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Masteroppgave

Bullying prevention, documentation and prevalence among the primary IB schools in Norway

A study on upholding Chapter 9A of the Education Act in the international school community in Norway

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Abstract

This thesis investigates *how primary IB schools in Norway implement prevention efforts and document reported bullying cases in accordance with Chapter 9A of the Education Act.* Secondary research questions helped drive the inquiry forward as the study further aims to explore the international PYP school community in Norway, their prevention efforts against bullying, the definition and documentation routines they practice, as well as compare the prevalence of bullying cases at each school.

By collecting and analysing qualitative data, with a specific focus on the phenomenon of bullying, a phenomenological approach was taken, following Creswell's (2007) eight-step procedure for conducting this type of research. A digital questionnaire with open-ended and multiple choice questions was distributed electronically to IB World Schools in Norway running the Primary Years Programme. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections, the first with general questions regarding bullying policies and practices at each school, and the second with specific questions about the prevalence of bullying during the 2019/20 school year.

The results provided a rare glimpse into the international school community of Norway, where previously not a lot of research had been documented. When comparing each school's definition of bullying to that of Olweus, whose work on bullying has set the standard since the 1970s, similarities were evident in the four main categories the definition was broken into. However, the use of research-supported bullying prevention programmes were not as common. Schools, instead, integrated anti-bullying themes into lessons that also focused on social-emotional learning and/or conflict management. The majority of the schools agreed on the key elements to document when a bullying case is reported, though there is quite the range of staff members who reportedly take responsibility for following up a reported bullying case. Overall, it appears that most schools, with only one standing out as stating they do not document reports of bullying, are in accordance with their duty to ensure students have a happy and safe learning environment. The various measures each school puts into place, such as following a prevention programme, or providing other targeted lessons, in addition to their duty to document, all ensure the school is in accordance with Chapter 9A of Norway's Education Act (Opplæringslova, 1998). Limitations and further discussed as well as the implications and suggestions for further, more specific, research.

Preface

This thesis was both challenging and rewarding in many ways. Pushing through the obstacles I met along the way proved my stubbornness (thanks, mom!) and my desire to complete what I started. Although it took some time, I would have not made it through without the support and feedback from my supervisor, Thormod Idsøe. He was able to patiently support and push me through our constant email chain, right down to the very end! I am incredibly grateful for the feedback and guidance I received.

To the participants who took time out of their busy schedule in order to complete the survey and give me valuable feedback to inform this thesis, thank you.

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1 Introduction & Background

Children in Norway, according to the Education Act §9A-2, have the right to a school environment that provides and promotes positive well-being, feelings of safety, and general happiness (Opplæringslova, 1998). The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training also boasts a zero-tolerance policy against bullying, which is in direct correlation with the Education Act's §9A-3 (Opplæringslova, 1998). The measures a school takes in order to ensure this declaration is upheld is up to each individual school. Norway has a small international school community, however, any effort to search for continuity amongst them, regarding their anti-bullying policies, or for any comparative data between the schools as far as the number of reported bullying cases were concerned, was unsuccessful. In fact, there does not appear to be much research among the international primary schools in Norway, in general. With that in mind, finding out how the international schools in Norway are tackling bullying in their schools would be very interesting. In order to do so, a brief history of anti-bully efforts in Norway, some background about international schools in the country, as well as the prevalence rates of bullying need to be identified before presenting the aim of this thesis.

1.1 A brief history of bullying prevention efforts in Norway

The concept of bullying first became an area of interest in the early 1980s in Norway. Dan Olweus at the University of Bergen, and Erling Roland, now at University of Stavanger, were tasked with defining 'bullying' and to create a booklet to help primary and secondary school teachers in how to identify and counteract bullying (Roland, 2011). Throughout the 80s and 90s, limited organised support against bullying was provided to schools in the country. However, the Centre for Behavioural Research sent out national surveys in the spring of 1995, 1998, and 2001, which brought bullying back into focus. When ringing in the 2001 New Year, King Harald V shared his concern with the public and by 2002, the Prime Minister at the time, Kjell Magne Bondevik, declared a zero-tolerance policy against bullying and launched The Norwegian Manifesto Against Bullying (Manifesto-1) (Roland, 2011 & Stephens, 2011). The Manifesto stated schools had the agency to implement their own strategy or program against bullying, but the government recommended the Olweus program, created by Dan Olweus, or the ZERO program, created by Erling Roland, in particular. According to the Norwegian Ministry of Education, "by the autumn of 2004, nearly 800 schools had adopted one of the two measures" (Stephens, 2011, p. 383). At approximately the

same time, the end of 2002, a new chapter was added to the Education Act, §9A, which focused on the pupil's school environment (Opplæringslova, 1998).

In coordination with the government's initiative, Better Learning Environment, which ran from 2009-2014, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, in 2011, called for owners of learning-environment and anti-bullying programs to apply for aid which would help schools to implement their programs (Eriksen, Hegna, Bakken, & Lyng, 2014). Then, in 2015, after 2 years of research, a committee headed by Øystein Djupedal, presented a report to the government, known as NOU 2015:2 'To belong to', about bullying, how to reduce it, and its negative effects (Roland, 2020). Djupedal also suggested amendments to the Education Act, some of which were introduced which lead to the 2017 update of Chapter 9A. The updates, among others, allowed children and parents to have a more active role in regards to the child's feelings of their psychosocial school environment and allow them to use their voice in a right of appeal to the county governor if they believed the school was not doing enough to help the child and/or the situation. With sixteen sub-sections of chapter 9A, the one that mostly relates to anti-bullying practices is Section 9A-4, *Obligation to act to ensure pupils a good psychosocial school environment*. Section 9A-4, among other declarations, says, "everyone working at the school must keep an eye on the pupils to ensure they have a good psychosocial school environment, and if possible, intervene against violations such as bullying, violence, discrimination and harassment" (Opplæringslova, 1998, §9A-4).

Many countries around the world believe education to be a human right, in alignment with the United Nations' establishment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989. Norway accepted this into their law. In the 2019 update to Norway's Education Act, for example, it states that, "Section 104 of the Constitution follows up the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The convention applies as Norwegian law with precedence over other legislation, cf. the Human Rights Act §3" (NOU 2019:23, 2019, p. 59). Roland (2020) adds further that, "the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is visible in Chapter 9A" (p. 39), which states children have the right to a positive overall well-being, feeling of safety, and general happiness while in school.

1.2 Understanding The International Baccalaureate Programme (IB) and the Primary Years Programme (PYP)

Primary school age children in Norway predominantly attend public schools. However, over the years, private schools have been introduced and integrated into the academic community,

such as international schools, foreign-language run schools, Montessori, and Steiner schools, to name a few. According the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, during the 2019-2020 school year, there were 2799 primary schools around the county (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). Included in that number are 20 authorised International Baccalaureate (IB) World Schools, that Norway hosts, who run the Primary Years Programme (PYP) curriculum (Iborganization, 2021b).

The International Baccalaureate Programme is an international education program that focuses on "fostering critical thinking and building problem-solving skills, while encouraging diversity, international mindedness, curiosity, and a healthy appetite for learning and excellence" (Iborganization, 2021a). There are four main programmes for students, depending on their age. The Primary Years Programme (PYP) is for students aged 3 to 12, which is typically from Pre-Kindergarten to grade 5 or 6. The main language of instruction is English at these schools; however, in Norway, the Norwegian language is used across disciplines in order to ensure better overall student understanding and to support the mother tongue of many of the students. These schools are also inclusive, which is to say they have both mainstream (neuro-typical), and students with special educational needs (SEN) in attendance, to make a multi-ability classroom. To receive official IB World School status, a school must first apply to the International Baccalaureate Organisation to become a candidate school, implement the PYP curriculum, undergo evaluations of their teaching practices and documentation, and then receive final approval of official status after consideration.

Under the Education Act §2-12, international schools are required to follow their approved international curriculum, in this case, the IB PYP curriculum, as well as Norway's Knowledge Promotion Reform (Kunnskapsloftet in Norwegian) that was introduced in 2006 (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016b). In other words, private schools need to balance their academic teaching to accommodate the educational requirements of their host country and the international curriculum in which their school was founded.

The IB primary school community is very small in Norway, with the first two IB schools authorised for the PYP in 2006, and the two most recent schools being authorised in February and June 2021, to bring the total to twenty. The first IB World School, authorised for the Diploma Programme (DP), was established in Norway in 1978. It is evident that very little research has taken place within the international school community in Norway. With the driving idea that these international schools are also required to follow the Norwegian Education Act, with additional specific curriculum requirements, interest is high to find out

how the schools went about doing this, with specific focus on anti-bullying strategies and practices in regards to both the mainstream and SEN student population.

1.3 The prevalence of bullying in Norway

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (UDIR- Norwegian acronym) provides an obligatory yearly survey to students in seventh, tenth, and eleventh grade, but is voluntary for students in grades 5-13. Christian Wendelborg, on behalf of NTNU Samfunnsforskning, analysed the data and prepared a report in which he presented the current year's data and compared it to the previous years, dating back to 2009. A student is considered 'bullied,' in the survey, if the student indicated they were bullied 2-3 times a month, or more. From 2009-2012, the average percentage of students who were bullied was 7.2%. After changes were made to the questions and format of the survey, there was a drop in percentage from 2013-2015, with an average of 3.9%. After more changes were made, before the 2016 survey, the number of students (grades 5-13) who said they are bullied has been consistent from 2016-2020, with 4.6%, 5.0%, 4.6%, 4.6%, and 4.5% respectively (Rapport 2020, Rapport 2021). The 2019-2020 survey saw a record high number of students to complete the survey, with a total of 461,184 students in grades 5-13 who participated. Of those students, 43,482 were from grade five, and 47,647 were from grade six (Wendelborg, 2020). In the 2020-2021 school year report, slightly fewer students participated in total (459,511), but the number of fifth graders (45,096) and sixth graders (49,757) increased (W 2021).

In an IB school, primary grades may or may not include grade six, depending on the host country. For the purposes of this thesis, grade six is included a primary class. The 2019-2020 report found that 9.2% boys in grade 5 were bullied compared to their girl classmates, who were at 8.5%. In grade 6, girls were bullied more, at 7.1%, compared to the boys who were down to 6.3%. The percentage of students who said they were bullied 2-3 times a month continued a mostly downward trend as the age of the student increased, ending with 1.9% of boys and 1.6% of girls being bullied in grade 13, which corresponds with grade 3 of Norwegian high school (Wendelborg, 2020).

As a comparison, the 2020-2021 report evidenced that 9.6% of boys in grade 5 were bullied 2-3 times a month, compared to 10.1% of girls. This was both a higher percentage of fifth grade students who were bullied than the previous year, but also shows a switch of more girls than boys were bullied. In grade 6, like the previous year, girls were bullied more than boys, 8.2% compared to 6.9%, which were also higher percentages than the 2019-2020

school year (Wendelborg, 2021). The general downward trend that was seen in the 2019-2020 report was also apparent in the 2020-2021 report, with 1.3% of boys, and 1.2% of girls being bullied, which is the lowest percent of bullying recorded from grades 5-13.

1.4   Thesis rationale and aims

The motivation for this thesis aims to shed some insight into a small handful of challenges that have presented themselves when comparing Norwegian national practices, in the area of bullying prevention, to the primary IB international schools that Norway hosts.

The first challenge is that, currently, there are no surveys that only collect and compare data from the IB primary schools in Norway. Therefore, the international schools have no formal way in which to compare data on topics such as their student demographics, the prevalence of bullying, or other important topics which would be interesting to document. The IB schools do participate in the mandated UDIR national surveys, however, some surveys, such as the one that collects data on the prevalence of bullying, does not represent lower primary age children. Results from grades 5 and 6 are investigated, for the purpose of this thesis, but their data is not representative of the students in grades 1-4. With fifth grade students indicating they are bullied 2-3 times a month at 9.6% (boys) and 10.1% (girls) during the 2020-2021 school year, it would be interesting to see the data for the grades leading up to it, to see if grade 5 is the peak or if grade 4 is similarly high in percentage (Wendelborg, 2021). More preventative measures could be placed in the grades leading up to fifth grade, if that were the case.

After determining the international schools participate in the national survey, the second sub-challenge is that the data that has been collected regarding bullying in primary schools in Norway are not separated between public and private. Information about the prevalence of bullying in IB schools in Norway is not available on its own since they do not have their own survey to use, but additionally, they cannot view their results through the national survey, as their data are combined with the results of the similarly aged students in other schools, most of them being public. With the supposed diverse student community at the international schools, it would be interesting to see how it compares to public schools, but also amongst its own community. Likewise, the nationwide survey results do not separate the data collected from students with special educational needs either. The only separation in survey results, besides possibly the municipality the school is location and the grade level, is the gender of the student. Arguably, there are reasons as to why the survey results from students with special educational needs are combined with their similarly aged peers, such as

the SEN student population making up a relatively small portion of the whole demographic, however, having data about their feelings towards bullying would be very constructive in working towards improving their psychosocial school environment.

