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CONFERENCE ON THE  
HISTORY OF EDUCATION

Edited by  
Maria Simonsen & Mette Buchardt



# Nordic Journal of Educational History

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The *Nordic Journal of Educational History* (NJE d H) is an interdisciplinary international journal dedicated to scholarly excellence in the field of educational history. The journal takes special responsibility for the communication and dissemination of educational history research of particular relevance to the Nordic region (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and political and geographic entities including the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Sápmi and Åland), but welcomes contributions exploring the history of education in all parts of the world. The publishing language is English and the Scandinavian languages. The journal applies a double blind peer review procedure and is accessible to all interested readers (no fees are charged for publication or subscription). The NJE d H publishes articles as soon as they have been through the peer review and copy editing process, adding cumulatively to the content of an open issue each year. Special issues are normally published as the second issue of any given year.

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# Table of Contents

## Introduction

- Education in the History of State and Power: Transnational, National and Local Perspectives 1–3  
*Mette Buchardt & Maria Simonsen*

## Articles

- Education as Lived Welfare: A History of Experience Perspective on Children and the Welfare State 5–20  
*Pirjo Markkola*
- Giving Language to Taboos: Nation and Religion in Modern Educational Reasoning 21–36  
*Daniel Tröhler*
- Contemporary Nordic Histories of the Universities: The Renewal of An Old Field 37–44  
*Johan Östling*
- Between Tradition and Experiment: The Idea of a New University 45–58  
*Maria Simonsen*
- Does Curriculum Fail Indigenous Political Aspirations? Sovereignty and Australian History and Social Studies Curriculum 59–83  
*Mati Keynes, Beth Marsden & Archie Thomas*
- The Children's Scale in Finnish Kindergarten Interiors from 1920s to 1980s 85–106  
*Taina Sillanpää*
- Skolan som försöksverkstad: Spridning av kunskap och erfarenhet av försökundervisning i svenska pedagogiska tidskrifter 1920–1960 107–131  
*Johan Samuelsson*
- Education, Nation-State Formation and Religion: Comparing Ireland and Norway 133–156  
*Nina Volckmar*





## INTRODUCTION

# **Education in the History of State and Power: Transnational, National and Local Perspectives Special issue: The Eighth Nordic Conference on the History of Education**

*Mette Buchardt & Maria Simonsen, special issue editors*

Education has a long history of being closely affiliated with authorities. Political and economic elites have taken a particular interest in education as the venue where mindsets and worldviews were formed. Throughout history, different stakeholders have emerged, and power structures have shifted. Some of the key agents in these processes have been the church and clerical authorities, princes and sovereigns, the builders of nation-states, various groups of professionals, international organizations, as well as private agents and interest groups. In the modern age, the principal actors in the educational arena have been the state, regional and local authorities.

This special issue, containing key contributions from the Eighth Nordic Conference on the History of Education in May 2022, focuses on new research perspectives on the history of state and power relations in a local, national and transnational sense. Raising historical awareness of these developments and trajectories seems key today in a world where education is often promoted using standards, comparisons and ubiquitous technologies. Historical research in this respect offers the prospect of rewinding our understandings of education pointing out all the lost possibilities and alternatives as well as providing sensitivities for understanding resilience, counter-movements and the shifting role of the local and national in a globalized world.

### **Local, national and trans-Nordic perspectives on the history of educational knowledge and power**

Knowledge production, circulation of knowledge and actors of knowledge are a central part of understanding local as well as national and transnational power relations. The history of universities and academic versus practical knowledge production forms part of such questions. Also, they play a massive role in the institution that hosted the Eighth Nordic Conference on the History of Education.

