policies over time and policies become more similar to one other policy or one other group of policies. In this investigation and with
sigma convergence we expect that the political parties in question become more similar in general, and that they emulate one political party or group of parties on equity and quality. *Delta convergence* refers to increasing similarities with one, external exemplary model. The backdrop for Heinze and Knill (2008) are the national adaptations to the Bologna platform, as an external, exemplary model. With delta convergence in this investigation, the expectation is that the political parties become more similar because they emulate an external vision of equity and quality in higher education.

Related to ideas on delta convergence, we find literature on so-called ‘global scripts’ on national higher education policies and systems (Gornitzka & Maassen 2011). The scripts challenge the national governance and massification of higher education is an example of such a global script (ibid.). Parallel, we find literature on the translation and transformation of ideas as they travel across borders. An example is how the Bologna reform played a role when developing and launching the Quality Reform in Norway (Gornitzka 2007: 20). Consequently, we can expect reflections of global and regional political priorities and values within national policies, i.e. also in political party programmes. Here, both equity (linked to massification of higher education) and quality (for instance linked to increase in quality assurance) can be regarded as national templates of global scripts.

### 2.2 Functions of higher education

There is a long track record of frameworks for understanding the values and functions of higher education within scientific literature on the field (e.g. Clark 1983a; Castells 2001; 2009). Academic quests for understanding the sentiments of higher education systems have a legacy, as universities historically “started largely as producers of values and social legitimation” (Castells 2009: 2). Manuel Castells describes how higher education systems are expected to deliver functions to society and the relative delivery of these functions influences the legitimacy of the systems (Castells 2001; 2009). With parallels to Clark (1983a), Castells draws out his notions of functions of higher education:

> “It is useful to see the universities as fulfilling different functions which are accentuated in some universities at some moments of history, but that to some
extent constantly combine and re-combine, and that depends on the emphasis of the function” (Castells 2009: 2)³

Two of Castells’ functions are of special interest for this investigation, namely the elevation of the level of education in the population in general and the production of knowledge. Although Castells does not portray the ideals for higher education, but rather the actual functions (Vukasović 2011), these two functions are parallel to the values equity and quality that have been presented in this thesis. In addition, Castells links the functions to innate values of the higher education systems. The two named functions can be traced in contemporary policy documents and papers today in Norway, represented through the values of equity and quality, making higher education functional in reaching these goals. Below is a further elaboration on the connection between equity and quality and Castells’ functions of higher education.

There is a modern function in elevating the level of education in the population at large expressed through national variations over the global mantra “everybody should be able to go to university” (Castells 2009: 3). This value addresses the need for social justice in fair treatment for all in access to higher education systems (Castells 2009; Clark 1983a) and coheres with the definition of equity in this investigation. As we have seen, Norway has also opened up its higher education system. This development is a result of many factors, but among the most important ones have been the need for an increasingly skilled workforce accompanied with social and political demands of wider participation and more equity in access (Askvik & Helland 2014: 64). For equity, and with reference to the previous definition of the term as equal rights to access higher education, the higher education system can be seen as a functional instrument in order to achieve social equity in the population, as in Castells’ function of elevating the level of education in the population at large.

On the other hand, one of the most obvious functions of the university is to generate competence, in the sense of “the generation of new knowledge” (Castells 2001: 208). One can argue that ‘production of knowledge’ represents far broader processes than quality in higher education and at large constitutes the primary processes of higher education in education and research. Yet, in higher education literature this function is generally linked to generating knowledge of a certain quality or ‘excellence’ in higher education, both within research and

³ Castells (2009: 2) stresses that with the term ‘university’ he means university system: “[…] not just universities – because different units provide different functions and the whole system has to combine these different functions”.

13
education (e.g. Clark 1983a: 245). For quality, which in this investigation is defined as operating with certain standards, the system can be seen as functional in the production of knowledge, since knowledge services – with new and ‘good’ knowledge – will benefit society along many axes. In this case the definition of quality is linked to excellence and certain standards (Harvey & Green 1993; Castells 2009: 2; Clark 1983a: 245).

The higher education system is expected to deliver and represent the values equity and quality and the systems’ relative deliveries contribute to justify the higher education systems. When coupling Castells’ functions elevation of the level of education and production of knowledge to equity and quality, respectively, it is interesting to investigate how these values have developed over time and how they potentially co-exist within the political realm of higher education in Norway.

**2.2.1 Co-existence and contradiction of functions**

Castells (2001; 2009) describes how the functions of higher education systems co-exist and how they often are regarded and experienced as contradictory. He writes on how “one of the key issues is how to articulate these different functions without downplaying one or the other” (2009: 3) and how the different functions take place simultaneously.

In Norway, the co-existence and possible conflicts between equity and quality is articulated along many axes. With respect to co-existence, Pinheiro (2014: 117) shows how capacity building in Norwegian higher education was instrumental to both increase competency and decrease socio-economic gaps. He identifies three phases of policy on access to higher education; the first phase from the mid-50s to early 70s marked by the expansion of the system, followed by the second phase from the mid-80s to the mid-90s where the systemic consequences of this expansion was addressed and subsequently the last phase from the mid-90s until today. In this last phase the higher education sector was “seen as a key one in leveraging Norway’s capacity to compete, both regionally and internationally, as well as in helping to address pending socio-economic asymmetries” (ibid.; Askvik & Helland 2014). Here, the link between equity and quality is described. Other examples from recent white papers on the co-existence between equity and quality include a recent white paper on internationalization of education. In this paper, the Ministry of Education and Research states that one of the intentions of the Quality Reform was to promote equity alongside with having high ambitions for developing norwegian higher education into a “world class” system.
(Regjeringen 2009: 45). Furthermore, there might also be other elements tied to the co-existence of equity and quality in the sense that the values might entail elements of each other.

With respect to the contradiction between the values or functions in higher education, this potential conflict is also touched upon by Clark: “Actions carried out on behalf of these values often clash, even contradict one another, necessitating accommodations that soften conflict and allow simultaneous expression” (1983a: 241). With reference to Castells’ functions, Vukasović notes that “the expectation sometimes voiced in national strategies that it is possible to 1. increase access while 2. maintaining or even enhancing quality with 3. decreasing resources while 4. sticking to traditional pedagogical approaches, […] is unrealistic to say the least” (2011: 277). Furthermore, quality in the educational system can be influenced by the social background of the students (Helland & Wiborg 2014) and access to study programmes traditionally has depended on grades from upper secondary school (Samordna opptak 2015)

4. Studies on enrolment patterns in the Nordic countries have shown that although higher education systems and institutions have become more inclusive, traditional universities and specialized institutions become more exclusive (Börjesson et al. 2014). Related to this, Marginson has also described how the Nordic model is under pressure, especially the state provision of equitable access to higher education (2014: 58).

The conflict between the two values is also described in contemporary politics on higher education in Norway. One example is a recent hearing letter on the forthcoming white paper on quality in higher education from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research:

“Simultaneous to having ambitions for outstanding educational programmes that enjoy international recognition, the institutions and study programmes must account for an increase in the students’ previous knowledge, level of ambition, motivation and circumstances in life” (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2016: 2)

Here, equity is described to challenge the quality ambitions at the institutions. This assumption is supported by current research, exemplifying how wider participation might come in conflict with traditional quality standards for the institutions, such as reducing drop out and increasing completion rates (Damša et al. 2015: 8). The above elaboration shows that the co-existence between the values equity and quality is not free of conflict and contradiction within the contemporary political realm of higher education in Norway.

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4 Some study programmes also require a combination of subjects.
2.3 Key expectations

Summing up, the key expectations from both institutional theories are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Key expectations with historical and normative institutionalism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Path dependency</th>
<th>Drivers of change</th>
<th>Consequences of change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical institutionalism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Critical junctures</td>
<td>Distinctiveness (possible divergence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative institutionalism</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>Convergence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With historical institutionalism, it is not likely to expect radical changes in the development of the prominence of equity and quality in the party programmes unless we assume that policy making for higher education has been at a critical juncture in the period we are investigating. Here, we expect that the distinctiveness of the political parties will unfold, possible resulting in divergence between the parties. With normative institutionalism, it is likely to expect that legitimacy will be a core driver of change in the party programmes. It is especially the institutional quest for legitimacy that will be used to analyse the changes in the party programmes. Here, we expect convergence between the political parties.

With reference to a functionalistic view on higher education (Castells 2009; Clark 1983a), we can expect that the findings will show conflict between the values equity and quality.
3 Methodology

This chapter will describe the research design of the investigation and the methods for data collection; document analysis and interviews. Furthermore, the strengths and limitations of gathering data from party programmes and quality criteria of the study will be addressed.

3.1 Research design

The investigation in this thesis encompasses a small number of parties and measures complex issues of policy and change. Qualitative studies open for suitable approaches to these complex issues since they aid in understanding political patterns for specific political fields, especially when the knowledge base of the topic is limited (Lijphart 1971). A combination of frequency counts and thematic analysis was applied to analyse the party programmes (Proitz 2014). Since such processes ideally should be repeated, a second reading of the programmes was also conducted (Bowen 2009). After the document analysis, a graphic quantification of the results was presented (Bryman 2012: 625). In order to cross-validate and supplement the findings from the document analysis of the party programmes, interviews were conducted (Yin 2014: 108). The research design draws on triangulation since two kinds of qualitative methods are used to study the party programmes (Bryman 2012: 392). The study is mixed-method since the document analysis is quantified, but the study is not cross-sectional since the amount of parties and variables is limited (ibid.: 59). It is also a confirmatory study, where change in the party programmes is expected based on previous literature on change in political values – also for higher education in Norway (Telhaug et al.1999; Volckmar 2014).

The sequence of the study was the following:

1. Document analysis of party programmes

2. Interview representatives from the named political parties
   Topic of the interviews was first the development mapped in step 1, questions on reasons for and consequences of developments and co-existence of values. Interviews
are aimed at nuancing findings in first step and give deeper, qualitative insight into the development of the values and their nature of co-existence.

3. **Analyse findings with analytical framework**

From two institutional perspectives on drivers and consequences of change, and contradictory functions of values.