The third challenge, brought forward by chapter 9A of the Education Act, addresses the inconsistency between the schools in regards to its implementation. Chapter 9A dominates the school's actions towards bullying and children's feelings of safety at school, so it is therefore, important to recognise it as a great tool for ensuring children's psychosocial school environment, but also as a challenge. According to the 2019 Deloitte *Evaluation of the new chapter 9A in the Education Act*, it was determined that school owners and principals understand and interpret the law differently, which results in a varied degree of implementation (Deloitte, 2019). Although mandated by the Education Act, ensuring children have a positive experience in life, not just at school, is surely the goal of all adults whose passion is caring for and educating children. More time and guidance is necessary, however, for school owners and teachers to adequately understand and apply the 9A law as it was meant to, if they want greater success without the added work hours and stress it has accumulated as teachers try to navigate and implement it into their daily routines.

1.5   Research question

Considering how limited the information and research is for primary IB schools in Norway, and the amount of freedom each school has to maintain the 9A law to restrict, and/or limit bullying, this researcher became interested to find out more about this. There are numerous research-supported anti-bullying programs and interventions currently implemented in schools worldwide that could also be used in international schools in Norway, thanks to their English-language based instruction. In addition, Norway has also been fortunate enough to have Dan Olweus and Erling Roland who created two well-known Norwegian language anti-bullying programs that were state endorsed, but to what extent do IB schools in Norway utilize such programs and resources? Deloitte's evaluation of the implementation of the 9A law also brought up some questions in which to explore. Each school is allowed the agency to address bullying and safeguard the 9A law in their own way, but confusion was also reported since the teachers and school leadership interpret the law differently. The choice from the Norwegian government aligns with the encouragement of children to have their own voice, but then it can lead to inconsistencies when two schools compare themselves. Finding out more about how each IB PYP school handles and documents bullying cases, was a driving force, which lead to the research question:

"How do primary IB schools in Norway implement prevention efforts and document reported bullying cases in accordance with Chapter 9A of the Education Act?"

Secondary research questions to further drive the thesis were:

- "What is each school's definition of bullying?"
- "Does your school implement a bullying prevention program or provide any sort of prevention or intervention measures aimed at addressing bullying?"
- "How many bullying cases were reported during the 2019-2020 school year and who was responsible for the follow-up process?"
- "How are bullying cases documented?"

1.6   Thesis overview

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the topic, providing key background information needed before explaining the rational, motivation, and ultimate goal and research question driving this thesis. The second chapter dives into Norway's history with anti-bullying programmes, their effectiveness, and the prevalence rates of bullying in Norway amongst primary age students in both the mainstream and special educational needs classrooms. A closer look at the target population of IB PYP international schools is also explored. The third chapter details the methods used for data collection, while chapter four presents the results from the data analysis. The final fifth chapter leads a discussion informed from the results. Further implications, limitations, and suggestion for more research concludes the thesis.

2   Literature Review

Monitoring and documenting bullying cases can take various forms, given the policies and practices of each individual school. Nevertheless, a common denominator in Norway is the necessity to document reported bullying cases in accordance with Chapter 9A of the Education Act. Prevention programs aid schools by providing valuable lessons that can be documented as a step taken to combat bullying. Four learning-environment and bully prevention programs received funding from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training in 2011: The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, the Respekt program, the Zero Programme, and PALS. The funding the Norwegian government has given to these programs over the years, in addition to the general knowledge and support the Olweus and Zero programmes, and their creators, have received, will be investigated more thoroughly. The *consequences* will not be discussed, however, as the focus here is on bullying prevention and documentation practices in Norway's primary IB international schools. First, the definition of bullying is provided for a consistent point of reference.

2.1   Definition of bullying

There are many ways in which to describe bullying or to give examples of what it looks like. However, having a concrete definition can be both helpful, but also difficult. Having a definition allows for a clear-cut answer to 'is it or is it not bullying?' Having examples, on the other hand, are more encompassing and explanatory for children to understand and for adults to classify. Although most literature shows similarities in the definition of bullying, there is still a lot of grey-area that can lead to misunderstandings or even differences in how cases are classified or followed up. Erling Roland (2020) asked the same question, "How, for example, should the County Governor assess a complaint from parents about bullying of their children when the legislator does not want to define what bullying is?" (p.42).

According to Olweus and Roland, for example, when they first defined bullying in the 80s, they said: "the definition has three key elements: (a) bullying is negative and repeated behaviour, (b) conducted by one or several persons together, and (c) directed against one who is not able to defend him/herself (imbalance of power)" (Roland, 2011, p. 383). After his two years of research and the subsequent report that followed, Djupedal agreed, saying bullying was a: "(a) negative action, (b) against one who cannot defend themselves, and (c) is repeated" (Roland, 2020, p. 42). The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2016) prefers to give 11 examples of what bullying could look like, rather than writing it out

in a statement. They say bullying can be: "to be kept out, to be beaten, pushed or teased, not being allowed to join groups on social media, or to get hurtful or ugly messages, pictures and videos," (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016a) among others. According to the 2020-2021 student survey, the definition they gave to the students was, "by bullying we mean repeated negative actions from one or more together, against a student who may have difficulty defending himself. Bullying can be calling another ugly things and teasing, holding another out, back-talking or hitting, pushing or holding on" (Wendelborg, 2021, p. 2). Parallels between the definitions mentioned here can be drawn. Hellstöm, Thornberg & Espelage (2021) also concluded that the majority of definitions of bullying, from their reviewed literature, are based on the pioneering work of Dan Olweus in the 1970s.

2.2   A closer look at Norwegian-created bullying prevention programmes

Norway has introduced a few campaigns and programmes against bullying, starting in the early 1980s. Dan Olweus, based in the city of Bergen, although originally from Sweden, and Erling Roland, from Stavanger, have both played an integral role in how Norway, and subsequently other countries, define and tackle bullying. Both men were involved in the creation of teacher-ready materials, among others, a handbook and video, to provide background knowledge to school staff about how to identify and intervene in bullying situations. Over the next two decades, anti-bullying efforts continued to simmer in the background, but did not come back to the forefront until 2001-2002, with King Harald V's New Year's Eve speech and the Manifesto-I being launched shortly thereafter.

2.2.1   Manifesto Against Bullying

The first Norwegian Manifesto Against Bullying (Manifesto-I) put bullying on the top of the agenda for educators from 2002-2004 (Roland 2011). Together with the newly created Chapter 9A, which paralleled the stance against bullying, the government and school staff had guidelines for dealing with bullying moving forward. Different sections of the law were outlined as reminders to the government, school staff, others who work with children, and the public about their responsibility to ensure children have a safe environment in which to develop and learn. Manifesto-I asserted Norway's zero-tolerance policy against bullying, and insisted that schools have a written plan or policy to combat bullying behaviour, and encouraged the implementation of an anti-bullying programme, or apply other anti-bullying strategies of their own adoption or creation (Roland, 2011). The two programmes they

recommended were the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme and ZERO. Manifesto-II was signed into practice from 2005-2007. This updated version "placed particular emphasis on clear leadership, local action, to include the parents and that the measures against bullying should be coordinated and long-term" (NOU 2015:2, 2015, p. 49). Manifesto-III, from 2009-2010, continued to hold the belief from the previous two manifestos, as well as build on their experiences. The fourth, and final, Manifesto Against Bullying was signed in 2011, running through 2014. The focus now was to encourage each municipality to sign their own manifesto, together with other businesses and organizations in their community, in order to be more specific to the needs of the region. By the end of 2014, just under 400 municipalities had signed their own manifestos to combat bullying in their local communities (NOU 2015:2, 2015).

With so many municipalities focusing on their own local manifestos, a new declaration was created, called the 'partnership against bullying.' Different local and nationwide organizations agreed to work against bullying by educating their staff, who work and interact with children in order to detect, prevent, and combat bullying, to spread knowledge about bullying, and to provide good attitudes and conditions to children in local networks (Partnerskap mot mobbing, n.d.). This agreement was signed in 2015 to take effect from 2016-2020. A new agreement was created for 2021-2025, which was signed by the Norwegian government, in addition to 14 different organizations on 25 March 2021 (KS, 2021).

2.2.2 The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is a school-based, research-supported, program created in the 1980s by Dan Olweus. The program provided teachers with materials, such as a teacher manual and videos, of how to recognise bullying behaviour, and address it, systematically and appropriately. Further aims of the program were to provide clear and simple guiding rules for teachers and students to report bullying. According to Olweus, and his colleagues,

> "the OBPP is built on four basic principles. Adults at school should: (a) show warmth and positive interest in students; (b) set firm limits to unacceptable behavior; (c) use consistent positive consequences to acknowledge and reinforce appropriate behavior and non-hostile consequences when rules are broken; and (d) function as authorities and positive role models" (Limber, Olweus, Wang, Masiello & Breivik, 2018, p. 57)

Prevention and intervention measures are put into place at various levels of the school structure to ensure the whole school community is invested in the overall goals and principles of reducing and/or preventing bullying behaviour. School staff is involved on the school, classroom, individual, and community level. For example, teachers receive training from certified trainers/consultants about the program, conduct a yearly student survey (Olweus Bullying Questionnaire- OBQ) to establish a baseline of bullying behaviour at the school (and also to compare yearly results to determine success of the program), and consistently provide students with clear guidance and support against bullying. Teachers and staff enforce school-wide rules against bullying through routine discussions and class meetings, meet with students and parents who have been involved in bullying, and develop plans to change the behaviour of those involved in bullying (Olweus & Limber, 2010 & Limber et al., 2018). Through fidelity to the program and working together towards the same goals, greater success is likely in the fight against bullying (Stephens, 2011 & Limber et al., 2018). Teachers are encouraged to follow the handbook, hold regular classroom meetings and discussions, and show a commitment to the rules of the program, all of which will help create a good school and classroom environment.

> "The following four rules are used in the program: (a) we do not bully others, (b) we will try to help students who are bullied, (c) we will also be with students who are easily left alone, and (d) if we know that someone is being bullied, we should tell the contact teacher (or another adult) and those at home" (NORCE, 2019).

2.2.3   Zero Programme

Erling Roland, who helped Dan Olweus in the early 1980s and had a hand in the creation of the OBPP, went on to create an alternative anti-bullying program, appropriately titled ZERO, for the zero-tolerance policy against bullying that Norway had adopted. This programme was created, and adopted, in connection to the Chapter 9A update and the Manifesto Against Bullying in 2002-2003. Similar to the OBPP, the Zero Programme encouraged all staff members to do their part to address and combat bullying behaviours. They are required to define bullying, set clear standards for behaviour, and most importantly, follow through with consequences that are appropriate and respectful. Staff members also visually identify themselves during outdoor free time, such as recess, by wearing a yellow vest with the programme logo, to encourage students to make the right choices and to let them know where to find a trusted adult, should there be a problem. Roland's approach, besides addressing bullying, had a focus on the teacher's authority in the classroom and how to use it as a tool to

improve social cohesion amongst the students and deter bullying behaviour. Roland said, "The main logic is that authoritative leadership directly reduces the temptation to gain power by humiliating vulnerable peers" (Roland, Bru, Midthassel, Vaaland, 2010, p. 43). In the classroom, dedicated time is scheduled each week for teachers and students to engage in meaningful discussions and follow the directed lessons from the teacher's manual. "This direct work, focused on bullying, aims first and foremost at improving empathy in pupils generally and building a norm system related to bullying" (Roland et al., 2010, p. 44). Besides the specified lesson time, a distinction this programme focused on was for students to be reminded to focus on schoolwork during their lessons and to treat their classrooms, peers, and school property with respect, something which may have been stated by schools themselves, but not before placed within the 'school-environment program' (Roland et al., 2010).

The Zero programme also introduced a set protocol for when a bullying case presented itself and needed to be addressed. The students involved would meet with a designated staff member, who held authority, and had been trained, to comfort the victim and confront the bully. Students involved had a chance to tell their side of the story. If multiple bullies were involved, they would speak individually to the trained adult one after another without the chance of corroborating their stories. Follow up meetings would continue, as necessary, and the parents of the students were involved from the first day.

2.2.4   Prevalence of anti-bullying programmes used in Norway

In coordination with the Norwegian King and the government's emphasis on a zero tolerance policy to bullying, the Olweus and Zero programs, in addition to others not mentioned in detail here, such as PALS and Respekt, have been implemented to various degrees over the last two decades in schools throughout the country. The Olweus program was in use in 72 schools during the 2001-2002 school year, but then jumped up to 138 schools throughout Norway during the 2002-2003 school year. Unfortunately, the Zero program did not have information available during that timeframe. During the 2001-2002 to 2007-2008 period, the top year for schools to employ one of these two programs was the 2003-2004 school year, with Olweus being implemented in 171 schools and Zero at 180 schools, for a total of 351 schools. Although a decrease from the previous year, the 2004-2005 school year saw Zero taking the lead, over Olweus, with 100 schools, compared to only 46. The numbers decreased

substantially after that year with only 60 schools, in total, employing one of the two programs in 2005-2006, 23 schools in 2006-2007, and 28 schools in 2007-2008. (Roland, 2011).

In 2014, The Welfare Research Institute NOVA, conducted research as to the prevalence and effectiveness of programs schools implemented, in Norway, in order to promote and maintain a healthy and safe school environment. Out of the 455 schools who participated in the research, 15% followed the OBPP, 12% followed PALS, 8% followed ZERO, and just 6% of schools followed the Respekt programme (Eriksen et al., 2014). The report suggested that schools who no longer follow a program, such as the four previously listed, is because the challenges the school may face are no longer a focus of the program. For example, all four programs focus on anti-bullying behaviour, however, mental health issues are not present at all. Therefore, "lack of tools to deal with digital bullying, covert bullying and students' mental health, confuses schools, and may also contribute to schools supplementing programs" (Eriksen et al., 2014, p. 13).