The 2022 conference was hosted in collaboration between the history-oriented research centers at Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Aalborg University, namely *Centre for Education Policy Research (CfU)* at Department for Culture &

Learning and the research groups *Knowledge, Sustainability and Heritage* (KSH) and *Conflict, Coercion and Authority in History* (CCA) at Department for Politics and Society. It took place in the northernmost of the five bigger cities in Denmark, namely Aalborg, where Aalborg University's (AAU) main campus has been located since 1974. That AAU is placed geographically and sometimes also politically at a distance from the capital, Copenhagen (where AAU since 2003 has actually had a branch also), increases the importance of paying attention to not only local trajectories, but also how the national and transnational dimensions play into local practice historically and at present. In continuation, in this special conference issue, we introduce a research article on the history of Aalborg University, one of the first publications in a bigger research project that aims to write the history of AAU. The article "Between tradition and experiment. The idea of a new university," authored by Maria Simonsen, tells the story of how a new university was created in the academic periphery of Denmark, and which changes in understanding of what is academic knowledge this led to. As such the article also points to and is part of the recent development of university history into a broader history of knowledge.

Simonsen's text was one of several contributions at the Eighth Nordic Conference on the History of Education that approach the history of education, state and power using the perspectives from history of knowledge. Since 2015, several Scandinavian historians have integrated perspectives from the history of knowledge in their studies. Historians from Lund University, led by Johan Östling, in particular, have shown how this field in collaboration with other fields can create dynamic and innovative analyses of historical periods, events or phenomena.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore a pleasure to bring Östling's keynote-panel paper from the conference in an elaborate form. Östling's article "Contemporary Nordic Histories of the Universities: The Renewal of An Old Field" on the one hand reflects on the historiography of universities in the Nordics, and on the other elucidates the mutual and overlapping research interests between the history of education and the history of knowledge. Also, Johan Samuelsson's article "Skolan som försöksverkstad: Spridning av kunskap och erfarenhet av försökundervisning i svenska pedagogiska tidskrifter 1920–1960" can be understood as part of the recent focus on knowledge production in Nordic history of education, lifting the question of how experimental educational knowledge was circulated in the heyday of Swedish progressivism by means of pedagogy journals.

### **The Nordic states between the welfare-state model, the nation-state project and the colonial past and present**

A central theme across the conference keynotes and papers was the question of how to understand education and state relations in the Nordics and beyond in light of the different features of the state. In this issue, Pirjo Markkola contributes with her keynote on "Education as Lived Welfare. A History of Experience Perspective on Children and the Welfare State" and offers an account of how newer methodological developments within the history of experience and the history of affect and emotions can shed new light on the historical relationship between Nordic welfare states and education and upbringing. Markkola addresses the question of redress and historical

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<sup>1</sup> Johan Östling, David Larsson Heidenblad and Anna Nilsson Hammar, eds., *Forms of Knowledge: Developing the History of Knowledge* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2020).

justice processes. This question is also taken up in Matilda Keynes, Beth Marsden and Archie Thomas' article "Does curriculum fail Indigenous political aspirations? Sovereignty and Australian history and social studies curriculum." While concentrating on the question of decolonialization and redress processes in an Australian context, the article offers perspectives and ways to go forward in order to explore similar processes in the Nordic region where historical justice questions also involve the question of the colonization of the North Atlantic and Sapmi. Keynes et al.'s article shows that the Nordic Education History Conferences and fora are no longer confined to the Nordics – scholar-wise and topic-wise. Another take on the Nordic welfare-state history regarding institutions is Taina Sillanpää's article on the modern history of Finnish kindergartens, drawing attention to the role of state education beyond the school institution.

However, the Nordic states are not only understood as welfare states: They are also nation-states. With his keynote paper "Giving Language to Taboos. Nation and Religion in Modern Educational Reasoning," Daniel Tröhler invites theoretically and historically to revisit the overlooked historical relationship between crafting nation and crafting education and the even more overlooked role of religion in this context. So does Nina Volckmar with a historical comparison of mainly Catholic Ireland and mainly Lutheran Norway.

With a conference consisting of approximately 90 participants, participants from universities and other research institutions in 9 states around the globe, the Nordic Education History Conference has become a place where novel methodology and challenging problems are exchanged, something that is reflected in the selections of papers that we are proud to present as articles in this special conference issue. We look forward to continuing the development at the next future conference hosted by Stockholm University. Until then: Enjoy the reading.

### **About the editors**

Mette Buchardt is a Professor and Head of Centre for Education Policy Research (CfU), Aalborg University, Denmark. Her research comprises the interdisciplinary field of education policy history and welfare state history, including education- and social reform in the European states, e.g. modernization and secularization, and the influence of migration on welfare state development historically.