The measuring points in the study are consequently step 1. and 2. and the basis for step 2. is the initial document analysis in step 1. This sequence of the investigation is purposeful since the first step can answer research question (1) while the interviews can nuance research question (1) and answer research questions (2) and (3). The quantification is applied in order to strengthen the credibility of the document analysis by illustrating for the reader the *extent* to which “certain beliefs are held or a certain form of behavior occurs” (Bryman 2012: 626). The quantification injects greater precision into the estimates of prominence made through the document analysis and assures the reader of that the findings are not anecdotal (ibid.).

### 3.1.1 Selection of political parties

For this study, a possible solution was to follow all political parties represented in the Norwegian Parliament the Storting, as all have sections on higher education in their party programmes for the period in question. To narrow down the scope of the study and in order to go more in-depth on the parties that have had strong impact on higher education politics for the last two decades, a narrower and purposeful selection of the political parties was conducted (Bryman 2012).

In order to make just comparisons between the parties, some central criteria for selection of the parties were singled out:

- The party has held office in the Ministry of Education and Research in the time period (see table 2).
- Party representatives have been leaders of the Standing Committee of Education, Research and Church Affairs in the time period (see table 3).
Table 2. Ministers of Education and Research in Norway since 2001.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kristin Clemet</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>19.10.2001 to 17.10.2005</td>
<td>Bondevik II (KrF, H, V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Øystein Djupedal</td>
<td>SV</td>
<td>17.10.2005 to 18.10.2007</td>
<td>Stoltenberg II (Ap, Sp, SV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tora Aasland*</td>
<td>SV</td>
<td>18.10.2007 to 23.03.2012</td>
<td>Stoltenberg II (Ap, Sp, SV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torbjørn Røe Isaksen</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>16.10.2013 to today</td>
<td>Solberg (H, FrP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Leaders of Standing Committee of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rolf Reikvam</td>
<td>SV</td>
<td>22.10.2001 to 30.09.2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of the above criteria, sections on higher education in party programmes of the following parliamentary political parties were mapped:

- the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet)
- the Conservative Party (Høyre)
- the Socialist Left Party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti/SV)

Consequently, these three parties have been central in the shaping of Norwegian higher education for the last two decades. Although they cover the criterions for selection, they entail innate differences for instance in proportion of votes in general election, history and when they have held office for the time period in this investigation. Although the differences are interesting and might influence how the values develop, they are not relevant in themselves for answering the research questions in this particular investigation.

3.1.2 Time period

The party programmes investigated were for the election periods 2001–2005, 2005–2009, 2009–2013 and 2013–2017. This time span is chosen because it gives enough data to study the developments of the values over time and across governmental constellations, yet the time

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* Tora Aasland served as the Minister of Research and Higher Education alongside with Kristin Halvorsen who served as Minister for Education.
span is not insurmountable for the scope of this thesis. In addition, this time period represents the period from right before, while and after the Quality Reform was implemented in Norway. The reform represented a major shift for Norwegian higher education and “a key idea behind reform and modernization attempts” (Damša et al. 2015: 20). Although the launch of the reform was a landmark for higher education in Norway, this investigation is not an evaluation of the effects of the Quality Reform on politics, neither is there an underlying expectation of causality between the reform and the values in the party programmes.

### 3.2 Document analysis of party programmes

The methodological approach to answer research question (1) was to count the frequency of equity and quality and thematically analyse the political party programmes according to the coding scheme (see Appendix 3) and searching out of central themes (Bryman 2012: 557; 579). In other words, the document analysis is comparing similar values, but from different texts (Krippendorff 2012).

All party programmes are official and accessible online. Such documents have low rates of error, high representativeness and being openly accessible policy documents, they are “non-reactive and stable resources, they can be reviewed repeatedly and provide broad coverage over time” (Prøitz 2014: 3).

*Table 4. The party programmes mapped in the study.*

|------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
To increase the reliability of the mapping of the party programmes, the counting and scoring exercise was carried in week 7 and 12 in 2016. In the second mapping, three adjustments in the initial scores were made. All three adjustments were an increase or decrease in one point, i.e. not substantial changes in the final scores (see Appendix 4 for overview of both scoring results). It is the final score that constitutes the data in this investigation.

### 3.2.1 Measuring the values

The majority of the party programmes were accessed through Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste (NSD) and some through the parties’ websites (see References for overview over accessed sources). The scoring was done for each individual party programme for each individual period, in total 12 individual investigations as there are four periods and three political parties. Coding will inevitably be influenced by the “constructs, concepts, language, models, and theories that structured the study in the first place” (Merriam 1998: 48). In order to increase the transparency of the frequency count, this process is partly building on established scoring methods on *quasi-sentences* in election programmes. Quasi-sentences are defined “as an argument which is the verbal expression of one political idea or issue. In its simplest form, a sentence is the basic unit of meaning” (Volkens 2001: 96). Yet, since these methods are not specific enough for analysing higher education policy (Jungblut 2015: 61), a particular method for this investigation was developed.

The method for measuring the values was the following:

1. **Frequency count:** Each quasi-sentence regarding equity or quality is given one point according to the coding scheme in Appendix 3. However, the parties vary in which they stress equity and/or quality or neither of them. The emphasis of the values in the party programmes can be investigated by determining the positioning of words and sentences on the values. For example, if the first sentence in the section on higher education describes the importance of equity for the political party in question, this textual fact has to be taken into consideration when evaluating the final score for importance of equity for the party in question. Hence, step 2. was conducted.

2. **Thematic analysis and final score:** After the frequency count in step 1, an in-depth reading of the sections on higher education in the party programmes was done. This analysis is thus based on the prominence of equity and quality in relation to the rest of the section on higher education for the relevant time period. Based on frequency count
in step 1. and thematic analysis in step 2. a final score was given for the individual values of equity and quality in the party programme for the relevant period. Hence, the final score entails a potential adjustment of the first count.

3. Quantification: In order to map the development of prominence of equity and quality in the sections on higher education in the party programmes, the final scores were collected into line graphs showing developments in the prominence of equity and quality over time, both within and between the parties.

Note that only the parts of the sections on equity and quality in higher education were investigated. Student housing and financial support from the State Educational Loan Fund were often included in the scores, but where there was no articulate link between these measures and equity and/or quality this quasi-sentence was not included in the score. With respect to both values, text on research, primary and secondary education and other educational issues was not included.

Limitations and advantages of measuring method

The measuring method of party programmes has limitations that need to be addressed and justified. First, one might claim that “party programmes are an odd format” in the sense that these documents are not fully representative of the politics of the political party in question. When frequency counting and scoring party programmes it is important to note that this exercise does not give full justice to the depth and breadth of importance of values for the political parties in question and how the parties relate to the policy areas in general (Telhaug et al. 1999). There might also be differences in how the political parties develop the party programmes and how representative these programmes are of the parties’ actual policies and politics on a subject (ibid.). Yet, the first are foremost purpose of a party programme is indeed to be representative of the values and action plans for the political party in question. Party programmes also give good opportunities for comparison since their form and content are similar between parties and over time (Budge & Bara 2001). It is a widely established method both within and outside social science research to compare these documents (ibid.). Hence, a

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6 The rationale behind this distinction in student housing and support from the State Educational Loan fund is that there are possibly many arguments to increase educational support and student housing, not just related to equity and/or quality. Examples of other common arguments are increased student financial support and student housing in order for students to study full time.

7 Quote from the representative from Høyre in interview: “Partiprogrammer er et pussig format”. Note that all party representatives shared reluctance of regarding the party programmes as a fully satisfactory representation of the de facto politics of their respective parties.
simple exercise such as scoring will give indications on the political priorities for the parties and make it possible to compare the prominence of the values of equity and quality over time also between the parties. Secondly, another possible pitfall when measuring the party documents, is that the parties take some concepts, such as equity and quality in higher education, as prerequisites for the whole sector. Hence, parties might not consider it necessary to state or write about values that they regard as given in the party programmes. Such implicit knowledge is a possible pitfall of many methods and the interviews are partly aimed at uncovering this condition. Third, the scoring of the party programmes does not give information on the relative importance of higher education for the political party in question, for instance how extensive the share on higher education in the party programmes is in each document. Yet, such quantification would make the exercise and analysis considerably more complex and possibly not viable to pursue within the scope of this investigation. In addition, it is the development in prominence of the two values and the relationship between the two that is of interest in this investigation. Finally, it is important to note that document analysis of texts in general has its limitations. Although high objectivity and reliability have been central aims in the scoring process conducted for this investigation, the reading of the party programmes in itself entails subjective judgements of the documents (Bryman 2012: 405). Yet, this is a possible pitfall in many branches of research and common measures to increase the scientific quality of the investigation are applied.

It is important to stress that party programmes have many functions, and one central function is the possibility to compare parties between each other and over time. Although this exercise has limitations, the above text argues that when using party programmes as data the advantages exceed embedded limitations.

### 3.3 Interviews

Face-to-face interviews are efficient to acquire data for answering the research questions. Interviews open for deep insight and understanding of the developments of the two values equity and quality. Three interviews were carried out with one higher education representative from each of the parties Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV. All of the interviewed representatives have served as politicians for their respective political party for long stretches of time.

An initial set of interview subjects from the three political parties were contacted by email and one successively by telephone explaining the study and why they are requested to be
interviewed. All of the individuals that initially were planned to be informants referred to other politicians in their parties and appointments with these were made. An interview guide for semi-structured interviews was developed (Bryman 2012; see Appendix 2), and the actual interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. Two of the interviews were held in the Storting, and one in a café in central Oslo. During the interviews notes were taken, but due to the political topic and in order for the interview subjects to talk freely, the interviews were not recorded. The notes produced in total 20 pages of material. The interview language was Norwegian. Where quotes were to be used in the text, they were translated into English. Two of the informants asked for anonymization and hence all interviews were anonymised.

### 3.4 Criteria for analysing findings

In the text below, quality criteria of the investigation are addressed, influencing the possibility to interpret and generalize from the findings. The criteria applied for this investigation are internal validity, external validity, construct validity and reliability.