2.2.5   Duty to document in Norway

Circling back to Norway's Chapter 9A of the Education Act, all schools are required to report, intervene, and follow up any case of a student feeling unsafe and/or not having a good psychosocial school environment, but also any bullying situations that arise, as the two often-go hand-in-hand. According to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, there are six steps in this process: follow, intervene, warn, survey, take action, and document (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). The 'action plan' must include a summary of the situation/problem to be solved, a list of measures the school plans to implement, with a timeline and designated person who is responsible for monitoring or carrying out the measures, and a date for when the plan will be evaluated (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). This process safeguards that the school staff, parents, and the student(s) involved work together towards the common goal of ensuring the student has a more positive school experience. It is important to have the student involved, in order to have their voice be heard and taken into consideration, as they have the first-hand perspective and opinions about what they need from the school in order to feel safe and secure. After the plan is activated, it is regularly evaluated, and only closed when the student says they feel safe and no longer need the specific measures put into place for them.

2.3   The effectiveness of bullying prevention programmes

There can be a wide range of opinions when it comes to bullying prevention programmes and their effectiveness in schools. People can base their opinion on their own perception and feeling of how the programme worked, or they can look at concrete data for their answer. Regardless, when searching for, or choosing, bullying prevention measures to implement in a school, Stephens (2011) states that schools are better off being "more concerned about degree of fit rather than which programme is allegedly 'best'" (p. 382). That is not to say that all schools need to choose a research-based programme. Norway has allotted schools the agency to find a system that works for their own school environment to combat bullying behaviour, whether it be a set programme to follow with teacher resources, or something more general and created in-house. It is generally agreed, however, that schools who approached, and committed, to a programme in a holistic way, were more satisfied with the programme and their perceived 'results' (Eriksen et al., 2014).

2.3.1   <u>Within Norway</u>

With the long-term implementation of the Norwegian created Olweus and Zero programmes, there have been many opportunities for schools to run the programmes and report their conclusions. "The fact that the Olweus program has shown reduced bullying both in the 1990s (where the general trend was increased problems) and in the 2000s (where outspoken problems have steadily declined) suggests that historical trend effects cannot explain the evaluation results" (Eriksen et al., 2014, p. 9). This is a good indicator of the OBPP being truly effective in Norway. Multiple schools reported that the use of pre-test (baseline survey) and post-test measurements of bullying behaviour were critical if the school was to concretely measure the effectiveness of the program (Stephens, 2011), which is common practice for both the Olweus and Zero programmes. The Nova Report, titled 'Common Focus: a study of school environment programs in Norwegian schools,' stated that, "the main challenge is to find relevant, but unaffected, comparison groups, and then demonstrate that the development at the program schools is more positive or takes place at a higher rate than is the case for the comparison group." (Eriksen et al., 2014, pg. 8). This shows the difficulty there is to establish the effectiveness of a programme when comparing it with another. However, when looked at on its own, "the effects of the OBPP can be long-lasting and suggest that the intervention schools had been able to change their "culture" and ability to

counteract bullying in a more permanent way" (Olweus & Limber, 2010, pg. 128), which in the long-run, sounds like the best outcome.

2.3.2   International

From 1980-2004, a large-scale meta-analytic study of bullying intervention programmes took place that included 15,386 student participants ranging from kindergarten to grade 12 in six countries, spread across 16 different studies. The authors concluded their study on bullying intervention effectiveness with both positive and negative results. On the positive side, they indicated that bully intervention programmes aided "in enhancing students social competence, self-esteem, and peer acceptance; in enhancing teachers knowledge of effective practices, feelings of efficacy regarding intervention skills, and actual behavior in responding to incidences of bullying at school" (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross & Isava, 2008, p. 38). On the negative side, the study noted, "it should not be expected that these interventions will dramatically influence the incidence of actual bullying and victimization behaviors, or that they will positively influence even a majority of the targeted outcomes" (Merrell et al., 2008, p. 41).

An updated meta-analysis, published in 2019, encompassed 100 studies from approximately 20 different countries. Three of the included studies came from Norway. Two for the Olweus and Zero programmes, and one from a 2013 study of a programme called "Zippy's Friends," which is otherwise not mentioned in this paper. The aim of the study was to conduct a more up-to-date review of the effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying programmes by comparing effect size (Cohen's *d*) and odds ratios. According to the three testing models used in the analysis, a random effects model, a fixed effects model, and the MVA model, the results concluded that the anti-bullying programmes significantly reduced both bullying perpetration and bullying victimization (H.Gaffney et al, pg.123, 2019- Evaluating the effectiveness of school-bullying prevention programs. An updated meta-analytical review). The study does note, however, that further research is needed "to better understand international and national variations in the effectiveness of programs" (Gaffney, Ttofi & Farrington, 2019, p.127, 2019).

2.3.3   Decreased bullying rates with age

With the many global studies focusing on the bullying phenomenon that have taken place over the years, one study concluded that bullying rates decreased with age. The study, taken

during the 2005-2006 academic school year, compared the bullying and victimisation rates of children across 40 countries aged 11, 13, and 15 (Craig et al., 2009). Children at these ages, depending on the age their country allows them to start school, would be representative of sixth, eighth, and tenth grade. Data was collected from approximately 1,500 students from each age group, in each country, through anonymous surveys. Norway was one of the countries represented in the study. Together with seven other countries, Norway had the lowest rates, for both genders, when it came to '*bullying others*'. In addition, the study specifically stated that "countries in north-west Europe (primarily Scandinavian countries) reported lower prevalence of bullying and victimization compared to eastern European countries" (Craig et al., 2009, p. 218). The overall trend in bullying types (physical, verbal, and indirect) for both boys and girls in the 40 countries, mostly showed a decreasing trend in the median score with age. This means that 15 year olds, regardless of gender, selected the option *none reported* at a higher rate than the 11 and 13 year olds, showing that bullying decreased with age. The study noted that the Scandinavian countries, compared to other European countries, often employ national prevention programs, which could be reflective of their low prevalence rates of bullying.

Although that study was a few years prior (2005/06), it is consistent with Wendelborg's Norwegian reports of the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years, which also found a decrease of reported bullying with age. The report documented students' responses to bullying from grades 5 to 13. To compare with the former study, during the 2019/20 school year, girls in grade 6 reported being bullied *2-3 times a month* at a rate of 7.1, where as in grade 8, it decreased to 4.7, and grade 10 showing 4.2. Boys had a parallel decline starting at 6.3 in grade 6, down to 4.3 in grade 8, and then a slighter decrease at grade 10 to 4.1. By grade 13, the prevalence of girls reporting bullying was down to 1.6 and the boys were at 1.9 (Wendelborg, 2020 & Wendelborg, 2021).

2.4   SEN students and bullying

2.4.1   Education for all

There can be no discussion about students with special educational needs without mentioning '*The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs* Education' from World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994. The conference put over 300 delegates from ninety-two governments, representing twenty-five international organizations, together to commit to, and ensure that,

"Education for All effectively means FOR ALL, particularly those who are most vulnerable and most in need" (UNESCO, 1994, p. iv). The conference resulted in the development of international and local legislations and policies regarding inclusive education in schools. The committee set forth a 'framework for action' which included guidelines for countries to implement at the national level to ensure a fair and quality education for all students, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, or emotional condition. UNESCO (1994) further stated that, "this should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups" (p. 6).

Norway's Education Act (opplæringslova) is heavily influenced and supportive of The Salamanca Statement and the previously mentioned UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A committee was put together to make suggestions for improvements after reading through the Education Act, which they then published in 2019, titled the 'New Education Act' (ny opplæringslova). In it, they confirmed the connection to the Salamanca Statement by stating, "Article 2 strikes firm that no child should be discriminated against and it is stated in particular that children with disabilities have the same right to school and education as all the other children" (NOU 2019:23, 2019, p. 87). "The committee also proposes several extensions of rights where the goal is to meet the needs of children, young people and adults in primary education better than today" (NOU 2019:23, 2019, p. 20). The committee noted that chapter five speaks directly to the right pupils have to special educational services, specifically when they do not benefit from ordinary education. The Pedagogical-Psychological Services (PPT – Norwegian acronym) in each municipality is responsible for the expert assessment of each child and the special educational services they shall receive, with input from parents, teachers, and with the child themselves. In their report, the committee referenced a 2015 report by the Norwegian Forum of Disabled Peoples' Organizations (Norwegian acronym SAFO), which concluded the Education Act's rules to be good in theory, but not followed through in actual practice, pointing specifically to "large municipal differences, lack of facilitation of training offers and lack of inclusion" (NOU 2019:23, 2019, p. 128).

2.4.2   <u>Bullying amongst SEN students</u>

According to a 2009 study comparing bullying and victimisation rates among students in mainstream and special education classrooms in the United States, there were higher rates of victimisation found among SEN students compared to their mainstream education classmates. When comparing students in the same setting, the researchers found that students with mild learning difficulties and students with moderate learning difficulties experienced higher levels of victimisation (55% and 78% respectively), compared to 25% of their demographically matched peer group (Rose, Espelage & Monda-Amaya, 2009). In corroboration with other authors, the researchers suggest that inclusive practices, when effective, can provide SEN students with a 'protective factor,' as it gives them the chance to learn and practice social skills for successful communication and appropriate classroom behaviour. When a class is fully inclusive, all students have the opportunity to "enhance development, increase acceptance, reduce negative stereotypes, and increase participation" (Rose et al., 2009, p. 763).

In a similar study, published in 2015, the differences in bullying victimization between students with and without disabilities were compared further. The authors noted, however, that continued research is necessary, as many studies in the area of bullying amongst students with special needs is lacking information about specific disability types. Often times, studies combine disabilities into groups, partly due to the small sample sizes of each disability type, which provides inaccurate or misleading information about a particular disability. There could be varying degrees of bullying within the mixed group, and it is suggested that the prevalence rate of victimisation varies depending on the student's behaviour characteristics associated with the type of disability they are diagnosed with (Bear, Mantz, Glutting, Yang & Boyer, 2015). There is also the argument that studies vary in their cut-off criteria used to define bullying victimisation. However, in this particular study, they found that students with emotional disturbance (ED) were more likely to experience bullying. The study provided questionnaires to 1,027 parents or guardians of students with disabilities and compared the answers with those of 11,500 parents or guardians of students without disabilities. Ten different disability types were compared separately, as well as had the data combined, for the sake of comparison to other studies with mixed disability groupings. The results showed that when discussing bullying in general terms, students without disabilities said they were bullied *sometimes* or *once or twice a month* at a rate of 22.3%, while a combined disability group resulted in 29.8%. The students in the emotional disturbance (ED)

group had the highest prevalence, with a result of 66.7%. Emotionally disturbed students also scored the highest, among the nine other disability groups, in the social-relational bullying category, saying they were bullied *sometimes* or *once or twice a month*, at a rate of 83.4%. Continuing to answer with *sometimes* or *once or twice a month*, all combined disability types resulted in 44.8%, while students without disabilities resulted in 34.9%. Blind or visually impaired students had the highest prevalence of bullying in the physical (50.0%) and verbal (90.9%) bullying categories. All disabilities combined resulted in 41.1% for physical bullying and 62.0% for verbal bullying compared to students without disabilities at a prevalence rate of 36.0% and 56.3%, respectively (Bear et al., 2015).

A third study, from Norway, which investigated the risk of peer-victimisation between SEN students, specifically those with developmental and behavioural difficulties (DBD), and their typically developing peers, also presented interesting results (Øksendal, Brandlistuen, Holte & Wang, 2019). Confirming a challenge this thesis was faced with, in regards to the lack of bullying perpetration and victimisation data amongst early primary aged students, Øksendal et al. (2019) extends this challenge down to pre-school aged children, stating there is a lack of focus aimed at this age group. Therefore, the data collected for this study focused on children leading up to the age of five. Data from the Norwegian Mother, Father and Child Cohort Study (MoBa) was analysed for the study (Norwegian Institute of Public Health, 2022), which at the time, in 2016, included 41,609 child participants, of whom 7,792 had a DBD. The developmental and behavioural difficulties were divided into the following categories for the study: autistic traits, emotional difficulties, behaviour difficulties, general learning difficulties, attention difficulties/impulsive behaviour, motor development difficulties, language difficulties, and hearing and vision difficulties. When compared to their typically developing peers, it was found that "all DBD groups showed increased risk of peer-victimization" (Øksendal et al., 2019, p. 593). Children with autistic traits, specifically, had the highest risk of all the groups. Conversely, children with hearing and vision impairments had the lowest risk of all the DBD groups. The overall results are similar to the studies carried out in the United States, in that children were more likely to experience an increased risk of peer-victimisation when having a DBD compared to their typically developing peers. The risk also continues to increase as co-occurring DBDs are present (Øksendal et al., 2019). Although the study focused on children at a pre-school age, the results clearly highlight the struggles SEN students have already been faced with by the time they join primary school.