Maria Simonsen is Research Associate Professor in History, Aalborg University, Denmark. Research interests include the history of the book, publishing studies from the nineteenth century onwards, the history of knowledge and history of the university. She has published widely on the history of Scandinavian encyclopedias. Currently she is undertaking a three-year research project on the history of Aalborg University.







## Education as Lived Welfare: A History of Experience Perspective on Children and the Welfare State

*Pirjo Markkola*

**Abstract** • Drawing on recent research on lived welfare state from a history of experience perspective, this article aims to contribute to the further exploration of the education-welfare state nexus. First, experience as a historical concept is discussed in a historiographical context from the 1960s onwards. Second, the concept of lived welfare and the conceptualization of education as lived welfare are explicated. Third, concrete examples of education as lived welfare elucidate the history of experience approach to children and the welfare state. Children's encounters with their educators and the school system shape their individual and collective ways of experiencing the welfare state. Examples from historical research presented in the article suggest that the conceptualization of education as lived welfare contributes to a better understanding of citizenship, belonging, trust in society (or lack thereof) and the general formation of individual-society relationship.

**Keywords** • lived welfare state, history of experience, education, childhood, citizenship

### Introduction

In the Nordic countries, children and young people encounter the welfare state in their daily lives in daycare, at school or through various child welfare measures. Education and child welfare institutions produce, regulate and constitute children's experiences of the welfare state. The historiography of the welfare state, however, sometimes ignores the educational system or leaves it to scholars of education or scholars of children and youth. Daycare, schools and child welfare institutions can be seen as constitutive arenas of children's and young people's experiences of society; consequently, education is a crucial part of the lived welfare state.<sup>1</sup> The prefix "lived" implies that the societal reality of the welfare state is reflected and made through experiences.

History of experiences has in recent years gained increasing attention in historical research. One example is the Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence in the History of Experiences, which has been hosted by Tampere University since 2018.<sup>2</sup> The centre, called HEX, studies the role and place of experiences in society and in explaining history. Its goal is to present a novel approach, the history of experience, to explore how people's experiences are constructed, how they are interpreted and shared and

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1 Mette Buchardt, Pirjo Markkola, and Heli Valtonen, "Introduction: Education and the Making of the Nordic Welfare States," in *Education, State and Citizenship*, ed. Mette Buchardt, Pirjo Markkola and Heli Valtonen (Helsinki: Nordwel, 2013); See also, Christian Ydesen and Mette Buchardt, "Citizen Ideals and Education in Nordic Welfare State School Reforms," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

2 Based on an international evaluation, the centre was granted eight-year funding by the National Research Council in 2018–2025. For the CoE in the History of Experiences, see HEX website <https://research.tuni.fi/hex/> (accessed January 23, 2023).

how they are institutionalized and structured. The centre explores how these processes of experiencing influence people's relationships with their community and society at large. One of the three main research themes of HEX is the lived welfare state.<sup>3</sup> The title of my article, *Education as Lived Welfare*, thus reflects the theme. Drawing on recent research on the lived welfare state from a history of experience perspective, this article aims to contribute to the further exploration of the education-welfare state nexus.

This article investigates three interrelated questions: What is the history of experience, what is the lived welfare state and what is the history of education as lived welfare? I argue that history of experience is a fruitful approach not only to the multidisciplinary research of welfare states but also to the research of educational institutions. My approach to the history of experience perspective as well as to education and welfare is historiographical. It means that I use historiographical analysis as my method to explore the history of experience. First, I will discuss the historiographical context in which the history of experience has evolved since the 1960s. How was experience as a historical concept introduced, applied and criticized? More recently, the history of emotions has played a crucial role in the recent interest in the conceptualizations of experience. Second, I will turn my attention to the lived welfare state and discuss education as lived welfare. Third, I will conclude with some concrete examples of education as lived welfare and explicate the history of experience approach to children and the welfare state.