**Internal validity**

Internal validity questions the validity of inferring causal relationship on the basis of covariation of variables (Kleven 2008). For example in this investigation, whether it is possible to infer change or convergence between the parties on the values equity and quality – which in itself is not possible to detect – from findings in document analysis and interviews. This is a common objection to the methods that are used in this investigation. Yet, is it plausible that inferences from these sources should be possible to make since they are among common documents for social research (Budge & Bara 2001). Furthermore, the graphic quantification from the document analysis was presented to the informants and they confirmed the findings from the document analysis on the programmes from their parties. In addition, this study is theory-based and uses more than one data source, which increases the internal validity of the study.

**External validity**

External validity entails the possibility of generalizing from the findings to a wider context or to other contexts (Bryman 2012: 54; Kleven 2008). It is challenging to assume that the potential development of the values equity and quality are directly transferable to other
political parties, other time periods or in other countries. Yet, developments of divergence, convergence and the nature of co-existence between the values is possible to investigate in similar political constellations in other countries, between the same parties but on other political fields or among other parties in Norway. The research and analytic design of this investigation might therefore be transferable to other contexts.

**Construct validity**

Empirical research relies on the link between construct and indicators (Kleven 2008). The issue of construct validity questions whether inferences are rooted in theoretical propositions and not based on subjective impressions. In order to apply systematic scholarship when studying the field of higher education (Maassen 2000) and to make sure that findings are not influenced by anecdotes and subjective opinions, the investigation builds on frequently used frameworks within institutional theory (Allern 2010). Furthermore, a functionalistic view on higher education is well established within research on the sector (Clark 1983a; Castells 2001; 2009).

**Reliability**

Reliability entails the extent to which the methods used will give the same results in further trials (Bryman 2012: 390). All the stages of the study were explained and documented, making it possible to conduct the same study later in time, with other selections of political parties or by another researcher. In addition, the second document analysis of the party programmes only entailed marginal adjustments of the final scores, which indicates that the stability of the method and findings is high.
4 Empirical political setting

This chapter gives an overview of the current and empirical setting for politics and policy making on higher education in Norway. The chapter will briefly relevant green and white papers on higher education, and give an introduction to the three political parties Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV. The chapter will provide much needed context that will be drawn upon in the discussion of the findings in chapter six. As such, this chapter is helpful in giving a greater understanding of the context in which the political parties operate.

4.1 Policy making for higher education

This investigation will look at policy change in political party programmes on higher education. The result of policy processes is normally manifested in a range of documents and among the most relevant ones for this investigation are party programmes and green and white papers (Store norske leksikon 2016). Party programmes are often the basis for government platforms and white papers as they are the official governing document for political parties. Green and white papers are important because they lay the ground for future politics on specific fields such as higher education. In order to analyse developments in the party programmes, a definition of what a policy is regarded as in the realm of this investigation is pertinent. Gornitzka defines a policy as a “public statement of an objective and the kind of instruments that will be used to achieve it” (1999: 14). This definition is relevant for various policy documents and also the study object of this investigation – party programmes – since the programmes are regarded to be among the founding public statements on policy issues on behalf of the political parties they derive from.

4.1.1 Party programmes as carriers of political ideas

A programme give information on the political priorities and is the official governing document of the party in question for the coming electoral period. In political party programmes, one can often find a mix of abstract, ideological principles, general political goals and specific policy measures that the party intends to carry out if elected into office (Vassallo & Wilcox 2006: 415). Political parties in Norway normally have two kinds of programmes; principal programmes and election programmes (Store norske leksikon 2016).
The initial phase of this study showed that some parties have principal programmes for the four election periods, but all have election programmes for parliamentary election. Therefore, it was the party programmes that were selected for investigation in this thesis. Occasionally these programmes are called election programmes or action plans, but the general tendency is that they are called party programmes and they will be called so in this investigation.

The process of developing party programmes normally starts with a preparatory committee who sends a proposal on a hearing in the organisation, before the annual national party meeting, who after negotiations passes or approves the programme (Heidar 2012: 183). In general, the volume of the political party programmes has increased over time. This increase is mainly due to that the party programmes cover an increasing amount of issues and that the parties profile themselves on broader fields throughout election campaigns (ibid.). This fact might influence the findings, but in this investigation it is the relation between equity and quality that is more of interest and the change in each value – also in relation to the other. There is also connection between the government platforms and party programmes as much of the content in the government platforms derives from party programmes. The extent of coherence between the party programmes, government platforms as white papers is among others, dependent of whether there is a coalition or single-party and/or a majority government.

4.1.2 Green and white papers

An Official Norwegian Report (Norges offentlige utredninger/NOU) – also called green paper – is an extensive, official study of a topic or field written by a committee appointed by the Government and often constitutes the foundation of later white papers on related issues (Stortinget 2016). A report to the Storting – also called white paper – is a document on specific fields, discussions on future politics or aspects of public governance that the Government presents to the Parliament (Christensen, Egeberg, Lægreid & Aars 2014: 113). The white papers often constitute the basis of later propositions to the Storting. Below is a brief chronological wrap up of the main green and white papers in the period we are investigating that deal with equity and/or quality.

White paper on dimensioning of higher education (1999)

The white paper *On principles for dimensioning higher education* (Regjeringen 1999), laid out the proposed long-term principles for the capacity and dimensioning of the Norwegian
higher education system. The paper defined that it was an important goal of future
dimensioning of Norwegian higher education to give equal access to higher education across
the country, meet individual demands for higher education, and to stimulate institutional
development that would secure future quality in education and research.

Green paper ‘Mjøs-committee’ (2000)

The official Norwegian report on higher education from 2000 named Freedom with
responsibility. On higher education and research in Norway, called the ‘Mjøs-committee’
(NOU: 2000) laid the ground for the later Quality Reform. The Mjøs-committee assessed
conditions in Norwegian higher education ranging from changes in structural measures, such
as legislation for the higher education institutions, to adjustments of educational measures,
such as degree structure. The report repeatedly states that equal right to access higher
education, in coherence with the definition of equity in this investigation, has been and shall
continue to be a founding pillar of Norwegian higher education (e.g. NOU 2000: 64; 473;
593). In addition, a substantial amount of the document was dedicated to measures to increase
quality in education. There was an expectation that the coming reform of higher education
could free resources at the institutions which again could be rechanneled to improve the
quality in higher education. With the Mjøs-committee, quality was introduced to the political
spectrum on higher education.

White paper on the Quality Reform (2001)

The Quality Reform introduced quality as a key priority for the general policy agenda in
Norwegian higher education. The reform was presented in 2001 through the white paper Do
your duty – demand your right. Quality reform of higher education (Regjeringen 2001). The
reform generally enjoyed broad political support across governmental and parliamentary
constellations both with respect to point of departure and implementation. The reform was
central to Norway’s adaptation of the Bologna process that would profoundly change the
Norwegian higher education system. The Quality reform was initiated by the conservative
government Bondevik I in the late 1990s, developed further and launched in a white paper by
the red-green coalition government Stoltenberg I in 2001 and finally implemented from a
conservative government with Bondevik II from 2003 and onwards (Stensaker 2014). The
Quality Reform introduced a series of formal changes ranging from a new quality assurance
system to a two-tier degree structure. The main goal of the reform was to achieve high quality
studies at Norwegian institutions. New forms of follow up by the institutions and funding systems should contribute to reach this goal through increasing the performance of the students, enabling them to succeed for instance by completing their studies faster. (ibid.; Damsha et al. 2015: 23; Regjeringen 2001: 25). On a more ideological level, it marked a change in in the Norwegian higher education policy landscape when introducing more explicit emphasis on organisational measures, financial measures, accountability and pedagogical measures. Although the main goal of the Quality Reform was to increase quality in higher education, the reform also confirmed that equal access to higher education had been and should remain to be a pillar of Norwegian higher education policy (Regjeringen 2001: 9).

White paper on lifelong learning (2007)

The white paper ...and no one was left behind – early efforts for life long learning (Regjeringen 2007) aspired to answer how the Norwegian educational system could assist the individual in realising their potential and lifelong projects (Regjeringen 2007: 3). Moreover, the paper was clear on the impact of socio-economic background on educational enrolment and the need to equalize this relation (ibid.: 8).

White paper on internationalisation (2009)

Although the title Internationalisation of education (Regjeringen 2009) clearly states the main focus, this white paper also deals with how internationalization is vital to increase quality in Norwegian higher education.

4.2 The political parties

The forthcoming descriptions of the three political parties are to a large extent building on Allern (2010), Heidar, Berntzen and Bakke (2008), Telhaug et al. (1999) and Volckmar (2014). Telhaug et al. (1999) and Volckmar (2014) describe how analysis of all the party programmes on higher education for Norwegian parliamentary parties from 1945 to 2000 show broad political unity on equity as a key political priority for higher education in the whole period. Yet, the same studies show that concerns on equity are not equally prominent in the party programmes from the 1980s and 90s and that Høyre is more dedicated to quality and other values for higher education. This finding is in line with Ansell’s research showing that
more left wing parties in general will favor high enrollment rates over 50 per cent and right
wing parties will favor enrollment rates below 50 per cent (2010: 29).

Common for all parties is that their definition of equity and quality in higher education cohere
with the definitions of the values in this investigation. For the parties, equity in higher
education entails equal access to education (‘lik rett til utdanning’) and quality generally
entails answering to certain standards, although the meaning of quality is vaguer than the
meaning of equity.