Just as victimisation rates were found to be higher among SEN students, bullying perpetration rates were also found to be higher among SEN students. This could be attributed

to multiple factors, such as it being a learned behaviour (from either inside or outside the school setting), the student lacking social skills to properly read the situation in which they act too aggressively, or possibly, a result of prolonged victimisation. Regardless of the reason why, the study found that "students with learning disabilities or mild learning disabilities have been reported to bully twice as often as students without disabilities" (Rose et al., 2009, p. 765). Many authors and researchers agree that when inclusion practices are incorporated well within the school setting, it can aid all students in developing acceptance skills, increasing participation and collaboration levels, and reducing negative stereotypes. "Inclusion has been seen by many as instrumental in countering disadvantage experienced by children and young people with SEN through prejudice and bias in school and later in society" (Frederickson & Cline, 2015, p. 75). When comparing students with disabilities in an inclusive setting and a self-contained setting, the results showed higher victimisation rates among the students who were in a self-contained classroom setting compared to an inclusive classroom setting (21.7% to 18.5% respectively). The rate of bullying was also higher in a self-contained setting (20.9%) compared to the inclusive setting (15.6%). Students without disabilities scored lower on the bullying scale (10.2%) and the victim scale (12.0%) than their peers with disabilities (Rose et al., 2009, p. 769).

2.5   The PYP impact on school climate

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Organization, first founded in 1968 in Geneva, has grown over the years to establish over 5,000 IB World Schools across over 150 countries. Norway is host to 43 IB World Schools. Twenty of which run the Primary Years Programme (Iborganization, 2021b). The PYP offers a curriculum in which the students are active agents in their learning. The students drive their inquiries forward by asking questions, being open-minded to other people's opinions and perspectives, and encourages international mindedness and global citizenship. There is also a focus on holistic education, where the student develops their social-emotional learning (SEL) as well as their academic learning. IB World Schools are required to fulfil their commitment to the IB, and programme specific curriculum, thorough implementation and documentation of the teaching and learning. In Norway, schools are also required to follow the Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training (læreplanverket for kunnskapsløftet) and the Education Act (opplæringslova). International schools in Norway, therefore have an extra commitment to uphold, which leaves one to wonder how the PYP affects school's overall environment, which can be referred to as either their climate or culture, interchangeably.

In their 2020 study of the PYP's impact on school climate, Boal & Nakamoto studied eight IB schools across California, USA, to determine if implementation of the Primary Years Programme improved the school's climate, and if stakeholders believed they could attribute any changes to teachers' development, collaboration, pedagogy, etc. to the successful implementation of the programme. In short, they found that "most commonly, after PYP introduction, participants viewed their school's focus on SEL and the whole child, use of consistent language, and sense of community as shifting or being different from non-PYP schools" (Boal & Nakamoto, 2020, p. 32). The study included feedback from the school's staff, students, and parents. Some participants were able to provide feedback during the transition into becoming an IB school, to offer a comparison, whereas others provided feedback based on being solely a PYP teacher, student, or parent. Although public schools may have programs and aspects of teaching and learning that are similar to the IB's curriculum, the results of the study showed that there were certain aspects of the PYP in which they could attribute to positive school climate. They included; the IB learner profile, the use of essential agreements, the PYP coordinator, and the general framework provided by the PYP, to name a few (Boal & Nakamoto, 2020). The PYP coordinator is responsible for the proper implementation of the IB curriculum's standards and practices. This person ensures the elements of the PYP are embedded in the everyday teaching and learning. Essential agreements in the IB programme, are essentially classroom rules that the students and teacher have created together in order to ensure everyone has had their voice heard as to how they wish their classroom environment to be. Other schools certainly have classroom rules and consequences and someone who ensures the curriculum is being upheld. Specific to the IB curriculum, however, is the learner profile: a set of ten attributes that "represent a broad range of human dispositions, capacities and traits that encompass intellectual, personal, emotional and social growth" (Iborganization, 2020). All the schools participating in the study reported increased social emotional learning amongst their student population. By infusing the learner profile as part of their everyday language use, students become more conscience of their own behavior and thus do their part in helping to improve the overall school climate. Many teachers expressed their satisfaction with the learner profile and the emphasis of social-emotional learning, not in isolation, but engrained into all their lessons and everyday interactions with each other. To name a few, the learner profile focuses on being caring, open-minded, good communicators and thinkers, and being principled in their actions. Teachers found the IB learner profile helpful when dealing with behavioral issues as well. The students were intrinsically motivated to do well, and encouraged others to do the

same, by using the common language the learner profile provided. "Participants found students using the IB learner profile attributes to give their peers feedback on whether they were acting in accordance with the values spelled out by the IB learner profile" (Boal & Nakamoto, 2020, p. 34).

In addition to the social-emotional learning that is brought forward with the learner profile attributes, IB schools focus on being internationally minded. According to their mission statement, the International Baccalaureate "encourages students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right" (Iborganization, 2014). Inclusion of people's differences, be they cultural, physical, or otherwise, is an important aim of most teachers and schools. Participants in the PYP school study reported a much more inclusive environment, "highlighting an inclusive environment related to physical ability, learning differences, prior experiences, culture, and language" (Boal & Nakamoto, 2020, p. 37). Students with special educational needs are naturally included in the classrooms as the IB differentiates the learning for each students' level. The student is also an ambassador for their own learning, in that they advocate for themselves how they best learn, present, or document their learning to their teacher, for assessment purposes. For example, the students have multiple options as far as oral reporting, written reports, visual presentations, or other more creative forms of expression, to demonstrate their understanding of key information to their teacher and classmates. Students with various needs and ability levels are able to succeed in a classroom setting such as this, which allows for less rigid and standardized learning and assessment. Whether it be the IB's philosophy and ideals, or some other undisclosed factor, the results from the survey "indicated that students in the PYP schools reported higher levels of Caring Relationships and lower levels of Bullying (both of which are findings that offer evidence of improvement) after their schools were authorized" (Boal & Nakamoto, 2020, p. 72).

3   Research Methodology

"Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). With the phenomenon of bullying as a primary focus of this thesis, a qualitative research approach analysing and interpreting the policies and practices of Norway's IB PYP schools seemed logical. "Phenomenology is popular in the social and health sciences, especially in sociology, psychology, nursing and the health sciences, and education" (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). The following chapter provides information regarding the practicalities of data collection and analysis used to inform this thesis.

3.1   Research design

As the aim of this research study was to compare the definition of bullying, documentation practices, and answer the question of *how* this was done amongst the participant schools; collecting qualitative data was the obvious option. Quantitative data, for example, "do not tell us about the processes that people experience, why they responded as they did, the context in which they responded, and their deeper thoughts and behaviors that governed their responses" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 46). Collecting and analysing qualitative data, on the other hand, allows one to interpret a deeper meaning behind the spoken, or in this case, written word. The researcher "collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all the individuals" (p.58).

Following Creswell's (2007) eight-step procedure for conducting phenomenological research, this researcher started by determining the overall problem (1) and phenomenon on which to focus the study (2). IB PYP schools in Norway do not have adequate research, or literature overall between the schools, in which to compare demographics, practices, or policies. Neither do they have specific research about the phenomenon of bullying and the various prevention programmes and documentation practices that go with it, to show their adherence to Chapter 9A of the Education Act. The next step (3) was to recognise the philosophical and phenomenological assumptions. When working under the methodological philosophical assumption, "the logic that the qualitative researcher follows is inductive, from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer" (Creswell, 2007, p. 19). Collection of qualitative data (4) was accomplished through a digital questionnaire that best suited the circumstances of the global pandemic and the

geographical spread between the participant schools, which is described in more detail below. When deciding on the questions in which to ask the participants (5), opened-ended questions which allow the researcher to interpret and place their experiences into context was essential. The question types will also be further explained. The experiences the participant schools share about having with the phenomenon of bullying were then analysed (6), looking for similar statements to derive meaning, which could then be shared as a final report (7) stating the '*essence*' of the phenomenon (8). "The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 8).

3.2   Research methods

Following the suggestion from the University of Oslo on their approved service, Nettskjema was used to create a digital questionnaire survey. Nettskjema boasts as being "Norway's most secure and most used solution for data collection for research" who "fulfil the highest requirements to security" (Nettskjema, 2021). The service allowed for the creation of a semi-structured questionnaire with both open-ended and multiple-choice question options. The multiple-choice question were essentially pre-coded to allow for easy content analysis. The questions were written in English only, as it was directed at international schools in Norway.

3.3   Questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into two main sections: general questions about each school's bullying policy and practices, and specific questions about reported bullying cases during the 2019-2020 school year. Within the first section, participants were presented with eight questions. One question was completely open-ended, requiring a written answer in the text box provided. Three questions were *yes/no* questions, however, one allowed for a written clarification by way of a text box, while another lead to a multiple choice check-box answer option as well as allowing a written clarification option in a text box. The remaining four questions in the section were given multiple choice check-box answer options (with the possibility to select multiple check boxes), with the additional text box option for additional clarification of an answer. The optional text box was utilized when participants chose '*other*' and wished to clarify their answer in their own words.

The popular definition of bullying, established in the 1980s by Olweus, was used as a basis for comparison when each school gave their definition in an open-ended text box. Four specific elements within the definition were assessed, with additional words or phrase beyond the definition from each school presented in the findings. In an effort to streamline the data collection on some of the other questions, static answer options, to be selected by checking the box, were offered. In most cases, participants were able to further offer free-text answers in the optional text-box. The majority of the questions were of a purely qualitative nature, however, some results were presented numerically, such as a percentage of the total number of participants who answered with that particular answer option. This was done to show a clear breakdown of the results in a readable table.

The second section contained five questions. Two questions were presented with a multiple choice option of number ranges. One of the questions allowed an answer selection of '*I do not have the information needed to answer this question.*' The final two questions were more complex, in that they were two-tiered multiple choice option answers. After answering the initial multiple choice question, also with an '*I do not have the information needed to answer this question*' option, participants were met with a second multiple choice, multiple check-box answer option, with an additional text box option. Answer options were presented as multiple choice options or number ranges in order to ensure clarity and guidance as to the intended response required for answering the question. Collecting answers in this way was reminiscent of a semi-structured digital interview as it allowed for additional information to be given in a text box, but would also, ultimately, group the participant's answers together to further increase anonymity. An overview of the survey questions is found in Appendix B.

3.4 Participants

International schools in Norway running the PYP curriculum with official IB World School status were asked to participate in the study. At the time the survey was distributed, May 2021, only 18 schools held that authorised status, whereas there are now currently 20 PYP IB World Schools in the country. Contact information for each schools' leadership team is accessible from the International Baccalaureate Organisation website (Iborganization, 2021b). The PYP curriculum coordinators at each school were selected to receive the initial participation request, based on the idea of them having the best overview of the students within the programme, in addition to the likelihood of having access to the information from the 2019-2020 school year needed to complete the questionnaire. Should the PYP coordinator not be able to complete the survey, it was requested that they pass the survey along to

someone else in their school community whom had the appropriate position and information to participate. Participation was voluntary. Besides all the participants being from international IB schools in Norway, by selecting the PYP coordinator at each international school, it encouraged results from a homogenous group of participants. However, to avoid any further potential for identification, final participants were not asked to share their school location and were, in fact, encouraged not to give any identifiable information when writing in the optional text boxes. No sensitive or identifiable information in regards to the students' name or age (when identifying the number of bullied students at each school), was requested, nor was it provided, to ensure anonymity.

3.5   Distribution

Participants were contact via electronic mail, as this made the most sense logistically due to the wide-geographical spread of the 18 PYP IB schools across Norway, and to allow for everyone to receive the appropriate information at the same time. Given the global pandemic situation at the time of research and data collection, distribution of information via digital means was the most appropriate and rational choice. Using the list of PYP coordinator email addresses collected from the IBO website, the request for participation was sent on 07 May 2021. An informational letter detailing the thesis goals, the participant's rights when filling out the questionnaire survey, and a consent form were attached to the initial email (please see Appendix A). Consent was considered given by the participant's choice to participate in the survey, as participation was otherwise stated as being voluntary. The actual questionnaire survey was delivered directly from Nettskjema through a secure link to the same PYP coordinators contact list. Subsequent reminder emails to participate were also sent directly through the secure portal. The survey was available for one month.

3.6   Data collection and analysis

The data that informed this thesis was collected digitally. Although the information was sent to each school's PYP coordinator, it can only be assumed that someone in the school's leadership team completed the survey, as they were the mostly likely staff member to have access to the information required. Once the participant completed the questionnaire, the results were immediately available for analysis via Nettskjema's website. Out of the 18 IB World Schools in Norway running the Primary Years Program that were contacted, only seven schools responded. The responses were recorded anonymously, meaning no gathering

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of the participant's name or the school's name was collected since the international school community is so small. The school's physical location was not recorded either, seeing as pinpointing their exact geographic location could have led to identification. Data analysis was able to start immediately and continued as the results came in.

"Problems in qualitative research span the topics in the social and human sciences, and a hallmark of qualitative research today is the deep involvement in issues of gender, culture, and marginalized groups. The topics about which we write are emotion laden, close to people, and practical" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 52). Bullying is a topic that fits into this category perfectly, as emotions run high for all involved, whether it be the victim, the bully, their respective families, the bystanders, or others involved in the situation, in addition to the fact that the victims can often come from marginalized groups (SEN students, for example). When analysing the data, great care and consideration was taken when comparing each school's answers in search of key words to determine the similarities, or differences, of their anti-bullying principles and practices.

In order for there to be continuity between the schools when answering the questions about special needs education, for a student to be considered special needs, Norway's educational psychology service (pedagogisk-psykologisk tjeneste - PPT) needed to approve the student's individualized educational plan (IEP, however, the Norwegian acronym is IOP). The IEP indicator was used to categorize the students as special needs for the comparison in bullying cases against the total number of bullying cases per school.