### History of experience in a historiographical context

Following the general patterns of historiography, the history of experiences builds on previous research and its criticism. The word "experience" has a long and complex history since the Age of Antiquity, as the American historian Martin Jay points out.<sup>4</sup> As an academic concept, experience has given rise to a rich variety of philosophical, psychological, sociological, literary and historical interpretations.<sup>5</sup> In this article, I am mainly interested in the ways in which historians have conceptualized experience and incorporated theoretical aspects of experience in their scholarly work.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the so-called new social history relied on experience as an important concept. The history of experience, and especially the politics of experience, are most often associated with the British New Left, and more precisely with the cultural

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3 Two other major themes are Lived Religion and Lived Nation. For recent publications, see Rob Boddice and Mark Smith, *Emotion, Sense, Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, *Lived Religion and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2021); Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki, and Tanja Vahtikari, eds., *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, eds., *Histories of Experience in the World of Lived Religion* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022); Pertti Haapala, Minna Harjula and Heikki Kokko, eds., *Experiencing Society and the Lived Welfare State* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023); *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience*, several entries.

4 Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 9–13.

5 Jay (2005), 222–34. The notion of *Erlebnis* as lived experience by the German historian and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) is worth mentioning. Some historians were inspired by his attempts to reach lived experiences in the past whereas others rejected his theories as too psychological. In 1905, Dilthey published *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (in English Poetry and Experience). Dilthey is also known for his contribution to the development of hermeneutics and his conceptualization of human sciences vs. natural sciences.

theorist Raymond Williams (1921–1988) and historian E. P. Thompson (1924–1993).<sup>6</sup> In his *Culture and Society* Williams criticized the elitist understanding of culture and proposed the alternative notion of culture as a whole way of life that is embedded in everyday experiences. For Thompson, who explored the experiences of the working classes, experience was a social fact that explained social relations and social power. Or as Thompson famously puts it in his often cited *The Making of the English Working Class*:

Class is not a thing; it is a happening. And class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.<sup>7</sup>

Thompson emphasized the agency of ordinary people and underlined the culturally and historically specific experience of class formation, thus paving the way for new approaches in social history and labour history.

Writing the history of experiences gained ground with new social history and produced several *histories from below* as an alternative to general historiography. The new social historians linked experience, social identity and politics together and allied with grassroot movements.<sup>8</sup> The *histories from below* explored not only the experiences of the working classes but also the histories of minorities and forgotten majorities. However, as early as in the 1960s, the younger generation of British Marxists turned to the writings of Louis Althusser and his structuralist Marxism. The concept of experience was heavily criticized for a lack of analytical value in historical and cultural studies.<sup>9</sup>

Thompson and his followers were also criticized by feminist historians, who argued that class was not the only defining category among the working classes and minorities. Gender, ethnicity and other categories were introduced to the history from below approach. Some feminist historians added gender to the analysis of working-class formation whereas some others sought to deconstruct the category of class. The US historian Joan W. Scott concluded Thompson's point of view: "Class consciousness was the cultural expression of men's experience of productive relations and ... it was an identifiable phenomenon."<sup>10</sup> Instead of consciousness, Scott suggested attention to discourse to understand how conceptions of class organized social experience and how representations and meanings given to material life were constructed.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1990s, poststructuralist critique and the linguistic turn successfully challenged attempts to ground historical explanations in the authenticity of experiences.

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6 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960, original 1958); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Penguin books, 1973, original 1963); For Williams' and Thompson's contributions, see. e.g., Jay (2005), 190–199; Stuart Middleton, "The Concept of 'Experience' and the Making of the English Working Class, 1924–1963," *Modern Intellectual History* 13, no. 1 (2016).

7 Thompson (1973/1963), 9.

8 Laura Lee Downs, *Writing Gender History* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2004), 30–31.

9 Jay (2005), 199–205; Middleton (2016), 180.

10 Joan W. Scott, "Women in *The Making of the English Working Class*," in Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 88.

11 Scott (1988), 88–89.

Poststructuralism emphasized the fundamental role of language, knowledge premises and social relations in shaping experience. The category of experience, as the historian Laura Lee Downs has noted, was dismissed as part of outdated social history.<sup>12</sup> In 1991, Joan W. Scott published a seminal article “The Evidence of Experience” in which she criticized the unproblematized uses of experience.<sup>13</sup> She argued convincingly that social historians had failed in their search for authentic experiences and especially in their attempts to use experience as evidence. Scott suggested that historians should rather analyse how experiences were produced discursively. According to her, discourses and ideologies produced knowledge of experience. Instead of taking experience as a starting point, experience should be something that needs to be explained.