4.2.1 The Labour party (Arbeiderpartiet)

Arbeiderpartiet was formed in 1887 as a joint organisation for the labour movement. After the
Second World War, Arbeiderpartiet has been a central driver in developing and securing the
welfare state albeit its policies in the 1980s were more directed towards market solutions.
Arbeiderpartiet normally profiles the party on public welfare, employment and school issues.
Since the general elections in 1993, Arbeiderpartiet on average has collected around 30 per
cent of the votes (see Appendix 1), a considerable reduction compared to the decades from
1930 to 1970, where the party enjoyed between 40 and 50 per cent of the votes in general
elections (Store norske leksikon 2016). For the time period in this investigation,
Arbeiderpartiet held office in the Ministry of Education and Research from 2000 until 2001
with Trond Giske as the Minister of Education and Research (see table 2). Traditionally, the
voters of Arbeiderpartiet were workers in industry, but today the party mobilizes broadly
across voter groups. One of many distinctive characteristics of the development of
Arbeiderpartiet for the decades after the Second World War is the political transformation of
the party. The party leadership has argued for greater variation in policy areas and that the
party should expand from being too explicitly associated with the interests of the unions
(Allern 2010: 128). As for the voters of Arbeiderpartiet, there has traditionally been a
negative correlation between higher education in the general electorate and support for the
party (Heidar et al. 2008). Vassallo and Wilcox describe how former more socialist parties in
Europe have sought to “keep some ties to workers while appealing more broadly to middle-
class voters” (2006: 5). Moreover, the party has only partly been successful in the attempt to
reach out to broader voter groups.

With respect to education, Arbeiderpartiet traditionally has been devoted to equity,
exemplified in this quote: “Equal access to education is compulsory in order to even out social
differences and give everyone an opportunity to use their abilities” (Arbeiderpartiet 2013: 22). On higher education, the party has also stressed quality in party programmes for more recent election periods.

4.2.2 The Conservative party (Høyre)

Høyre was formed in 1884, alongside with the Liberal party (Venstre), and is today a party of middle size. The party normally mobilises between 14 and 27 per cent of the votes in general elections since the Second World War with only two exceptions in 1981 and 1985 where the party achieved over 30 per cent of the votes in these elections (Store norske leksikon 2016). For the time period in this investigation, Høyre held office in the Ministry of Education and Research from 2001 until 2005 with Kristin Clemet and from 2013 until today with Torbjørn Røe Isaksen (see table 2). Høyre is traditionally viewed as the antagonist of Arbeiderpartiet and balances between value conservatism and economic liberalism. Yet, the party has also favored public and state solutions and is less national conservative than most of its siblings among conservative parties in Europe. The party normally profiles itself on communications and transport, secure work places, strengthening private (and public) health and care solutions, education and research. The rise of the heterogeneous middle class has influenced Høyre in becoming a more liberal cross-class ‘people’s party’ (Allern 2010: 150). The voters of Høyre are traditionally well paid private sector employees, independent and self-employed businesspeople and people with high wages and education in general from more urban areas around the Oslo-fjord and larger Norwegian cities (Heidar et al. 2008).

Høyre traditionally stresses measurable quality in education, competition and differentiation for value creation (Telhaug et al. 1999; Volckmar 2014), exemplified in this quote: “The basis of value creation and future welfare is a well established educational system” (Høyre 2013: 14). An example of quality measures in higher education taken recently is the sharpening of entrance requirements in Norwegian teacher education (Regjeringen 2014)\(^8\).

4.2.3 The Socialist Left party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti/SV)

SV was established through its forerunner Sosialistisk Folkeparti in 1961, an outbreak of party politicians from Arbeiderpartiet. In general elections for the last two decades, SV has

\(^8\) From 2016, in order to be accepted to teacher education in Norway, applicants must have attained the grade 4 or better from Norwegian upper secondary school (Regjeringen 2014). This is one of more measures aiming at increasing the quality and attractiveness of teacher education.
achieved between 4 per cent of the votes in 2013, a peak of 12.5 per cent in 2001 and nearly 8 per cent in 1993 (see Appendix 1). For the time period in this investigation, SV held office in the Ministry of Education and Research from 2005 until 2013 with Øystein Djupedal (2005–2007), Tora Aasland as Minister of Research and Higher Education from 2007 until 2012 alongside with Kristin Halvorsen as Minister for Education from 2007 until 2013 (see table 2). Although established as a leftist party, the “leftist orientation of SV’s party programmes was definitely less pronounced in the 1980s and 1990s” (Allern 2010: 197). The party has promoted itself as a radical alternative on the left side of Norwegian political spectrum, but the party politics on fields such as economy and state management have been de facto less radical. SV has established itself more as a left-libertarian party with green values and emphasis on equality with an extensive political platform (Allern 2010: 197). In accordance with party sibling in Europe, voters of SV are generally new middle class; employees in public sector and people with high education and in contrast to the more blue-collar profile of the party electorate when the party was established (Vassallo & Wilcox 2006). On political issues, SV especially stresses public solutions and ownership, climate and environment and international solidarity (Heidar et al. 2008).

On education, SV has traditionally stressed equal rights to education, exemplified in this quote: “Equal right to education is a founding element in SVs politics on education, and important for the development of a fair and democratic society” (SV 2013: 57). In the party programme for the recent general election, the party also has emphasised quality in higher education.

4.3 Key aspects of empirical political context

Summing up the description of the empirical political context entails some aspects that will be brought into the analysis of the patterns of prominence of equity and quality. The process of developing party programmes may entail differences between the parties. Yet, the importance and political implications have many common features between the parties.

The description of green and white papers on equity and quality in higher education show that both values have been on the political agenda for the last two decades. In the period we are looking at, there has been a white paper dedicated mainly to quality in education (Quality Reform). Quality has also been a prominent feature in other green and white papers on higher education, which signalises that this field has been of special political interest. In addition, but
not to the same extent, equity has also been given attention through white papers on other subjects. Yet, the context reveals potentially larger attention to quality than equity in the political sphere for higher education for the period in this investigation.

The description of the political parties in this investigation shows that they are innately different. At a first glance, the party histories, electorate, main political issues and angle on higher education politics entail profound differences. From these differences, it is likely to find that the parties vary in their emphasis on equity and quality.

These empirical circumstances will be brought into the analysis of the patterns of equity and quality in the party programmes, but will not influence the findings in the investigation.
5 Findings

The first research question is “What is the prominence of the values equity and quality in party programmes on higher education?”. In order to answer this question, document analysis of the party programmes was conducted. Figure 1, 2 and 3 give a quantified presentation of the development of the prominence of the values equity and quality for each of the political parties Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV for the election periods 2001–2005, 2005–2009, 2009–2013 and 2013–2017. In order to answer the first part of research question (2) “How can possible patterns of prominence be explained and what may be the consequences of these patterns?” the document analysis is drawn on and figure 4 and 5 provide quantified comparisons of the party-wise scores for each value. The comparisons in figure 4 and 5 are accompanied with information from the interviews. This information nuances the findings from the document analysis and addresses research question (2) and (3) “How do political parties perceive the co-existence of the values equity and quality in the political realm of higher education?”.

5.1 Prominence of values in party programmes

The document analysis for the party programmes of Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV on both values for the four last election periods gave the party-wise results below. Note that all the informants confirmed the quantified development for their party described when they were interviewed.
5.1.1 Arbeiderpartiet

Fig. 1 shows how both of the values equity and quality have developed for Arbeiderpartiet over the four election periods. The equity value has been stable over the period. The prominence of the value starts at three points and increases with one point in the 2009–2013 party programme, and staying at this score in the 2013–2017 programme. For quality, the value has increased in prominence over the four election periods, starting at one point in the 2001–2005 programme, increasing to three and six in the 2005–2009 and 2009–2013 programmes respectively, and decreasing to five in the 2013–2017 programme. For Arbeiderpartiet, the value quality has increased more in prominence than equity in the party programmes over the four election periods. Yet, in the last party programme both the values are approximately equally prominent for Arbeiderpartiet, with only one point more on quality.

Figure 1. Prominence of ‘equity’ and ‘quality’ in the party programmes of Arbeiderpartiet.
5.1.2 Høyre

Fig. 2 shows how both of the values equity and quality have developed for Høyre over the four election periods. For equity, the value has decreased from four points in the 2001–2005 party programme to two points in the 2005–2009 programme and further decreasing with one point in both the 2009–2013 and 2013–2017 programmes. The value equity ends at zero points in the 2013–2017 programme. For quality, the value started at four points in the 2001–2005 programme, decreased to one point in the 2005–2009 programme and increased to three and seven in the 2009–2013 and 2013–2017 programmes, respectively. For Høyre, the value equity has decreased and the value quality has increased in the party programmes over the four election periods. Quality appears to have become more prominent for Høyre in the last two election programmes.

Figure 2. Prominence of ‘equity’ and ‘quality’ in the party programmes of Høyre.
5.1.3 Sosialistisk Venstreparti/SV

Fig. 3 shows how both of the values equity and quality have developed for SV over the four election periods. For equity, the value has decreased from three to two points from the 2001–2005 to the 2005–2009 programme, and increased to 10 points in both the 2009–2013 and 2013–2017 programmes. For quality, the value has increased from one point in the 2001–2005 programme to two points in the 2005–2009 and 2009–2013 programmes and increased to nine points in the 2013–2017 programme. For SV, both equity and quality have increased in the party programmes over the four election periods and have a high score in the last party programme.

Figure 3. Prominence of ‘equity’ and ‘quality’ in the party programmes of SV.
5.1.4 Divergence on equity

Fig. 4 shows how the prominence of equity has developed differently for the three political parties over the four governmental periods. The prominence of equity is stable for Arbeiderpartiet, increases for SV and decreases for Høyre. The parties start at approximately the same level of prominence on equity in the 2001–2005 programme and end at four points for Arbeiderpartiet, zero points for Høyre and ten points for SV in the 2013–2017 programmes (for further details in points and scores, see party-wise descriptions). On the basis of this mapping, we observe divergence on the value equity in the party programmes.