3.7   Credibility

A variety of terms such as reliability, validity, rigor, trustworthiness, confirmability, and transferability, have been used in quantitative and qualitative data to reference the credibility of a study's results. In this particular study, "credibility of a qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600).

3.7.1   <u>Validity</u>

When determining the validity of a research study, the researcher can use different 'lenses' in which to view the credibility of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). For qualitative studies in particular, when gathering participants' first hand and/or written reports, it is generally expected that the participants will accurately present their experiences and realities. "The qualitative paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed and it is what participants

perceive it to be" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). Further clarified by Lincoln & Guba (1985), the participants too have a responsibility to the readers of the survey and study, in regards to 'honouring' the truthfulness of their experiences and presented data.

Two external peer reviewers provided feedback on the survey questions to further establish validity of the survey. Before the final distribution of the questionnaire, an international school principal, and a contact person from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, provided valuable feedback on the readability of the questions and the formatting and static answer options.

3.7.2   Reliability

Expanding on a study's validity, the consistency in which a survey delivers the same results is the general explanation of reliability in qualitative research. The two measurement instruments are closely related, with Golafshani (2003) stating, "reliability is a consequence of the validity in a study" (p. 602). Since this particular survey was delivered anonymously, with only seven of the possible 18 schools who were invited to participate providing answers, in addition to fluctuations in student behaviour each year, which could lead to bullying, receiving the exact same results from a redistributed survey would be impossible. In an effort to ensure reliability, questions were provided with clarifications and static answer options to provide guidance as to the type of answer the question was seeking.

3.7.3   Generalisability

Generalisation refers to the ability to take the research results and apply it to the general population (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The results received from the seven participant schools may support generalisation across the international school population in Norway (18 PYP schools), because they were all under similar contexts. For example, all the schools are classified as 'international' who run the PYP program and framework in the host country of Norway. They also follow the Norwegian national curriculum, in addition to the IB, with English and Norwegian as their two main languages. Furthermore, the 18 schools also endured the same five week national lockdown period, due to the global pandemic. These contexts, particularly because of Covid-19, are specific to the 2019/20 school year. Prevalence rates of bullying have shown trends and consistencies over the years. Factors such as cultural differences and global issues (pandemics, wars, etc.), can contribute to variabilities in bullying prevalence data. Lincoln & Guba (1985) in their book, *Naturalistic Inquiry,* by

their chapter five title stated, "The Only Generalization Is: There Is No Generalization" (p. 110). Looking at the larger general population of Norway and beyond, especially in years other than the 2019/20 academic year, this particular survey resulted in a very small sample size, which would not be appropriate to generalise past the 18 PYP school community.

3.8   Ethics

The process to secure approval for appropriate data handling from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD- Norwegian acronym), began on 15 March 2021. After receiving feedback to make minor adjustments to some questions, the application was resubmitted on 16 April 2021, with the final approval granted on 26 April 2021. No personal information such as the name of the schools participating in the survey, nor any third persons in regards to SEN students are identifiable from the questionnaire. However, the yellow level data coding classification is due to there being so few international primary schools in Norway (18), and even fewer to potentially answer the survey and provide information about their policies and practices. Once again, the consent letter (Appendix A) detailed the appropriate information regarding the participant's rights to withdraw from the study.

4 Results

This chapter will analyse the results from the digital questionnaire survey that was sent to 18 international PYP schools in Norway. The results provide an interesting sneak-peek into the policies and practices in the participating primary schools, which offers a beginning basis for comparison between the schools themselves, but also against the requirements of the Norwegian Education Act.

4.1 Defining bullying

As previously mentioned, the definition of bullying can vary between the different bullying prevention programs, and/or schools, who aim to state it for clarity in their publications or policies. However, it is most often the case that the definitions are similar in key elements, but differ slightly in the wording or emphasis placed on the key elements. Participants were asked to share their school's definition of bullying. Of the seven schools that submitted responses, one school stated, "we do not have one definition of bullying." This statement could align with the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training's preferred 11 examples and descriptions of bullying behaviour, rather than providing a set definition, which were previously mentioned (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016a). However, without further explanation, that is just conjecture. Using Olweus and Roland's first definition of bullying from the 80's, which has been a long-standing, and well-referenced definition, four specific categories were created for comparison. The six other participants' definition of bullying are compared and categorised in Table 1.

Table 1

Definition of bullying

	Bullying is characterised as:				
	a negative action against others (physical or mental harm)	**a repeated action**	**done by 1 or more person against another**	**when the victim cannot defend themselves (a power imbalance)**	**Additional keywords and phrases from the school responses:**
School 1	X	X		X	Intentional
School 2	X	X			Systematic
School 3	X	X		X	Systematic
School 4	X	X	X	X	Causes embarrassment
School 5					"We do not have one definition of bullying."
School 6	X	X	X	X	"We use the definition provided by the Norwegian Ministry of Education."
School 7	X	X	X		Creates a hostile environment and substantially disrupts the education process

It is clear that the six schools who provided a definition agree that bullying is a negative or harmful behaviour, whether it be physical or mental, that is repeated over time. Three of the six schools state that the act of bullying is conducted by one or more person(s), while four of the six schools classify the victim as someone who is unable to defend themselves (or say there is a clear power imbalance between the bully and the victim). Only two schools (school four and school six) included all four key elements in their definition, one of which specifically stated they "use the definition provided by the Norwegian Ministry of Education." Two additional keywords that were noteworthy from the definitions the participants provided were to describe the act of bullying as *intentional* and *systematic*. From these results, it is apparent that the majority of the schools reported the same key elements in their definition of bullying as Olweus and Roland established in their definition in the 1980s.

After the act of bullying has been established and the victim identified, the participating international schools answered the question, "what are the most common steps that your school takes when addressing bullying situations and ensuring the safety of the victim?" Table 2 shows the distribution of the answers to question seven on the survey. The schools could check as many static answer options that applied to their school, from the list of six available, with an optional text box for further clarification of their methods.

Table 2

Steps to take when reporting bullying

What are the most common steps that your school takes when addressing bullying situations and ensuring the safety of the victim?	Total number of school's responses
Prevention measures (school policy against bullying, classroom lessons, etc.)	5 (71.4%)
Documentation forms	6 (85.7%)
Observations of students by school staff	6 (85.7%)
Student surveys that address the school or classroom environment or bullying in particular	2 (28.6%)
Intervention with a member of school leadership	6 (85.7%)
Parent contact/involvement	6 (85.6%)
Other	1 (14.3%)*

*Note: In the optional text box, one school indicated that extra staff members may be assigned to areas where bullying is reported most frequently and that conversations with the students involved to get clarity about the situation are essential.

Six of the seven PYP schools (85.7%) agreed that documentation forms, observations of students by school staff, intervention with a member of school leadership, and parent contact/involvement were the most common steps they implemented when bullying has been reported. Five of the seven schools (71.4%) indicated prevention measures (such as having a school policy against bullying or having specific classroom lessons on the topic of bullying) as an additional common step to take. Two schools indicated they use student surveys to aid them, and one school in the optional text box said, "if the situation warrants it, extra members

of staff are assigned to areas where this might be occurring more frequently. Conversations with the students involved are always conducted to get clarity regarding the situation."

4.2   Implementation of a research-supported bullying prevention programme

Based on the success of Norwegian-created bullying prevention programmes, such as The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) and the Zero Programme, in addition to Norway's Chapter 9A of the Education Act, it was logical to inquire into the anti-bullying efforts provided by the international school community in Norway. Although the popularity of these programs began to wane already in the mid-2000's across the country, there are some public schools, and possibly private schools, who still follow similar programs. A higher number of participating schools would have provided a better over-all picture of the international school community in order to compare their practices, however from the seven schools who participated, five of them (71.4%) indicated they did not use a research-supported bullying prevention program, but provided further feedback into how their school specifically targets bullying prevention. Two schools indicated that they either "follow opplæringsloven §9a" or a "School Environment Plan written by staff and in line with UDIR requirements." The School Environment Plan is the action plan schools in Norway enact when a student is feeling bullied, unsafe, or is not having a good psychosocial school environment, which was previously stated. Therefore, it is not surprising that schools do this; however, even if schools did follow a specific bullying prevention programme, the assumption is that they still follow the Norwegian law to report and document 9A cases. One of the schools just mentioned, in addition to another, clarify that their prevention and intervention work is embedded in their PSPE scope and sequence learning outcomes and have a designated 'well-being time' in their daily schedule, in addition to working with a stop-light method for conflict mediation.

4.2.1   Kelso's Choice

Another international school indicated they also have PSPE curriculum goals to address class environment and bullying issues. In addition, however, they use a resource called the wheel of choice, which comes from the Kelso's Choice Conflict Management system. "This conflict resolution curriculum teaches children the difference between big problems and little problems. Kelso the frog is a fun and engaging way for children to learn conflict management" (Kelso's Choice, 2021). The targeted age for Kelso's Choice is from Pre-K to

5th grade. The wheel of choice, specifically, is an easy to use visual poster that encourages the students to solve their conflict using nine suggested actions they can take on their own, without involving an adult, to encourage independent problem solving.

4.2.2   Second Step

One of the seven school participants said they "focus on teaching good social skills via a SEL program called Second Step." Although the school answered *no*, they do not implement a research-based anti-bullying program, on the survey, the Second Step programs are "research-based, teacher-informed, and classroom-tested to promote the social-emotional development, safety, and well-being of children from Early Learning through Grade 8," as indicated on their website (Second Step, 2021). They offer a specific, research-based, unit that focuses on bullying prevention, available from Kindergarten through Grade 5, as well, but the international school who indicated they use Second Step may not follow that particular unit.

4.2.3   The KiVa Programme

The remaining two schools, of the seven who responded to the survey (28.6%), indicated they follow the KiVa Programme, an anti-bullying program established by the University of Turku, in Finland. With funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland, the program is research and evidence-based, having gone through a national randomized and controlled trial. Through prevention, intervention, and monitoring, KiVa's goal is to "prevent bullying and to tackle the cases of bullying effectively" (KiVa Program, 2021) by following a specific curriculum of lessons and online games that focus on the roles students play within the social situation. KiVa is reminiscent of the OBPP in that Dan Olweus and Christina Salmivalli, one the Finnish developers of KiVa, worked together in the 1990's to extend what they knew about the bully and victim dynamic to include other participant roles, such as the reinforcers, assistants, defenders, outsides, and the bystander, who is a large focus of the KiVa lessons. Similar to the Zero programme, teachers help reinforce the presence of KiVa in the school by wearing yellow vests when outside with the students, staff members are trained to talk to students who have been identified as the victim and the bully, and there is dedicated time in the schedule for KiVa lessons.

As a follow-up question to whether or not the international schools in Norway implement a bullying prevention program, schools were asked if they had any other prevention

measures, or specific lessons in which they address the issue of bullying to educate the students about how to deal with those situations, and surprisingly, two of the seven said *no*. Five of the seven schools said *yes*, which is well documented based on the descriptions of their actions they provided (above). With the exception of the one school who said they "follow opplæringsloven §9a," the expected result for this question should have been six out of seven schools to indicate *yes*.

4.2.4   Declining popularity of bullying prevention programmes

Research-based bullying prevention programs have had varying levels of popularity and degrees of implementation across the globe since the topic of *bullying* became so prominent. Among other factors, the government's support can be a reason as to the decline in popularity of these programs. Such is the case for Norway. The Olweus and Zero programs were well encouraged and supported by the government, with the total number of schools using either of the programs peaking during the 2003-2004 school year, with a relatively sharp decline after that. One possible reason as to why the Ministry of Education placed less and less of a focus on anti-bullying efforts was the updated curriculum plan (læreplan) that was released in 2006. Suddenly, teachers were more concerned about how to implement the new curriculum changes, with meetings and planning days focused on that, which before may have been used for addressing the students' well-being and social issues within the school. Roland (2011) confirmed the connection between the decline in anti-bullying efforts and the new curriculum changes by saying, "implementing a new curriculum plan can be a serious threat to an important aspect of the social domain at the schools: the antibullying campaign" (p. 387). Teachers simply became 'too busy' to dedicate the time. In the 2014 report of school environment programs in Norwegian schools, Common Focus, they too questioned the teachers' demanding schedules and their lack of time available to implement the anti-bullying programs, but further contemplated "what this can say about the programs' suitability in the work with psychosocial environment and bullying" (Eriksen et al., 2014, p. 27). It is important to note, that this shift in priorities is not secluded to Norway alone. When writing about the American school context, Olweus and Kallestad said that due to a similar increase in pressure, "many administrators and teachers have been reluctant to set aside time for class meetings, despite evidence that they are important to the success of the program" (Olweus & Limber, 2010, p. 131).

4.3 Responsible parties

The old proverb that said, "It takes a village to raise a child," certainly had it right (as referenced in Cowen-Fletcher, 1994). Within the school setting, the same can be said for it taking the whole school community to support children in their development, be it social-emotional, mental, or physical growth. This applies to both the mainstream and special needs education child. Table 3 shows the number of people who are involved when bullying cases are reported at the participating schools. The PYP international schools were asked three specific questions to help narrow down the staff members who play the largest part in the process of accepting a report of bullying, following through with the investigation of the claim, and ultimately 'closing' the case. Question four and five of the survey identify "to whom do students/parents/teachers report bullying cases?" and "who is the main staff member to follow up with the reported bullying case?" Both questions had five specific staff members to choose from, with an optional *other* category with a short answer text box. In both cases, the homeroom teacher of the student was identified as the main staff member involved in receiving the report and following it up, with the head of school/principal being the next most involved staff member. However, it is clear there are multiple people involved when a student is bullied at each school.