The linguistic turn and poststructuralist theories turned the general attention of historians towards discourse analysis, in which material experiences were not interesting. The role of language was emphasized over the bodily experiences of the people in the past. Quite recently, two historians of emotions and experiences, Rob Boddice and Mark Smith, argued that “Scott was unable to see how to include the body and the brain, the feelings and the senses, unable to see beyond discourse, while retaining a grip on the historicization of everything.”<sup>14</sup> In 1991, discourse was seen as a solution, as “the root of everything” as Boddice and Smith have stated. However, Joan W. Scott’s critical point, that experiences are socially and culturally constructed, remains central for the later understanding of the history of experience.<sup>15</sup>

In the German-speaking countries, historiography advanced differently. The concept of experience was theorized to meet the challenges of the linguistic turn. The German *Erfahrungsgeschichte* utilized the potential of the German language to distinguish between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, something that the English language cannot easily express. *Erlebnis* refers to perceptions and pre-discursive experiences (often translated as lived experience) whereas *Erfahrung* refers to socially shared experiences. This distinction is possible in many languages, including the Scandinavian languages. In Swedish and Danish, we can talk about *upplevelse / oplevelse* and *erfarenhet / erfaring*, in Finnish *elämys* and *kokemus*. Experiences are formed in longitudinal processes in which “experiences pile up to form stocks of knowledge, which are transmitted between individuals, social groups, institutions, and even generations.”<sup>16</sup> The process of turning *Erlebnisse* into *Erfahrungen*, is also dependent on the person’s linguistic, social, political and cultural background, among others. As the Finnish historians Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki and Tanja Vahtikari point out, experience is understood “as a process in

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12 Downs (2004), 95. Downs also writes about “the individual-experience-to-social-identity link on which many narratives of social history rested.”

13 Joan W. Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry*, 17, no. 4 (1991).

14 Boddice and Smith (2020), 19. In 2004, Downs’ reading of Lyndal Roper (1994) pointed to the lack of histories that problematize the relationship between psychic and physical (mental life and bodily experience). Downs (2004), 173.

15 See especially Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki and Tanja Vahtikari, “Lived Nation: Histories of Experience and Emotion in Understanding Nationalism,” in Kivimäki, Suodenjoki and Vahtikari (2021), 11; Boddice and Smith (2020), 19.

16 Kivimäki, Suodenjoki and Vahtikari (2021), 11; Ville Kivimäki, ”Sodan kokemushistoria: Uusi saksalainen sotahistoria ja kokemushistorian sovellusmahdollisuudet Suomessa,” in *Ihminen sodassa: Suomalaisten kokemuksia talvi- ja jatkosodasta*, ed. Tiina Kinnunen and Ville Kivimäki (Helsinki: Minerva, 2006), 74–76.

which events and perceptions are shaped into socially shareable meanings.<sup>17</sup> They summarize one of the key points of the history of experiences. Experiences are socially and culturally constructed and shared. Moreover, experiences form layers of collective and institutionalized knowledge. Therefore, the history of experience does not locate experiences within individual minds; instead, experiences are perceived as strongly cultural, social and societal phenomena.

Many scholars developing the history of experience approach are familiar with the history of emotions, which explores emotions as social and cultural phenomena.<sup>18</sup> For the history of emotions, the constitutive role of language has been crucial. Concepts such as emotive (by William Reddy) or emotional communities (by Barbara Rosenwein) offer conceptualizations applicable to the history of experience. For example, the concept of emotional communities has inspired reflections on the “communities of experience.”<sup>19</sup> However, the historians Ville Kivimäki, Antti Malinen and Ville Vuolanto suggest one major difference between Rosenwein’s emotional communities and their own understanding of communities of experience. While emotional communities are discovered and named as research results, communities of experience are recognized and shared (but not necessarily named) by historical actors themselves. Moreover, belonging to the same communities of experience does not exclude disputes and differing interpretations of the meanings given to experiences. As a concept, communities of experience may help to understand “how subjective experiences turn into action, social relations and organizations, new identities, norms and attitudes, into political programmes and agendas.”<sup>20</sup>