The interviews with party representatives from all three parties describe how equity in higher education is and has been a pillar in Norwegian higher education politics. They point out that equity in higher education is a given for this political field, which can be a possible explanation for why Arbeiderpartiet and Høyre have not increased their focus on equity over the time period to the same extent as they have done for quality. Two of the representatives mentioned the establishment of the State Educational Loan Fund as the starting point for
establishing consensus on equity in higher education. Both Arbeiderpartiet and SV describe how equity is a pivotal value for their parties and how this value defines many political fields, not just higher education. The representative from Høyre states that the party “lost the elections” in 2005 election (see Appendix 1). After this election, equity was put more on the agenda within the party and a new course was set out after the 2005 elections. The informant explained how “we acknowledged that we had been too vague on what was most important for us, which is equal rights to higher education and quality in education” and further that “we had to do something, we had to get through to the voters”. This process resulted in a new slogan for the party ‘Opportunities for all’ (‘Muligheter for alle’). Although equity in higher education is not as prominent in the party programmes for Høyre after this election, the interviews reveal that equity partly is emphasised to gain legitimacy from the electorate. The slogan ‘Opportunities for all’ was also the title of the party programme from 2009–2013 and the party representative from Høyre states that they believe in the importance of good public institutions for the same reasons as Arbeiderpartiet. Although this attention to equity in Høyre is voiced by the party representative, the priority is not reflected in the texts on higher education in the party programmes.

Some of the findings on equity from the interviews do not cohere with the document analysis of the party programmes. For SV there is match between the document analysis showing increased prominence of equity and the findings in the interview with the party representative. This is also true for Arbeiderpartiet, where equity as a value has been repeated throughout the four last party programmes, although it has not increased more than one point over the whole four election periods. Yet, for Høyre the informant stresses that equity is an important value for the party. This claim is not coherent with the findings in the document analysis where the prominence of equity decreases continually over the four election periods in Høyre’s party programmes. Consequently, all parties claim that equity is an important value for the party, but only Arbeiderpartiet and SV emphasise this value in their most recent party programmes.

5.1.5 Convergence on quality

Fig. 5 shows how the prominence of quality has increased in prominence for the three political parties over the four governmental periods. All the parties start at lower scores for this value, and end at five points for Arbeiderpartiet, seven points for Høyre and nine points for SV. Although both Arbeiderpartiet and Høyre have slight decreases in the prominence of the value at one point, the final score of prominence of the 2013–2017 party programmes is
considerably larger than at the offset in the 2001–2005 programmes (for further details in points and scores, see party-wise descriptions). For all three parties, the total increase in prominence of the value quality is fifteen points. Quality in higher education appears to have become more prominent for all the political parties in their party programmes. Based on this, we observe convergence on the value quality in the party programmes.

The document analysis of the party programmes does not give information on what kind of convergence we observe, but the interviews give information on the characteristics of the developments. It is relevant to note that the interviews are not suited to give a full description, yet they can indicate the dynamics behind the convergence on quality.

When questioned on what processes that could have catalyzed the increased prominence of quality and convergence on the value, the party representatives described how the convergence process on this value had been driven by multiple factors. Yet, the party representatives ascribed the main reason for increasing prominence of quality being the political parties themselves, not external factors and actors. According to the informants, the political realm of higher education and the parties have become more preoccupied with quality. For instance, when asked about whether the international focus on quality in higher
education could have contributed to more emphasis on quality as a value for higher education, the informant from Arbeiderpartiet stated: “we [i.e. the party] are not so influenced by Bologna, we are more influenced by other parties and the discourses within and around higher education in Norway”. Moreover, when SV was asked why quality apparently has become a more prominent value for the party, the informant described that they intended to “reconquer the concept of knowledge” after the 2005 elections. When explaining this shift, the representative stated that the party mission was to stress the importance of “Bildung⁹ and softer aspects of quality”. In addition to this, the party representative said that “no one wants to be weaker on quality than the other”, indicating a potential dependency between the political stakes of other parties and SV politics on the issue of quality.

Yet, the parties did not perceive quality as a topic that appealed to a broad range of the voters. Like the representative from Arbeiderpartiet stated: “if you have five minutes to attract voters, it won’t be quality in higher education that you will bring to the table. Yet, many voters in flow value education and want to secure good public institutions for all. Quality is an important factor of this”. At the same time, the representative stressed that the increased prominence is a political ambition in itself for the party. They have wanted to stimulate institutions to achieve higher quality for the good of society, return of investment of tax payers money and for the good of the individual student. In other words, the party representatives perceive that the parties themselves have contributed to convergence on the issue of quality. Hence, in this investigation we do not have evidence to support that we have found delta convergence with an external exemplary model shaping conceptions on the issue of quality (Heinze & Knill 2008).

On the question on whether the party representatives perceived that they were influenced by other political parties, the answers in the interviews varied. Arbeiderpartiet and SV did to a large extent describe that they have not been influenced by the other on the value quality. Yet, into the interview, the informants from these two parties implied that the influence of Høyre has contributed to an increase in emphasis of quality in their respective parties. The representative from Arbeiderpartiet said that for higher education, “Høyre has been important in promoting the value of quality”. When discussing the potential influence of Høyre on the party, the representative from SV more discretely stated that “one does not operate in a bubble and no one wants to be weaker on quality than the other”. Further, the informant described

⁹ In Norwegian “dannelse”.

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that Høyre holds the – undeserved – position as the leading political party on politics for higher education. The representative from Høyre on the other hand, stated that “I perceive that we have been engaged in quality for a long time. After all, Clemet was engaged in quality”\textsuperscript{10}. Yet, all the representatives say that there is a high degree of consensus between the parties on higher education policies; that there might be differences in the measures proposed, but that the common goal is a good education system for all. As the SV party representative put it “you shoot at each other, but when it comes down to it we might not disagree that much”. Moreover, Høyre’s party representative stated: “You are challenged and answer to different arguments from the other parties, but then you go home and think about what is said, you reflect upon whether the other part might be more reasonable than you first assumed. This refraction makes the politics better”. This quote illustrates the dynamics in the political landscape and how parties are influenced by each other as an effect of belonging to the same group of policy makers dealing with higher education.

The above data indicate that for the value quality in the party programmes for Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV, \textit{sigma} convergence is found. The parties have influenced each other as a result of being part of the same group of political parties with politics on higher education. The interviews indicate that when Arbeiderpartiet and SV have enhanced the prominence of quality in the party programmes, this is partly due to influence from Høyre. This dynamic is a possible explanation to why the three parties have converged in promoting quality as a prominent value for higher education in the four last party programmes.

5.2 The co-existence of the values

For the third research question (3) “\textit{How do political parties perceive the co-existence of the values equity and quality in the political realm of higher education?}”, the data from the document analysis and interviews with key political representatives from Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV are used as data sources.

5.2.1 Comparison of values

Interesting differences appear when comparing the historical development of equity and quality. \textit{First}, there is difference in the development of prominence of the values. Quality

\textsuperscript{10} Former Minister of Education and Research (2001-2005) from Høyre, see Table 2, page 19.
is mentioned twenty one times in the political party programmes for 2013–2017 and
mentioned six times in the 2001–2005 programmes, and has increased in frequency with
fifteen points from the first to the last party programmes for all three parties.
Comparatively, equity is mentioned fourteen times in the 2013–2017 programmes and ten
times in the 2001–2005 programmes and has only had growth in four points for the four
election periods for all three parties. The comparison shows that the value quality has
increased more in prominence over the four programme periods than equity. Second and
accordingly, quality appears to have become more prominent than equity in the party
programmes over the time period. Not only has the prominence of quality increased more
than for equity, but the value is mentioned far more frequently in the 2013–2017
programmes with twenty one points compared to equity with fourteen points. The end
result is that quality in total is more prominent than equity. This stands in contrast to the
starting point in the 2001–2005 programmes where equity was the more prominent value
with ten points on equity versus six points on quality. Judging from the document analysis,
the value quality seems to be more prominent than equity in the last party programmes,
except for in SVs party programmes where the values are evenly prominent with only one
more point on equity than quality. Third, although there is change in both values, the
development is not the same for both values as there is divergence on equity and
convergence on quality in the period.

5.2.2 The co-existence and possible contradiction of the values

Questions on the co-existence of the values equity and quality in the political parties were
asked towards the end of the interviews. All representatives of the parties first-handedly were
of the opinion that the values are not in conflict with each other. An example is the
representative from SV stating that “it is completely possible to have these two thoughts in
mind at the same time”. Yet, the representative carried on “… unless you get so pre-occupied
with quality that you lay the thresholds for access too high and consequently reduce the
possibility for all to access higher education”. The representative from Arbeiderpartiet was of
the opinion that higher education, even faced with high drop-out rates, leads to quality beyond
the institutional borders in the society and working life:

“Yes, there is a theoretical tension between the two values, but in fact they are
completely unifiable. When more people have been able to access higher
education, this has led to quality for society. Yes, we have drop-out, but most of
the students that have studied at a higher education institutions do get a job. So equal right to higher education lead to quality beyond institutional boundaries”.

The representative from Høyre stated that equity and quality in no way were in conflict with each other, and moreover that they are equally important. Furthermore, this representative stated that when making clear demands from participants in higher education, society is helping the individuals who have lesser chances of success in higher education: “you do the student a disservice if you have a too soft approach and make no demands”.

As the findings show, the informants first state that these two values are fully compatible within the Norwegian higher education system. When asked on how to address social inequality into the higher education system, the representative from Høyre stated that it is the effort prior to access to higher education that is should be strengthened, i.e. the resources and efforts employed in the school system. The representative stated that the school system should control for socio-economic background and described how “some students will always outperform others and this is linked to socio-economic background”. In this statement, there lies an implicit acknowledgement of that quality may prevail over equity and offers an explanation as to why equity is not so prominent in the party programmes of Høyre.

Moreover, as an example of changes in favor of quality in higher education, the informants were asked about their opinion on the increase in entry requirements for teachers (see chapter 4.2.2). They all agreed that this sharpening of admission requirements theoretically could be an example of quality being stimulated at the expense of equity in access to higher education. At the same time they were reluctant to elaborate on that this change actually mirrored a possible conflict between equity and quality. Without reading too much into this part of the replies from the representatives, the discussion on increased entrance requirements does nuance the initial party message from the interview subjects that the two values equity and quality are equally stimulated and valued and that they can co-exist without any considerable tension between them. Consequently, a potential contradiction in the two functions equity and quality can not be dismissed on the basis of these findings.