Table 3

Responsible parties

	Who are bullying cases reported to?	Who is the main staff member to follow up the case?	Who determines a bullying cased to be closed?
Homeroom teacher	6 (85.7%)	6 (85.7%)	2 (28.6%)
Social teacher	2 (28.6%)	2 (28.6%)	1 (14.3%)
PYP Coordinator	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	1 (14.3%)
Head of School/Principal	6 (85.7%)	4 (57.1%)	2 (28.6%)
A different specific staff member dedicated to bullying cases	2 (28.6%)	2 (28.6%)	0 (0%)
Other	0 (0%)	2 (28.6%)*	1 (14.3%)*
Parent	N/A	N/A	5 (71.4%)
Student	N/A	N/A	5 (71.4%)

*Note: In the optional text box, the schools indicated the KiVa Team member as their "other" option.

For clarification of the staff members listed on the survey, the homeroom (or classroom) teacher is the main teacher of the class, with whom the student spends most of their time, and is the main contact person with parents in the class. The 'social teacher' could have different names at each school location such as support teacher, or (guidance) counsellor. The role however, should be similar in that they support the students who have social issues they wish

to discuss, such as advice on how to manage a social situation or role-playing social situations in order to help a student understand and respond appropriately. In some schools, the social teacher could also aid the school nurse in supporting students with mental health issues. The PYP coordinator is a specific role to IB international schools. The PYP coordinator ensures the implementation of the IB curriculum in the primary grade classes and has a large and trusting presence in the students' school days. The option of, '*a different specific staff member dedicated to bullying cases*' was presented and chosen by two different schools for question four and five, without the option to clarify that staff member's title. The '*other*' category, with a short answer text option, revealed that two international schools indicated the 'KiVa' team member/coordinator was the main person to follow up with reported bullying cases in their schools.

When the international schools were asked, "who determines a bullying case to be closed/monitoring is no longer required," two additional answer options were added: *parents of students involved*, and *students who are involved*. In Norway, the voices of parents and students, themselves, are important when addressing the students' concerns about the classroom environment, and their overall well-being, as per Chapter 9A-9 of the Education Act (Opplæringslova, 1998). That is evident in the results, which show that *parents* and *students* are the main people to determine that a bullying case is closed, both being rated at 71.4%. Once they feel safe and secure, the case is closed.

4.4   Documentation

As previously mentioned, the duty to document a child's claim of an unsafe school environment in Norway is paramount in accordance with Chapter 9A-4 of the Education Act (Opplæringslova, 1998). An action plan with relevant information is prepared and shared with the parents, for their approval, as well as the school staff in order to implement the specific measures to safeguard the child. This applies to bullied children as well as children who feel unsafe for other reasons. With the duty to document in mind, it is not surprising that six out of the seven international school participants indicated that *yes* (85.7%), they do indeed have specific documentation that needs to be filled out when a bullying case is reported, compared to one school who said *no* (14.3%). Of the six schools that document such cases, they were able to select multiple main elements that need to be included in the documentation, as well as write their own in an optional text box, found in Table 4. Most of the schools agreed as to the key information that must be reported. The two most common elements to be reported being the date the incident occurred and/or was reported and a

description of the incident, both being selected by 85.7% of the schools. The next most
common elements to be reported, selected by 71.4% of the schools, was tied three ways
between the name of the students involved (the victim and bully), the location of the incident,
and the name of the person who reported the incident. Two schools offered a further
clarification by stating they also documented the action (that was taken by the teachers as a
follow-up and/or the consequence to the bully) and each students' account of the incident. In
Norway, the students have the right to state their side of the story when confronted for such
an incident.

Table 4

Documentation

What are the main elements that need to be documented when a bullying case is reported?	Total number of school's responses
Date of report and/or incident	6 (85.7%)
Name of students involved (bully and victim)	5 (71.4%)
Description of the situation	6 (85.7%)
Location of the incident	5 (71.4%)
Person who reported the incident	5 (71.4%)
Other	2 (28.6%)*

*Note: In the optional text box, one school indicated they document the action, while the other school documents each
student's point of view.

4.5   The Covid-19 pandemic factor

Although this thesis and survey did not focus on the Covid-19 pandemic, as it is a relatively
small 'blip' compared to the years of bullying research, it was hard to ignore as students in
schools the world over were impacted by it. The pandemic was, and in some places still is,
the most current world and significant life-impacting event, that could have implications on
the results of this survey, without intention. When this study and questionnaire was sent out
to the 18 IB PYP international schools in Norway, the 2019-2020 school year was already
complete. After the 2020 New Year, most notably in February, all schools in Norway, much
like many other countries across the globe, were greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.
News of the spread of the corona virus had many people worried, and on 12 March 2020, a
vast majority of schools and businesses in Norway closed down in an effort to reduce the
further spread of the virus. The "normal" school day for primary students became anything
but that. Teachers scrambled to make education accessible to their students through digital
means. However, the most vulnerable students, and those whose parents were essential
workers, were offered a physical space in the school in which they would receive their
education. Schools were closed on a national level for a five-week period. However, after that

initial school closure, for the rest of the school year, and into the next, primary, secondary, and upper secondary schools operated under different guidelines due to the students' age and the infection rate amongst those age groups. On UNESCO's '*Total duration of school closures'* interactive map, they calculate that between March 2020-August 2021, Norway had a combine total of 29 weeks of both full school closures (on the national level) and partial school closures (UNESCO, 2022). This lead to most schools having very individualised plans as far as which grade levels could attend school, how many students and teachers could be in a classroom together at the same time, and what their daily and hourly scheduled looked like. Some classes were divided into smaller groups, with the students and teachers having strict rules for keeping 1-2 meter distance and following general hygiene procedures. These disruptions caused a lot of discontinuity for students' learning over that second half of the year, and even continued into the 2020-2021 school year. According to their '*Global monitoring of school closures'* interactive map, UNESCO indicates that 1,080,263 learners in Norway were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The primary students alone represented 448,655 of the total learners (UNESCO, 2022).

Even though it was for a "good reason," classes and grade levels were kept separate from others, in order to decrease the potential spread of the virus, but in the long-run, the social atmosphere of the classroom was impacted. The students may not have interacted with others that they normally would have, whole classes may have split into two smaller groups, or one new class may have been a combination of students from multiple classes. Therefore, when taking any sort of survey about the school/classroom environment or the students' satisfaction, results may be impacted. With this in mind, the following prevalence results of bullying in the 2019-2020 school year may not be an accurate representation of "normal school year."

4.6   Prevalence of bullying in the 2019-2020 school year

Despite the second half of the 2019-2020 academic year being disrupted by the global pandemic, the participants of the survey were asked to disclose how many bullying cases were reported and documented during the school year. The majority of the schools (four out of six) indicated they had 3-5 reported cases, whereas two schools reported 6-9 cases, and one school reported 10-12 cases, which can be seen on Table 5.

Table 5

Prevalence of bullying in the 2019-2020 school year

	How many bullying cases were reported and documented during the 2019-2020 school year?					
	0	**1-2**	**3-5**	**6-9**	**10-12**	**13 +**
School 1					X	
School 2			X			
School 3			X			
School 4			X			
School 5			X			
School 6				X		
School 7				X		
TOTAL	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (57.1%)	2 (28.6%)	1 (14.3%)	0 (0%)

Out of the total number of bullying cases each school reported, each international school was asked, '*how many of the reported cases involved special needs education students with a documented individual education plan (IEP/IOP).*' In order to consider the student as SEN, proper documentation through Norway's PPT service was an eligibility requirement. Two of the participating schools did not have the information necessary in order to answer the question, whereas another two others schools answered that none of their reported bullying cases involved SEN students. Three of the participant schools responded with 1-2 SEN students being involved in some way in the total number of reported bullying cases (see Table 6). Whether the SEN student was the victim or the bully was not asked, nor indicated.

Table 6

Prevalence of SEN students bullied in the 2019-2020 school year

	How many of the reported bullying cases involved special needs education students with a documented individual education plan (IEP/IOP)?				
	0	**1-2**	**3-5**	**6+**	**I do not have the information needed to answer this question**
School 1	X				
School 2					X
School 3		X			
School 4		X			
School 5	X				
School 6		X			
School 7					X
TOTAL	2 (28.6%)	3 (42.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (28.6%)

With the Covid-19 pandemic being a potential factor, the school participants were asked to compare the number of reported bullying cases to the previous school year (2018-2019), if they had the possibility. Four of the schools did not have the information available to allow for comparison, while two schools considered the 2019-2020 school year to have a higher number of reported bullying cases, whereas one school had a higher number of reported

bullying cases in the 2018-2019 school year. Table 7 shows a breakdown of possible reasons as to why Covid-19 could have attributed to the number of bullying cases increasing or decreasing during the 2019-2020 school year.

Table 7

Covid-19 pandemic factors

	Do you believe the number of bullying cases in your school were affected in some way by the Covid-19 pandemic?		
	I feel the number of bullying cases increased due to:	**I feel the number of bullying cases decreased due to:**	**I do not feel the number of bullying cases were affected by Covid-19.**
extra frustration and/or stress among/between the students	1	0	-
the deviation from their normal everyday routines	1	0	-
reduced social interactions with friends and family	1	2	-
other	0	1	-
TOTAL	1 school (with three answers)	3 schools*	3 schools

*Note: In the optional text box, 1 school further theorised the number of bullying cases decreased due to less face-to-face contact between the students.

For clarification, only one school felt the number of bullying cases increased, for which they indicated three possible reasons. Three schools felt the number of bullying cases decreased, but each school only indicated one reason each. The final three schools did not believe the number of bullying cases were affected by Covid-19 or other factors.

At the time of the survey, the 2020-2021 school year was well underway. The school year in Norway, much like other parts of the world, was still in the grips of the global pandemic, with partial school closures. The participating schools were asked to compare their current number of bullying cases to previous years, including 2019-2020, which was only affected by the pandemic half way through the year. Three schools believed they did not have the information necessary to answer the question, whereas two of the IB schools felt the number of bullying cases, thus far, had been higher than they expected. The remaining two primary schools felt the number of bullying cases, up to that point in the year, had been lower than they expected. Table 8 details the reasons why each school felt the number of bullying cases were either higher or lower than expected.

Table 8

Bullying prevalence comparisons in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic

	Do you feel that Covid-19 impacted the number of bullying cases reported during the 2020-2021 school year? (up to the time of reporting)		
	I feel the number of bullying cases has been higher than expected due to:	I feel the number of bullying cases has been lower than expected due to:	I do not have the information needed to answer this question.
Students being more frustrated and unable to cope with their feelings	2	-	-
Constant changes in routine	2	-	-
Reduced social interaction with friends and family	2	-	-
Reduced social activities for the student (in or outside of school time)	-	2	-
Strict guidelines for students being physically separated by 1-2 meter(s)	-	2	-
Class sizes being separated into smaller cohorts	-	2	-
Students being at home for a longer period of time	-	2	-
Students being more adaptable and/or understanding of other people and the situation	-	0	-
Preventative measures put into place within the school	-	1	-
Other	0	0	-
TOTAL	2 schools (28.6%)	2 schools (28.6%)	3 schools (42.9%)

5   Discussion

This thesis had an overall goal to discover '*how do primary IB schools in Norway implement prevention efforts and document reported bullying cases in accordance with Chapter 9A of the Education Act*.' By inquiring into the bullying prevention measures and documentation practices the PYP schools in Norway routinely use, a beginning comparison was able to be formed. Schools participated in a digital questionnaire aimed at collecting information pertaining to the secondary research questions that informed this thesis. The results were able to allow a comparison of each school's definition of bullying, which bullying prevention program they employed, and/or other related measures they implemented in order to address the phenomenon of bullying, how many reported cases of bullying were documented in the 2019/20 school year, and how, specifically, they were documented. Similarities were discovered between the participating schools as well as areas in which continued research and continuity of practices would be beneficial. In this chapter, further discussion of the findings, implications, limitations, and recommendations to the current research are presented.

5.1   Defining bullying

As evidenced throughout this thesis, 'bullying' has been an important, long discussed, topic amongst educators, researchers, politicians, and more. Across the globe, people have worked to establish a definition that clearly encompasses the essential elements that are deemed 'bullying' behaviour, to be used as a standard point of reference. Many literary sources agree that Olweus's early work and definition is still relevant today (Hellstöm, Thornberg & Espelage, 2021). Each of the PYP schools who participated in the survey, also confirmed the similarities of the 'key elements' in their schools' definition, as well as the subtle differences. The additional key words and phrases from the schools that did not fall into the four categories provided, can lead to an interesting further discussion of how much is *too much* to put into a definition of bullying for students to understand and ultimately adhere to. One school, for example, specifically stated that bullying causes *embarrassment*. Does that need to be specifically stated in the definition, or is it implied that a victim will be embarrassed because they are/have been bullied. Cultural differences as far as what each school, region, or country values can also weigh heavily on how the definition is worded. One school specifically stated that bullying "creates a hostile environment and substantially disrupts the education process." Although it was a school's definition of bullying, it begs the question, how does the local community or country's definition differ from this one, as they most likely

would not have the specification about the education process. What is clear, however, is that all the IB schools who participated in the survey have a clear definition to identify bullying behaviour.

5.2 Implementation of bullying prevention programmes

From the IB PYP schools who were surveyed, the majority indicated they did not implement a research-based bullying prevention program. A few, however, indicated they still made efforts elsewhere, such as within the scope of their whole curriculum. Education, as we know, must evolve with the times and needs of the society. In 2006, a new curriculum was necessary in Norway, just as in 2020, when yet again the curriculum was updated. As stated on the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training website, the new updates to the curriculum reflect an increase in certain values, amongst them: human dignity, identity and cultural diversity, critical thinking and ethical awareness, and democracy and participation (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2021). With a focus on the values the updated curriculum reflects, bullying prevention could be addressed with a concerted effort, without a separate anti-bullying curriculum. A common theme amongst authors and researches determined that schools who showed fidelity to a program, approaching it with commitment and an open mind-set, had better feelings of success with the bullying prevention programmes they implemented (NORCE, 2019). However, the same can be said for a commitment to teaching a social-emotional curriculum that won't sacrifice previous anti-bullying efforts. Ultimately, many of the lessons gained from direct teaching on the topic can aid the students' social-emotional development in the future. So, although the sample size of the survey that informed this thesis was small, the fact that only two of the seven participant schools indicated they followed a research-based bullying prevention programme seems in-line with the decreased implementation of such programmes that Norway has documented over the years. The trend showed the schools focusing more on aligning their prevention and intervention measures with targeted social-emotional lessons that teach conflict management and resolution and overall well-being.

5.3 Documentation

The majority of the participating international schools agreed on the key elements to be documented in a reported bullying case in accordance with Chapter 9A, however, there were some small discrepancies, in addition to one school indicating that they did not document at

all. The documentation process should, theoretically, be the same each year, with only the flux in the number of students who report being dissatisfied, unhappy, or unsafe at school to change. According to the 2019 evaluation of chapter 9A, in regards to documentation practices, they found "uncertainty as to what documentation practice is required to uphold the duty to document, and the practice varies both between and within schools and school owners" (Deloitte, 2019, p. xiv). The variability between the schools is evident from the results of the survey. Without considering the one school who reported they did not document reported bullying cases at all, only twice did the remaining schools six agree on what elements should be documented. The remaining six schools agreed the date of the (bullying) report/incident and the description of the situation should be documented. Surprisingly, only one school specifically stated they ask each students' point of view of the incident. This is surprising due to it being required according to the Education Act Chapter 9A-9 (Opplæringslova, 1998), which states that children have the right to express their opinion in cases involving their school environment. Therefore, having clear expectations and standardized documentation requirements for both Norwegian public schools and international schools in Norway, who simultaneously run the national and IB curriculum, could create continuity between the schools and a shared experience in which to relate to each other.

5.4 Prevalence of bullying during the 2019/20 school year

In the survey connected to this thesis, when informing about the number of reported bullying cases their school experienced, the participants were not asked to further divide their numbers into gender or grade level. With such a small IB PYP school community in Norway to begin with, further separating the data of reported bullying cases could have further distinguished the schools' responses from each other, which could have resulted in a higher level data coding classification level. As a consequence, further comparison between how the international school's bullying cases compared to the Norwegian public school's numbers is impossible. Four of the six schools reported 3-5 total cases; two schools reported 6-9, whereas one school reported 10-12 cases amongst the primary grade level students. The IB PYP schools were further asked to share their opinion as to how the 2019/20 school year compared to the previous year (2018/19) as well as the 2020/21 school year, which they were currently in at the time of completely the survey. When comparing to the previous school year, four schools did not have the information necessary to answer the question, whereas one school reported the number of bullying cases to be higher in 2018/19 school year, and two

schools had a higher number of reported bullying cases in the 2019/20 school year. When comparing the 2019/20 school year to the 2020/21 school year, the schools who felt they were able to respond had an even split of opinion. Only four of the seven schools felt they had the information necessary to compare the number of bullying cases between the two school years. Two schools believed the number of bullying cases increased in 2020/21 from 2019/20, whereas two schools believed the number of cases had decreased.

Looking deeper at Wendelborg's reports that analyse the results of the yearly nation-wide student survey, starting with the 2017/18 school year up to the most recent, resulted in an interesting find. Historically, the survey collects the responses of boys and girls in grades 5-13. Each year, the overall trend shows grade 5 students reporting the highest levels of bullying, which when decreases with the students' age. What was noteworthy, however, is that the initial level in which the grade 5 students report bullying each year has increased each year, at least since 2017/18. Starting from 2017/18 and progressing to the 2021/22 school year, boys in grade 5 reported bullying at a rate of 7.8, 8.1, 9.2, 10.6, and 10.8. Girls showed a similar increase, with two deviations: 7.6, 8.7, 8.5, 10.9, and 10.1 (Wendelborg, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022). Although bullying rates are relatively low in Scandinavian countries, and Norway has documented a decrease of bullying prevalence with age, the fact that the rate in which the fifth graders are initially reporting bullying has increased over the years should be investigated. This trend indicates more research and bullying prevention measures should be prioritised amongst primary age students in an effort to combat the incline in which grade 5 students are experiencing bullying.

The increasing trend in which grade 5 students have initially reported bullying, was further applied to the results from the international schools' comparisons of the 2018/19, 2019/20, and 2020/21 school years. Although Wendelborg's results focus on individual grade levels (5-13), if spoken about as a generalised trend of increased bullying prevalence, then a comparison to the survey's results can be made. One school, for example, demonstrated the same increased trend of bullying cases. The school reported having a higher number of bullying cases (6-9) in the 2019/20 year than they did in 2018/19, as well as reporting a higher number of bullying cases in 2020/21. Two schools, due to answering '*I do not have the information needed to answer this question*,' were only able to partially compare to the increasing trend. One school reported having a higher number of bullying cases (3-5) in the 2019/20 school year, but did not have the information necessary for the 2020/21 school year. The other school reported 6-9 bullying cases in 2019/20, and followed the upward trend in the 2020/21 school year, but did not have the numbers needed to report on the 2018/19 school

year. Contrary to the discovery of the increased trend in Wendelborg's data, one school reported a direct opposite result. That particular school reported a higher number of bullying cases in 2018/19 than they had in 2019/20 (3-5), with a continued decrease in the 2020/21 school year. A second school was able to partially support this by indicating a lower amount of bullying cases in the 2020/21 school year than they had in the 2019/20 school year (10-12), with no numbers for comparison for the 2018/19 school year. These numbers show that although generalisations in trends can be spotted and supported, each individual school has their own circumstances in which consider.

5.5   Beyond bullying- other environmental factors

As the time of the survey, the effects of the global pandemic could not be overlooked as a contributing factor when schools reported their number of reported bullying cases. Although at the time, the IB school participants were simply theorising, given more distance in timing ('post'-pandemic), and more research as to how the pandemic has affected students, both academically, and in regards to their well-being, it can now be stated that the pandemic did indeed have an impact on the students and the total number of reported bullying cases. One school in particular believed their total number of bullying cases, in the 2019/20 school year, to have increased due to students feeling '*extra frustration and stress*' and having '*reduced social interactions with friends and family*.' When considering the impact that Covid-19 had on the current (at the time) 2020/21 school year, two schools felt the number of bullying cases had increased, compared to the previous year due to students feeling '*more frustrated and unable to cope with their feelings,*' the '*constant change of routine,*' and the continued '*reduced social interaction with friends and family*.' These results led to a new component in which this thesis had not previously addressed.

Bullying is a phenomenon that takes a toll on both the victim and the bully's mental health, in addition to affecting the school's social environment. According to a national survey of school employees across the USA, the participants (a mixture of teachers, school nurses, and other school staff members) indicated they were concerned about the mental health issues of the students upon their return to school for the 2020-2021 academic year (Pattison, Hoke, Schaefer, Alter & Sekhar, 2021). These mental health issues included the expected increase in students needing access to mental health services and the subsequent strain it would place on the school's staff in order to provide such services. Some schools expressed concerns about their physical environment and general health-related protocols, which ended up scoring higher than the mental health concerns. Those numbers confirmed

the authors' theory that "it is even more likely that these secondary concerns will take the proverbial 'back seat' as safety concerns potentially outrank even academic priorities while schools continue to adapt to new learning structures" (Pattison et al., 2021, p. 379-380). School nurses were consistently more concerned about mental health than both the educators/others categories combined that filled out the survey. This is not so surprising considering the previous statements of how 'busy' teachers are and how much time and focus they place on the academic curriculum and standardized tests. Given all the other barriers to learning that children face, the lack of collaboration between the school's staff, whose common goal is to support each and every child's development, should not be added to the list. It should not just be the school nurse's concern about the child's mental well-being, when the mental state of the child will affect every part of their daily life, including their academic development, which teachers are so focused on. "Constructive school climate assists academic teaching and learning either directly or tacitly, through socio-emotional learning, service learning, (and) civic education" (Hatziconstantis & Kolympari, 2021, p. 111).

While reporting the consequences the school closures have on children's physical and mental well-being in the USA, Hoffman and Miller (2020) agreed on the necessity for school mental health providers and teachers to work together for the benefit of the students. Besides identifying the students in need and providing counselling, they should collaborate with external entities to provide the appropriate support. "The COVID-19 pandemic is shining a spotlight on how important schools are for meeting children's non-academic needs and the importance of appropriate funding for these services in the wake of this pandemic and on an ongoing basis during regular times" (Hoffman & Miller, 2020, p. 305).

5.6 Limitations and implications

5.6.1 Limitations

Upon seeing this research study to the end, some limitations arose. Due to the small sample size, generalisation of the results was impossible. That does not mean to say that research within this population is unimportant or unnecessary, however. Current research is limited within the primary IB international school community in Norway, giving little to compare to. The survey itself had some limitations as well. With its approved data handling level from NSD, sensitive information that could have further clarified and classified each school's prevalence of bullying, separated by age and gender, could not be collected. This

information, in addition to specifics about the total number of students in each school, the exact number of SEN students who were victimised and their specific diagnosis, and the school's geographical location in Norway could have allowed for further comparisons to public schools in that region, as well as looking for regional trends.

5.6.2   Implications

The motivation for this thesis was to shine a light on the challenges the primary IB schools in Norway face when comparing bullying prevention measures against Norwegian national practices. It is apparent there is a lack of current research available within the primary IB school community in Norway, something that will hopefully change in the future as this community has shown growth over the years. Understanding more about this community, and how they navigate the Norwegian context could help them to integrate and align more with the principles and practices set by the various governing bodies in Norway, which would allow for more standardisation and data comparison opportunities.

5.7   Recommendations for future research and change

Working through this thesis revealed some further limitations, which presented challenges to this research study. A lack of information was available on the national level for comparing the prevalence of bullying in primary school children, specifically. Additionally, the current data are not separated enough, by public/private school or SEN/mainstream student, to allow for more detailed comparisons. The implications, presented below, suggest recommendations for how a change in certain documentation and practices could better serve the purposes of this research study, as well as future studies.

5.7.1   Bullying prevention and detection for lower primary aged student

The national survey in Norway does not collect data on the prevalence of bullying in lower primary age children. Students in grade 5 and older are targeted for such surveys that focus on the child's well-being and their satisfaction of the school environment. Bullying, however, knows no age limit and "transcends cultural and geographic boundaries" (Craig et al., 2009, p. 221). The reasons for why students in grades 1-4 do not participate in the survey could be numerous. One possible reason could be that children at those young ages may not interpret and report a bullying situation the same as an older student, due to the child's lack of experience or knowledge about how to discern what bullying is according to the school's

agreed upon definition. Especially if a school does not have a specific anti-bullying curriculum, or present the students with targeted lessons in which to discuss and/or role-play certain scenarios, then the student does not have the understanding necessary to participate in a survey. Conversely, with direct teaching, students may then have a differing view of bullying and its definition, compared to students at schools who do not have implicit teachings, which then alters the ability to compare survey results. In the 2014 Common Focus report, the researchers expressed concern "that the use of the program changes the way respondents perceive bullying, so that in reality the occurrence of another phenomenon is measured before the intervention than after" (Eriksen et al., 2014, p. 9). Comprehensive comparison surveys would be necessary to account for all these factors. A solution for understanding children's perceptions and experiences with bullying in grades 1-4 in Norway could be to conduct more qualitative surveys and studies instead. When reviewing qualitative research on school bullying and victimization, the authors of their published systematic review of research strategies agreed it was "surprising that qualitative research is less frequently used in school bullying than quantitative research, since understanding this phenomenon requires a deeper insight into children's perspectives" (Patton, Hong, Patel, Kral, 2015, p. 2). By engaging the student in dialogue and hearing about their victim/bully experience, rather than the frequency of how often it happened, researchers would gain valuable insight into the students' understanding of the situation on a social and emotion level, such as their feelings and emotions linked to the experience.