With reference to research question (3), it is interesting to give a brief discussion on the co-existence between the two values. The interview subjects state that they have a clear perception of what the concept equity entails for the field of higher education. They define equity as chance equity (‘lik rett til utdanning’), parallel to the common use of the term in policy documents such as white papers (see chapter 4 above) and the definition of equity in
this investigation. Yet, all the informants state that quality is a complex concept and that the meaning of the value is in change. The informant from SV mentions that a broader perception of quality should be applied, also incorporating ‘Bildung’ and democratic functions of the education system. The above quote from the Høyre representative on that quality education will elevate the weaker students, shows this party’s perception of that quality may lead to equity. Here, a potential overlap between the values is illustrated.

Summing up, the representatives state first-hand that they see no immediate contradiction between the values equity and quality within their respective political parties, as manifested in their party programmes. Yet, as the quotes from SV and Høyre show, when elaborating further on the theme, some potential conflicts appear such as heightening the thresholds for entrance to the higher education system and the covariance of performance with socio-economic background. Furthermore, the findings show that quality is perceived as a wide concept which is difficult to define and that it possibly entails aspects of equity.
6 Discussion

This chapter will analyse the findings from chapter five by drawing on two perspectives; historical and normative institutionalism. This will help to answer the first part of research question (2) on how the possible patterns of prominence can be explained. It interesting to investigate how the convergence and increasing prominence of quality potentially co-relates with a divergent development in the prominence of equity. The discussion also addresses potential shortcomings of the two institutionalisms when they are applied to the empirical findings. Explanations for the observed convergence on quality and divergence on equity will be brought forward. Finally, the nature of co-existence between the two values within the political parties will be discussed with reference to research question (3) “How do political parties perceive the co-existence of the values equity and quality in the political realm of higher education?”.

6.1 Changes as seen from institutional theory

6.1.1 Equity

For the value equity we see divergence between the parties Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV in their programmes for the four election periods (see figure 4). This finding will be analysed from the perspective of historical institutionalism and normative institutionalism.

Historical institutionalism

From the perspective of historical institutionalism, the argument can be made that the developments on the value equity cohere with this analytical standpoint. As shown in chapter 4 and in the interviews, for Arbeiderpartiet the value of equity is deeply founded within the organisation and has been a strong standing and stable core value for the party ever since its establishment in 1887. This historical ‘stickiness’ is reflected in the mapping of the party programmes where equity is stable over the four election periods and indicates distinctiveness for the party. For Høyre, one might also argue that this party historically has not stressed equity as a core value as prominently as both Arbeiderpartiet and SV. The development of successive decrease in prominence of equity in the party programmes for the four election periods for Høyre might therefore be argued to cohere more with the party profile than an alternatively stable or increase in mentioning of the value. Also for this political party, the
development of equity is distinctive. Yet, as the informant from the party explained, after the 2005 downfall in the general election, the party spent time on developing and formulating a shift in their politics and policy resulting in ‘Opportunities for all’ (Muligheter for alle) as the new party slogan. This rhetorical shift is not mirrored, though, in the plans and future actions described in the texts on higher education in the successive party programmes of 2009–2013 and 2013–2017. Yet, this observation is in coherence with a historical institutional perspective, where one might argue that equity and ‘opportunities for all’ are not defined as among the core, historical values of Høyre. In other words, the general rhetorical shift in favor of equity did not manifest itself in the real politics of the party. For SV and parallel to Arbeiderpartiet, equity is a core value in the party since the party’s foundation in 1961. Also for this party one can observe how ‘stickiness’ or ‘path dependency’ secures the founding ideas within the party. This ‘path dependency’ with respect to equity has become more prominent for SV in the party programmes for the last two election periods, where the party has experienced a recess in election results (see Appendix 1). It is interesting to observe that both equity and quality are distinctly more prominent in the two last election programmes for the party. One possible explanation is that the historical legacy and thus current identity of the party might delegitimize emphasising quality without emphasising equity. Hence, if the party intends to stress quality, it consequently is committed to stress equity. If this is the case, we are observing the distinctiveness of the political party unfold.

From a historical institutional perspective, the fact that we see divergence on the value equity in the party programmes cohere with the notion of ‘path dependency’ and distinctiveness where the parties are bound by their founding ideas. Not ascribing the authors to historical institutionalism, this suggestion is supported by Heidar and Saglie, stating that the historical legacies and conflict structures of Norwegian parties still dominate Norwegian party politics and that the party organisations are more conservative than renewers of politics (2002: 149).

**Normative institutionalism**

From the perspective of normative institutionalism, one can also argue that some of the developments in the value equity cohere with this analytical standpoint. Although institutions like political parties are not solely regarded as utility-maximising entities, legitimacy from its surroundings is a central driver for change within this perspective. The stability in prominence on the value equity for Arbeiderpartiet can – from a normative institutionalist perspective – be explained by the innate need for the party in giving steady attention to the value in order to
confirm internally and externally that equity is indeed a core value. For Høyre, the decrease in prominence of equity might be explained by this value not being central in order for the party to increase or maintain legitimacy. Yet again, it is curious that the shift in vision for the party (‘Opportunities for all’) was a fact from 2009 and onwards, but the shift is not reflected in the party programme texts on higher education for the two following election periods. For SV, the increase in prominence on equity in the two last party programmes might be read as an attempt to increase legitimacy of the party. The rationale behind this is that the party accentuated the importance of quality in these two party programmes and in order to uphold legitimacy on a strong-standing value like equity, this value also had to be increased correspondingly.

From a normative institutional perspective, the finding of divergence between the parties in prominence on equity might be explained by the variation in need for legitimacy from party surroundings on this issue. For SV, legitimacy to the position as the party that voices the need for equity is an important driver for the change we see throughout the four party programmes on this value. On the other side of the spectrum we have Høyre, which have no immediate need to gain legitimacy on this issue.

6.1.2 Quality

For the value quality, we see convergence between the parties Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV in their programmes for the four election periods (see figure 5). This finding will also be analysed from the perspective of historical institutionalism and normative institutionalism.

**Historical institutionalism**

As we have seen, historical institutionalism refers to critical junctures in order to explain profound changes in policies and ideology. Initially, one might argue that increased prominence of quality cannot be described as a profound change in policy since the policy area is relatively narrow compared to other areas like employment, infrastructure and health. Yet, a fully plausible counter argument to this is that the increased prominence of quality is a result of a wider critical juncture for at least two of the parties, since a critical juncture can be defined as major societal shifts or electoral shocks (Harmel & Janda 1994: 265). For Høyre and SV the parties might have experienced ‘electoral shocks’ in 2005 as this election was considered as a considerable defeat for the two parties, the two parties lost respectively 7,1
and 3.7 per cent of the votes compared to the general elections in 2001 (see Appendix 1). As stated earlier, this defeat catalyzed a major political shift for Høyre and the new slogan ‘Opportunities for all’. SV on the other hand, had a goal in “reconquering the concept of knowledge”. At the same time as the party informant indicated a potential dependency between SV politics on quality and political standpoints of their opponents Høyre: “no one wants to be weaker on quality than the other” leading to increased points in quality in the party programmes. On the other hand and as we have seen, the shift in slogan for Høyre illuminating the need for equal opportunities for all did not result in factual policy changes in direction of more equity in higher education. For Høyre and in the field of higher education, the most prominent policy change after the 2005 elections was the accentuation of quality. So for Høyre, this critical juncture of defeat in the 2005 elections might be read as the driver for change and consequently increase in prominence of quality – although this change does not fully cohere with the overall shift in the new rhetorical political vision for the party which was more directed towards equity. Yet, the election defeat mobilized the party to address core values more evidently, and quality is a core value for Høyre according to the interview subject and the general political profile of the party (see chapter 4.2.2).

In line with the historical institutional perspective, the increase in prominence of quality is catalysed by the distinctiveness of the party being more articulated in the latter party programmes. For a traditionally equity oriented party like SV it is also challenging to argue that an increase in prominence of quality is in line with the ‘path dependency’ of the founding ideological ideas of the party. This last point is also true for Arbeiderpartiet, since quality in higher education has not traditionally been a leit motif for the party, so the increase in prominence of quality from the first to the third party programme is hard to explain with stickiness’ of ideas or in coherence with the parties’ distinctive character, with reference to historical institutionalism. Finally, historical institutionalism and path dependency might be suited to explain certain singular changes in the party programmes, but cannot fully account for the changes we have observed in the party programmes for all parties for the four election periods. From a historical institutional perspective, the increased prominence of quality in the political party programmes over the four election periods can not directly be coupled to this analytical perspective for all three political parties.

As we have seen, historical legacies still dominate Norwegian politics. Possible outcomes of such dynamics might be that the parties enhance ‘new’ values like quality to a further extent than ‘old’ values like equity (Heidar & Saglie 2002: 149). This does not necessarily mean
that old values are repressed or become less important. In the light of the above discussion, the convergence we see between the parties when making quality more prominent is challenging to explain with reference to historical institutionalism for all parties, since the total findings on quality not unanimously can be coupled to historical institutionalism.

**Normative institutionalism**

Normative institutionalism might serve to explain the rise in prominence of quality in the party programmes for the four election periods. For all parties, one might argue that it has been a priority to stress quality – both internally to the core of the party and externally – in order to attain and uphold legitimacy from the surroundings of the party. As the representative from Arbeiderpartiet stated, the party does not understand quality as an aspect of politics that will attract large parts of the electorate, but quality in higher education rather falls into a comprehension of the importance of good public institutions. At the same time, this increase in the prominence of quality for Arbeiderpartiet came about because this value is important for the party (the good of society, return of investment of tax payers’ money and for the good of the individual student). In other words, legitimacy from one central part of the electorate in addition to a general shift in policy focus for the party are main motivations for the increase in prominence of quality for Arbeiderpartiet. As the informant from Høyre explained, a new course for the party was set out after the 2005 elections and resulted in the new slogan ‘Opportunities for all’. The findings show that quality is stressed partly because the party wants to gain legitimacy from the electorate. Yet, also this representative states that quality is a high priority for the party, they believe in the importance of good public institutions for the same reasons as Arbeiderpartiet. For SV, previously cited quotes show how quality was important to voice in order not to ‘lag behind’ the other parties on this value in addition to that the party wanted to “reconquer the concept of knowledge”. Also for SV, the increase in prominence of quality is linked to a policy shift where quality in higher education is identified as a relatively new political priority for the field.