5.7.2   A call for new or adjusted bullying prevalence surveys

Another challenge, when looking at Norway's national survey, is that the data is not nearly broken-down enough to provide any insight into the victim/bully rates of students who attend an international school in Norway, in particular. With this thesis particularly in mind, it would be very interesting to compare the international school community students. The international school's student demographic is comprised of students who are from an international background altogether (neither parents nor student(s) born in Norway), half-Norwegian (coming from a mixed-heritage home), have non-Norwegian parents, but the student is born in Norway, or they could be fully Norwegian in search of an alternative academic curriculum than what is provided by the public school. Regardless of each individual school's demographic, because of their special circumstance of being separate from the public schools with their IB PYP curriculum, comparing the international school

students across the country to each other would make more sense, arguably, than comparing them to that of the public school students. The IB PYP school students have the same general curriculum overview and terminology for things regardless of what country they are in, but comparing the schools who have the same host country provides a bit more of a grounding comparison basis. It would also be nice to hear more about the 'PYP experience' in Norway. Referring back to Boal & Nakamoto's (2020) study of the PYP's impact on school climate, it would be beneficial in the context of this thesis to note if and/or how the schools feel the IB programme contributes to their bullying prevalence rates. Additionally, questioning whether being in a host country that has had nation-wide anti-bullying programme support has potentially altered the students' general outlook on bullying would be an interesting.

Similarly, the survey does not separate data for students who identify as having special educational needs. SEN students have been found to have higher victimisation and bullying rates when compared to their mainstream education classmates (Rose et al., 2009). From the results collected from the IB PYP schools in Norway, three schools identified 1-2 SEN students amongst those involved in their total number of reported bullying cases for the 2019-2020 school year. Although the survey given to the international schools in Norway was for the teaching staff to identify the number of bullying cases and who was involved, an interesting discussion point here is how a SEN student would answer a survey directed to students to identify bullying, the type of bullying, and the frequency in which it occurs. Most surveys are arguably created for the typically developing general education student in mind. A suggested instrument to measure bullying amongst the SEN student population more accurately is the European Bullying Intervention Project Questionnaire (EBIPQ), which measures both victimization and aggression (Rodriguez-Hidalgo, Alcivar, Herrera-Lopez, 2019). With 7.7% of Norway's primary school students identified by The Directorate for Children, Youth and Families (Bufdir – Norwegian acronym) as having special needs and receiving special education (Barne-,ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet, 2022), it is important for these students to have a fair representation of their bullying experience, through an instrument that is differentiated to their needs.

5.7.3   Benefit of sharing experiences

Just as it is important to collaborate more within each individual school, it is just as beneficial to collaborate between schools. For example, when comparing 11 IB schools in Greece to the local schools offering the national curriculum, the IB school participants reported

collaboration rates of only 50-55%, whereas the public schools reported 90-95% participation in collaboration schemes (Hatziconstantis & Kolympari, 2021). One third of the IB schools, in addition, reported the forms of communication as unsatisfactory. This is a disappointing result. The International Baccalaureate Organisation state they work to create "frequent opportunities for shared learning and collaboration with others" (Iborganization, 2022) within their global community. It should not be forgotten, however, to collaborate with those in the local community as it provides a mutual learning opportunity for both the public and (potentially private) international schools who ultimately share similar country-specific issues.

To continue on the thread of continuity, to combat the isolation of IB schools within a host country, some schools have banded together in order to create an independently run, although recognised, association in which to collaborate and support each other. The IB international school community is small in Norway, even smaller when focusing just on PYP schools. Learning from each other, both in how to navigate within the host country's law framework and raising a community of multi-cultural and international learners, can only benefit everyone within the learning community. It was with that in mind that NIBS (Norwegian IB Schools) was founded in 2011. NIBS helps to "facilitate collaboration between all IB schools in Norway" and to "act as a referring body for IB in questions that affect IB World schools in Norway" (Norwegian IB Schools, n.d). For the purposes of this thesis, as well as for the betterment of IB schools in Norway, continued progress towards a more collaborative community is a goal.

5.8   Final remarks

Together with many other researchers before, the conclusion of this thesis is to continue the effort to research and document the bullying phenomenon, specifically in the IB PYP international school community in Norway. The NIBS community has made efforts to align and share best practices over the years, and even though autonomy and agency are important to reflect the needs of each individual school's student and staff population, some consistency amongst the PYP schools in Norway could provide stable ground for which to continue to grow. Learning more about each school's experience may help all Norwegian-hosted international schools in understanding certain contexts and phenomenon, including how an international school community of students understand and face bullying compared to their similarly aged Norwegian public school counterparts. Although a seemly small number of SEN students are impacted by bullying, according to the thesis survey results, if one student

is feeling bullied, that is one student too many. "What is required to reduce bullying is nothing less than a change in the school "culture" and in the norms for behaviour." (Olweus & Limber, 2010, p. 131). Prioritising social-emotional learning, in connection to bullying prevention, takes time, effort, and dedication, but the benefits are innumerable.

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Appendix A: Participant Information and Consent Letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project
"Anti-Bullying strategies used in international elementary schools in Norway, with a special focus on SEN students"?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to identify the anti-bullying strategies (e.g. programs, interventions, documentation) international elementary schools are using in Norway. This includes the steps they implement and the documentation forms they use to track the reported cases of bullying. Specifically, the focus is on students who have been victims of bullying who are identified as having special needs through their individualized education plan (IEP/IOP), approved through Norway's educational psychological service (PPT), and not just a differentiated learning plan provided by the school. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project
This is a master's thesis research project through the University of Oslo, Norway. The purpose is to investigate anti-bullying policies and practices within Norway's international elementary school community. The schools will be asked to share their definition of bullying, the kind of program or actions they implement within their school to reduce the cases and overall effects of bullying, and the number of reported cases of bullying they documented during the 2019-2020 academic school year, if any. Specifics about who documents and follows up on reported bullying cases is investigated, as well as the actual documentation/forms the school uses to track student reports and retellings of bully situations. Continuity between the schools will be determined based on each school's individual practices. Schools will be asked to share both the number of bullying cases they reported in general, as well as the number of those cases whose victims fall into the category of SEN. If a student has a diagnosis from Norway's PPT service who is following an individualised educational plan, they will be considered a SEN student, and will be compared to the total number of reported cases of bullying in an attempt to determine if there is a relationship between SEN students being victims of bullying at a higher rate than their typically developing peers.

Who is responsible for the research project?
This is a Master's Thesis project completed by Melissa Swanson. Melissa is completing her Master's in International Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo (UiO), Norway. The project supervisor is Thormod Idsøe from The Norwegian Center for Child Behavioral Development (NUBU).

Why are you being asked to participate?
Norway's international elementary school community is rather small. Schools who officially run the IB-PYP curriculum will be asked to participate (currently 18 schools with official IB World School status). The staff member who has access to the information from the 2019-2020 school year will be asked to complete the questionnaire to the best of their ability.

Contact information for each school is accessible from the International Baccalaureate Organisation website (www.ibo.org). The number of elementary (PYP) international schools in Norway is listed along with each school's official website and contact information.

What does participation involve for you?
If you chose to take part in the project, it will involve you filling in an online questionnaire through Nettskjema. It will take a maximum of 45 minutes, depending on how much time is needed to type open-ended text answers or to look up the 2019-2020 school year information. The survey includes questions about your school's anti-bullying policy and practices, the school's definition of bullying, and reported cases during the 2019-2020 academic school year. Your answers will be recorded electronically and will not be linked to you or your school name, unless you do that yourself in the comment boxes.

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

You will not be asked to give any personal information about yourself or any students in your school (such as your name, age, gender, position at the school, etc.). You will not be asked to state any specifics on students' special educational needs or disability diagnosis.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data
We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act). The data collected will be processed and stored through the University of Oslo's Nettskjema tool. The UiO student researcher and supervisor will have secure access to the data. Nettskjema has a high level of information security requirements. If necessary, forms can be set up for direct encrypted delivery to secure storage in the Services for Sensitive Data (TSD) environment. Participants should not be able to recognise any sensitive or personal information in publications.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?
The project is scheduled to end 1 June 2021. After the master's thesis has been written, and the data collected via Nettskjema will be deleted.

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

What gives us the right to process your personal data?
We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with The University of Oslo, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?
If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:
- University of Oslo Master's student: Melissa Swanson,
  - by email: (melissms@uv.uio.no)
- Student supervisor: Thormod Idsøe,
  - by email: (thormod.idsoe@nubu.no)
- UiO Data Protection Officer: Roger Markgraf-Bye, by email: (personvernombud@uio.no)
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Melissa Swanson (UiO), Thormod Idsøe (NUBU)

Consent form

By filling out the Nettskjema questionnaire, it means that you are agreeing to the following statements and that you are giving your consent.

I consent:
- to participate in an online questionnaire about bullying policies and practices at my school.
- to provide information that is as accurate as possible, without providing any identifying information about the school's location or students' age, grades, genders, etc.
- for the information I provide about my school to be published in Master's thesis paper.
- for any information or personal data to be stored until the end of the project (1 June).

Appendix B: Questionnaire survey questions

General questions about your school's bullying policy and practices:

1. What is your school's definition of bullying?

> (Open type-text answer space.)

2. Do you implement a research-supported anti-bullying program at your school? (e.g., KiVa, Olweus, Zero, The Bully Free® Program, etc.)
   - Yes
     - If yes, please name the program: (open type-text answer space)
   - No
     - If no, are there any other specific/structured ways to target this? (open type-text answer space)

3. Are there any prevention measures taken, or lessons taught, within the individual classes to educate the students about bullying and/or how to deal with certain bullying situations on their own?
   - Yes
   - No

4. To whom do students/parents/teachers report bullying cases? (Please check those that apply to you.)
   - Homeroom teacher
   - Social teacher
   - PYP coordinator
   - Head of School/Principal
   - A different specific staff member dedicated to bullying cases
   - Other: (open type-text answer space)

5. Who is the main staff member to follow up with the reported bullying case? (Please check those that apply to you.)
   - Homeroom teacher
   - Social teacher
   - PYP coordinator
   - Head of School/Principal
   - A different specific staff member dedicated to bullying cases
   - Other: (open type-text answer space)

6. Do you have specific documentation/certain forms that need to be filled out when a bullying case is reported?
   - Yes
     - If yes, please indicate the main elements that need to be documented
       - Date of report and/or incident
       - Names of students involved (bully and victim)
       - Description of the situation
       - Location of incident
       - Person who reported the incident

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- Other: (open type-text answer space)
    - No

7. What are the most common steps that your school takes when addressing bullying situations and ensuring the safety of the victim? (Please check those that apply.)
   - Prevention measures (school policy against bullying, classroom lessons, etc.)
   - Documentation forms
   - Observations of students by school staff
   - Student surveys that address the school or classroom environment or bullying in particular
   - Intervention with a member of school leadership
   - Parent contact/involvement
   - Other: (open type-text answer space.)

8. Who determines a bullying case to be closed/monitoring is no longer required?

   - Homeroom teacher
   - Social teacher
   - PYP coordinator
   - Head of School/Principal
   - A different specific staff member dedicated to bullying cases
   - Parents of students involved
   - Students who are involved
   - Other: (open type-text answer space)

Specific questions addressing the number of reported bullying cases reported during the 2019-2020 school year:

9. How many bullying cases were reported/documented during the 2019-2020 school year? (Please check the number range that best represents your school's situation.)
   - 1-2
   - 3-5
   - 6-9
   - 10-12
   - 13-15
   - 15-20
   - 20+

10. How many of the reported cases (from the number given above) involved special needs education students with a documented individual education plan (IEP/IOP)?
   - 1-2
   - 3-5
   - 6-9
   - 10-12
   - 13+

11. If you have the possibility to check, how does the number of reported bullying cases from the 2019-2020 school year, that you reported above, compare with the 2018-2019 school year?
   - The 2019-2020 school year had a higher number of reported cases of bullying

- The 2018-2019 had a higher number of reported cases of bullying
- I do not have the information needed to answer this question

12. The 2019-2020 school year was greatly impacted by Covid-19, restrictive guidelines, school closures, and distance learning periods which reduced students' social interactions and the overall number of hours they were present in the school building, especially from March-June 2020. Do you believe the number of bullying cases in your school were affected in some way by this Covid-19 factor? (Please check those that apply to you.)

- I feel the number of bullying cases increased due to:
    - extra frustration and/or stress among/between the students
    - the deviation from their normal everyday routines
    - reduced social interactions with friends and family
    - other: (open type-text answer space)
- I feel the number of bullying cases decreased due to:
    - reduced social activities for the students, either in, or outside of school time
    - strict guidelines for students being separated, physically, by 1-2 meter(s)
    - class sizes being separated into smaller cohorts
    - students being at home for a longer period of time
    - other: *Please do not give any information that could reveal your school identity or location.* (open type-text answer space)

13. Having started a new school year already, 2020-2021, do you feel that Covid-19 has had an impact on the number of bullying cases reported so far (i.e., do you feel like there have been more or less cases than you expected, when you compare to previous years)? Please explain.

- I feel the number of bullying cases has been higher than expected due to:
    - students being more frustrated and unable to cope with their feelings
    - constant changes in routines (red level, yellow level, home learning, etc.)
    - reduced social interactions with friends and family
    - other: (open type-text answer space)
- I feel the number of bullying cases has been lower than expected due to:
    - reduced social activities for the students, either in, or outside of school time
    - strict guidelines for students being separated, physically, by 1-2 meter(s)
    - class sizes being separated into smaller cohorts
    - students being at home for a longer period of time
    - students are more flexible, adaptable, or understanding of other people and the situation
    - preventative measures put into place within the school
    - other: *Please do not give any information that could reveal your school identity or location.*   (open type-text answer space)