The above discussion shows that the political parties have increased their focus on quality in order to gain legitimacy in the electorate and internal political values. The discussion shows alignment with normative institutionalism, in that multiple intentions drive change. Yet, traditionally within normative institutionalism, political actors are generally not viewed as rationally steering towards goals that will maximize their utility (Allern 2010). In addition to other motivations, all three informants ascribe the increase in prominence of quality as an
appeal to the electorate – a rational and well-defined goal. Hence, normative institutionalism can only partially explain this explicit increase in the prominence of quality for all three parties.

### 6.1.3 Limitations of analytical framework

After this discussion, it is purposeful to briefly address potential limitations of applying these two analytical frameworks for analysing the findings in this investigation. Due to the limited time and scope of this investigation, only elements from historical and normative institutionalism have been used for the analysis, and this critique will not give full justice to the breadth and different perspectives within these two analytical frameworks. Yet, the discussion reveals that both perspectives have limited explanatory power for the empirical findings in this investigation.

Both historical and normative institutionalism give good explanations on the divergence on equity in the party programmes for Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV in the four election periods. Yet, with respect to this value, historical institutionalism shows greater explanatory abilities. Due to the strong standing status of this value as one of the founding, distinctive values for Arbeiderpartiet and SV this value was stable or increased in all the party programmes of these two parties. On the other hand, since Høyre traditionally has not been equally oriented towards equity, the decrease in prominence of this value coheres with the central notion of ‘path dependency’ and distinctiveness in historical institutionalism. This again shows how historical legacies influence current content in party programmes. Yet, with respect to quality, historical institutionalism is only sufficient in order to explain the changes in Høyre, not in Arbeiderpartiet and SV, where we have observed the influence from Høyre on Arbeiderpartiet and SV and an increase of the value quality. This influence from Høyre, where we actually are observing elements of politics from a political opponent in Arbeiderpartiet and SVs party programmes, can not be explained by historical institutionalism, unless you regard the 2005 elections as an electoral shock for the party. It is pertinent to note that convergence is a development that aligns with the normative institutionalism perspective. Yet, the empirical findings in this investigation both through document analysis of the party programmes and amplified by the interviews, show that on this value, convergence has taken place.
Normative institutionalism is to a larger extent than historical institutionalism capable of explaining the convergence on quality in the party programmes for Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV in the four election periods. Normative institutionalism shows that legitimacy has been a core driver for the parties in emphasising this value, especially in last two election programmes of the parties. With this perspective, legitimacy is expected to be a prime driver for why all three parties increasingly address quality in their party programmes over the four election periods. Yet, this form of institutionalism can not explain the rational and utility-maximising aspects of the parties which the interviews unveil when looking into the motifs for increasing prominence of quality. At the same time, normative institutionalism acknowledges that an institution, like a political party, can have multiple rationales and drivers and this acknowledgement coheres with the findings in this study. This openness to a range of motivations makes normative institutionalism as a theoretical framework more applicable to the findings in this investigation.

A final critique of both institutionalisms, is the insufficiency in explaining the travel of ideas between the parties. The most prominent example which is described in the findings and in the discussion above is the influence of Høyre on Arbeiderpartiet and SV with respect to quality. The interview subjects indicated that the political differences on higher education between the parties are blurred. The informant from Høyre stated that the parties are very much agreeing with each other on common goals within their policy field – which in our case is more equity and quality within higher education – but they might differ on the methods to reach these goals. As we have seen, a premise when studying institutions is that there in fact is an institution, “a body of men” (Burke 1770, quoted in Sartori 2005: 8), that is possible to demarcate from other institutions or bodies of men. Yet, in the light of the above findings and discussion showing ideological content from the political opponent Høyre in the party programmes of Arbeiderpartiet and SV, the line between the institutions, i.e. political parties, is not straight forward to draw. In the light of this investigation and the limits of its findings, the question is posed whether we are witnessing more elastic institutions – in our case political parties – with mobile and blurred values – institutions that are capable of and willing to “borrow” political ideas from not only their peers but also their political opponents. Here, it is relevant to refer to a more nouveau branch of institutional theory – institutional work – where collaborative or competitive processes within institutions are expected to lead to solutions embedding multiple interests. Furthermore and parallel to convergence on quality, institutional work describes how competitive convergence leads to actors translating “some
elements of others’ templates into their own in response to feedback from potential adopters” and furthermore how such processes can occur simultaneously in different institutions (Zietsma & McKnight 2009: 145). Applied to this investigation and from the perspective of institutional work, the observation that all parties ‘claim’ the value quality in their higher education politics is an example of how at least Arbeiderpartiet and SV simultaneously adopt the value quality (which is more in line with the historical identity of Høyre) in competition for legitimacy.

Summing up, historical and normative institutional perspectives can not explain the full empirical picture that we have found in this investigation. Historical institutionalism can explain the patterns on equity, but normative institutionalism comes further in illuminating the findings of development on both values equity and quality for the parties in the four last election programmes.

6.2 The co-existence of equity and quality

The initial interest that catalyzed this investigation was the co-existence of the two values equity and quality in the text on higher education in the party programmes of Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV. The following text will give a brief discussion on the nature of this co-existence.

The findings from the document analysis of the party programmes show that there in general is more focus on quality in the documents (see figure 5), except for SV where equity also is more prominent in the latter party programmes (see figure 4). In accordance with notions of contradictory functions in higher education, a plausible expectation is that the increasing prominence of quality for the three parties marginalises equity. The generally increased focus on quality might draw political attention away from the notions equity in access to higher education system. The interviews initially weaken the suggestion that these two values should be in direct conflict. As the informants state, these two values are fully compatible within the Norwegian higher education system. The representative from Arbeiderpartiet for instance, stated that they complement each other and the example was how equal access into the higher education system leads to quality beyond the institutional boundaries, i.e. in society and working life. Yet, when the representatives were confronted with the changes in entrance requirements for teacher education, the responses were more ambiguous. Also, the representative from Høyre was of the opinion that it was the school systems that should be at
the forefront in securing social mobility into higher education, not necessarily the higher education system in itself. Hence, it is challenging to dismiss the notion of contradictory functions of higher education on the basis of this investigation. In addition, Castells’ points about of the contradictory functions of higher education (2001; 2009) are supported by contemporary research (e.g. Vukasović 2011; Maassen 2014) and also described in earlier works on higher education (e.g. Clark 1983a). In other words, it is not pertinent to dismiss Castells’ notions on the innate contradiction between equity and quality on the basis of this investigation.

Furthermore, it is relevant to discuss the findings of that quality is a wider concept than equity and that the first might entail aspects of the second, as the quotes from the Høyre and SV representatives illustrate. These findings are interesting in the light of contemporary research on quality. Stensaker and Prøitz describe what they coin as the ‘democratization of quality’ where they argue that perceptions of quality are relative and partly fueled by greater access for broader groups, not just the academic elite, to define the content of the concept (2015: 28). The observation that this value has become broader over time is supported by the findings in this investigation, and especially the link between equity and quality. The findings in this investigation illustrate how quality is an expansive value which also gives room for some of the elements of meaning that one normally would ascribe to the value equity. Stensaker and Prøitz (2015) describe how an increasing amount of stakeholders are involved in discussing and defining the concept quality, contributing to a democratisation of the concept. The incorporation of elements of equity into the value quality might be an example of Stensaker and Prøitz’ point. Quality as such appears to be more of a ‘meta-value’ incorporating other values, as we can observe for other pivotal terms in higher education such as ‘internationalisation’ (Scott 2005). The observation that quality includes elements of equity does not seem problematic for the informants. Yet, it might be problematic for the environment of the parties, for the electorate in the sense that the meaning of these values could come across as unclear and undefined, as argued by Marginson: “policy-makers take an approach that is too broad or too vague, so that the extant notions of public goods become meaningless” (2014: 62). It is reasonable to be conscious of the possible negative effects of broadening core values for an important public good such as higher education. Yet, although the findings in this investigation support the fact that quality as a concept is broadened – and perhaps has become too vague to be given a suitable definition – the findings do not indicate
that this development is of great concern to the political actors that were interviewed for this study.

Summing up, this discussion shows how the findings on potential conflict between equity and quality in the political parties is dubious. At first-hand the interviews do not identify a conflict between the two values. Yet, the informants do also not dismiss potential conflicts when they are exemplified. Furthermore, the concept quality appears to be hard to define and able to incorporate other values, such as aspects of equity.
7 Conclusion

This chapter will sum up the previous six chapters and especially conclusions from the discussion in chapter six. Possible themes for further research will be addressed.

The purpose of this investigation has been to analyse how ideas in politics on higher education develop. When investigating party programmes on higher education from three central political parties in the field (Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV) for four election periods, the first research question addressed was (1) “What is the prominence of the values equity and quality in party programmes on higher education?”. The findings showed different developments on both values. For Arbeiderpartiet, the party programmes showed little change on equity, but increase in the prominence of quality. For Høyre, the prominence of equity decreased in the party programmes, and there was increased emphasis on quality. For SV, the party programmes increased in prominence on both equity and quality for the four election periods.

Consequently, and addressing research question (2) “How can possible patterns of prominence be explained and what may be the consequences of these patterns?”, the findings showed divergence between the parties for equity, and convergence on the value quality in the party programmes over the stretch of the four election periods. For equity, the findings indicated a diverging development on the value, in that all parties develop differently with respect to this value. For quality, the findings indicated sigma convergence where the parties are more internally influenced than by an external, exemplary model as in delta convergence (Heinze & Knill 2008). The findings indicate that Arbeiderpartiet and SV have been influenced by Høyre, resulting in quality becoming more prominent in the two last programmes of these two parties. The findings in this paper have indicated that especially for quality, the differences between the parties are challenging to pinpoint and formulate. As Gornitzka and Maassen state “Ideas are not spread in a vacuum. But interact with other sets of ideas, practices, and institutional arrangements” (2014: 13). Consequently, it might be purposeful to look beyond the formal structures of the institution political party and look into different ideological streams or groupings within the parties. Moreover, discrepancies were found in SVs motifs for stressing quality. Discrepancies were also found in Høyre, where the representative stated that the party attends to equity in higher education, but the measurement
of the developments of the party programmes shows a decreasing and finally non-existing prominence of equity.

For the part of research question (2) on what the explanation for the patterns can be, the discussion showed how both historical and normative institutional theory only partly are sufficient to explain the found changes in the values. Historical institutionalism could explain the diverging development on equity. Normative institutionalism and this perspectives’ attention to legitimacy and convergence is more suited to explain the patterns of prominence on both values in the party programmes. Yet, one might argue that the demarcation lines of historical institutionalism are easier to draw than those of normative institutionalism. For instance when analysing drivers of change, critical junctures as in historical institutionalism are more clearly defined (e.g. electoral shocks) than the general term ‘legitimacy’ as in normative institutionalism. Hence, the threshold for applying historical institutionalism when categorising social phenomena might be higher than for normative institutionalism. Normative institutionalism has also been criticised for being amorphous and making statements that are hard to disprove (Allern 2010: 91).

It is interesting to note that the two perspectives have offered very different explanations to the developments of the values. For instance with respect to quality and Høyre, historical institutionalism implies that this value is more intact with the traditional core of Høyre and offers this hypothesis as an explanation for why quality is increasingly prominent in the party programmes. From a normative institutionalism perspective, the quest for legitimacy from surroundings and electorate would suffice as explanation. It is also relevant to note in the conclusion on this second research question that for the findings in this investigation, we have had two analytical frameworks that explain parallel processes leading to different results. We have two ‘entities’ (equity and quality) in the party programmes, measured over the same time period and we have seen how historical institutionalism better can explain one (equity), and normative institutionalism better can explain the other (quality) – but that the latter also comes far in explaining changes on equity. Observing how the two perspectives have given different explanations, exemplifies how “different conceptual lenses lead analysts to different judgements about what is relevant and important” (Allison 1971: 253). Knill and Lenschow have described how different perspectives can greatly influence the assessment of outcome of change when stating that “It is not the faulty collection or interpretation of empirical data but the application of different analytical perspectives that results in contrasting assessments of change” (2001: 27-28). Their statement is also valid for this investigation where we have seen
that the two versions of institutionalism give two different explanations for the same phenomena. Furthermore, these two authors propose that different analytical perspectives should be treated as complementary instead of competing (ibid. 35). Inspired by these words, and concluding on the discussion on the theoretical frameworks for this investigation, it is proposed that both of the analytical perspectives that have been applied have strengths and weaknesses, but they both do offer explanations for the developments in the party programmes in the period chosen. Where historical institutionalism has described the pull towards the parties’ innate values and qualities, normative institutionalism has described how the party seeks legitimacy and gives suitable descriptions of the consequences of developments of the two values. Together, these two perspectives more adequately have unveiled the processes, rationales and interests behind the findings in this investigation than they would have done on their own. Moreover, institutional work theories might be additionally helpful in illuminating the findings, in the sense that this analytical perspective can address the observed travel of values between the political parties (Zietsma & McKnight 2009).

The findings indicate that there is no first-hand dominant conflict between the values equity and quality for the political parties in question (Castells 2001; 2009). In addition to other perceptions of the mutual amplification between equity and quality, an example is the representative of Høyre, stating that quality might actually contribute to equity and elevate the weakest students. Such findings support a perception of that quality appears to have become a ‘meta-value’ incorporating other – potentially contradictory – values. With this assumption as a backdrop, we return to the normative institutional perspective and quality being an example of a ‘global script’ and delta convergence (Gornitzka & Maassen 2011; Heinze & Knill 2008).

However, when addressing the second research question (3) “How do political parties perceive the co-existence of the values equity and quality in the political realm of higher education”, potential conflicts between the two values are initially only acknowledged on a rhetorical level and not regarded as being actual conflicts in real politics on higher education. Yet, when concrete examples are brought forward, the conflicts were not dismissed by the party representatives, such as the increased entrance requirements for teacher education. Moreover, the findings indicate potential overlap and inter-dependence between the values. An example is how representatives see that increased access to higher education from broader population groups can contribute to quality in society, although drop out and low study progress might be one of the initial consequences of equity in access to higher education.
Although the findings in this paper show no dominant conflict between quality and equity for the three parties and over the time period in question, they indicate that some conflicts are present and that political representatives only hesitantly comment these conflicts. Scholarly literature points out a potential conflict of interests in Norwegian higher education: “The development in higher education in the years to come will address how we as a society shall tackle the various interests that are actualized through the debate on quality” (Stensaker & Prøitz 2015: 34). This investigation documents the rise of quality in the party programmes and the findings show that to a certain extent, the increase in prominence of quality might come in conflict with the value equity, supporting the argument by Stensaker and Prøitz above. Yet, the findings also show that the rise of quality in the party programmes mainly has developed irrespectively of equity (with the exception of SV, as accounted for), simply because it has become more important for the political parties in question. Hence, a possible marginalisation of the value equity as a consequence of the increasing prominence of quality is mainly an unintended development.

In a broader sense, the investigation in this thesis questions where values in politics come from, how they change, what factors drive the changes and what the respective consequences of patterns of change might be. Beyond the findings and discussion, the study is useful insofar as it entails questions on what the consequences of increased and unified emphasis of quality might imply for other values for the higher education sector. Furthermore, a related question is whether also new values will enter the sector of higher education in Norway and what the consequences of such a development might be. When new values enter the political realm – what will happen to the old ones? Will equity remain to be mentioned in the party programmes or will it be ‘taken for granted’? If so, what are the consequences? As Clark describes, values are important for the higher education systems around the world and he critically – and relevant for closing this thesis – poses that “Vague societal values are brought down out of the clouds of free floating rhetoric as they are defined in the chambers of the legislature, the meeting rooms of the political parties” (1983a: 240). The implications of vagueness is described in this thesis especially with respect to quality, in that certain values are embraced by many political actors making the demarcation between the parties more blurred. Although the scope of this investigation is the three parties’ programmes on higher education within a limited time frame, it is a pertinent question to ask whether the developments and rationales behind the developments are representative of other policy field as well.
In general, this investigation has contributed to literature on change in party politics for higher education. The investigation identifies and discusses the rationales behind and consequences of patterns of change on the values equity and quality. An important limitation of the study is that it has operated on a purely rhetorical political level. Through developing this study, I have observed that there is scarce literature on the actual effects of political rhetoric (Bleiklie & Michelsen 2013). As we have seen, party programmes are important carriers of political ideas, and it would be interesting to trace political ideas from the party programmes, through government constellations, policy papers and implementation in the higher education sector through legislative and financial measures. When new incentives for the sector are introduced; what is the rhetorical offset of their introduction, how are they legitimized, how are they processed and translated into palpable measures and what results are they expected to have? In other words, it would be interesting to study potential developments between the offset and outcomes of political rhetoric for the higher education sector.
References

Political party programmes


General references


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- (2007): *St. meld. nr. 16 (2006–2007). ... og ingen sto igjen — Tidlig innsats*
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Appendix
Appendix 1: Election results for Arbeiderpartiet, Høyre and SV.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arbeiderpartiet</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Høyre</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sosialistisk Venstreparti</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Appendix 2: Interview guide

Introduction EJL

- Mapping the political values “equity” and “quality” in the party programmes of SV, Arbeiderpartiet and Høyre from 2001 to 2017. Trace how the values have changed.

Confirm (or not) document analysis

- Show mapping both values. To what extent is this coherent with interview subjects perceptions of the development of prominence of these values in their own party?

Explanations for and consequences of change


- Potential explanations for different developments.

1. Personal information

1.1. Position now and historically in relation to relevant party programmes.

1.2. Position of influence for relevant party and party programme.

2. Open question

2.1. Within the field of higher education, what values are important for your party now?

2.2. How have this/these values developed in prominence over time? Are these values characterized by stability or change over the time period? If change, why?

3. Equity

3.1. How is equity promoted in your party (program) today and since the Quality Reform?

3.2. To what extent has this value changed in prominence?

3.3. Can you describe how the value has changed?

3.3.1. Path dependency, ‘stickiness’ and divergence/distinctiveness (historical)?

3.3.2. Legitimacy and convergence, sigma/delta (normative institutionalism)?

3.4. How has change come about?

4. Quality
4.1. How is quality promoted in your party (program) today and since the Quality Reform?

4.2. To what extent has this value changed in prominence?

4.3. Can you describe how the value has changed?
   
   4.3.1. Path dependency, ‘stickiness’ and divergence/distinctiveness (historical)?
   
   4.3.2. Legitimacy and convergence, sigma/delta (normative institutionalism)?

4.4. How has change come about?

5. Relation equity and quality

5.1. How do the values co-exist in the party programmes and in the political sphere of higher education?

5.2. To what extent do they influence the prominence of each other?

5.3. To what extent do the values come in conflict with each other?

5.4. What is most important; equal access or quality?
Appendix 3: Coding scheme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity in higher education</td>
<td>- lik(e)/samme rett(igheter)/mulighet(er)</td>
<td>1 point per quasi-sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- alle skal ha mulighet til</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- allmenn/sikre tilgang til</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- bred rekruttering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- uavhengig av sosial (og økonomisk)/privatøkonomisk bakgrunn/status/forhold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- rettferdig og sosial profil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality in higher education</td>
<td>- god/økt/høy kvalitet/standard</td>
<td>1 point per quasi-sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- høyt nivå/best/fremragende</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- verdensklasse/internasjonal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- øke/styrke/spissing/ av kvalitet(en)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- bedre utdanning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- av betydning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ledeende/fremst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Final scores frequency count and thematic analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arbeiderpartiet</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count equity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count quality</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score equity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score quality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 (3)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Høyre</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count equity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count quality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score equity</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score quality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SV</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count equity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count quality</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score quality</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
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Conducted February 15\textsuperscript{th} and April 17\textsuperscript{th} 2016. Where the count and score gave different result on April 17\textsuperscript{th}, new result is marked in parenthesis and this is the score included in the final thesis text.