Experiences as cultural, social and societal phenomena operate on many levels. Three levels of experience – everyday experience, experience as process and experience as structure – have been distinguished by the historians Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo.<sup>21</sup> Their conceptualizations inform my understanding of the concepts of experience. First and foremost, experience is not only what happens to an individual: it is also a social process. Second, experiences become social when they are acknowledged, reflected on and shared. Third, when reflected experiences are shared and confirmed, they constitute collective resources, a social stock of knowledge, and accumulate in social institutions.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo, among others, point to the temporal aspect of experiences as social structures and refer to the famous conceptualization of

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17 Kivimäki, Suodenjoki and Vahtikari (2021), 12.

18 E.g. Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Stephanie Olsen, ed., *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2015); Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Reetta Eirainen, “Emotional and Social Ties in the Construction of Nationalism: A Group Biographical Approach to the Tengström Family in Nineteenth-Century Finland,” *Studies on National Movements* 4 (2019), 1–38.

19 Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

20 Ville Kivimäki, Antti Malinen, and Ville Vuolanto, “Communities of Experience,” in *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience* (HEX Handbook). <https://doi.org/10.58077/PXX2-ER19>.

21 Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, “Introduction: Religion as Historical Experience,” in Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo (2022), 10–11.

22 Pirjo Markkola, “Working-Class Women Living Religion in Finland at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo (2022), 222; See also Kivimäki, Suodenjoki, and Vahtikari (2021), 11.

temporality by the German historian Reinhart Koselleck. Experiences as social structures “are formed based on communal memories of past experiences, and they shape both present interpretations of the world and the future expectations of individuals and entire societies.”<sup>23</sup> In general, the Koselleckian understanding of historical time as constructed in tensions between the space of experience and the horizon of expectations is shared by many historians of experience. The Finnish historians Minna Harjula and Heikki Kokko have developed “scene of experience” as their key conceptual tool to examine the social history of experiences, including the lived welfare state. For Harjula and Kokko, the scene of experience represents “the situational moment in which experiences emerge in social interaction.”<sup>24</sup> Harjula, in particular, has focused on the lived welfare state. She has analysed encounters between citizens and welfare state institutions as space, practices and societal solutions and their outcome.<sup>25</sup>

In the new history of experience,<sup>26</sup> as Rob Boddice and Mark Smith call it, many scholars are focusing on “lived histories.” Lived religion has had a relatively well-established historiographical tradition since the 1990s, when scholars of religion sought new concepts to bridge the gap between theological dogma and religious practices. Instead of relying on dichotomous concepts such as popular vs. official religion or informal vs. formal religion, they coined the concept of lived religion.<sup>27</sup> For HEX, the concepts of lived nation and lived welfare state were inspired by the promising research on lived religion. To avoid simple causalities and top-down hierarchies between people and society, the concepts of lived nation and lived welfare state connect individual, social, societal and structural experiences of the nation and the welfare state.

### Education as lived welfare

The concept of *lived welfare state* aims at seeing the building, legitimation, success and failures of the welfare state from a wider perspective combining micro-level approaches from below and a macro analysis of society.<sup>28</sup> Welfare states are constructed in both political decision-making and in the everyday practices of welfare state institutions,

23 Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo (2022), 13.

24 Minna Harjula and Heikki Kokko, “The Scene of Experience,” in *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience* (HEX Handbook). <https://doi.org/10.58077/SSXN-4N37>; Heikki Kokko and Minna Harjula, “Social History of Experiences: A Theoretical-Methodological Approach,” in Haapala, Harjula, and Kokko (2023).

25 Minna Harjula, “Framing the Clients’ Agency: Generational Layers of Lived Social Work in Finland, 1940–2000,” in Haapala, Harjula, and Kokko (2023); Minna Harjula, “Encountering Benefits for Families: Layers of Lived Social Citizenship in Finland in the 1930–40s,” in *Lived Institutions as History of Experience*, ed. Johanna Annola, Hanna Lindberg and Pirjo Markkola (Cham: Palgrave, forthcoming 2023).

26 Boddice and Smith (2020), 1, 18, 22; New history of experience, also in Josephine Hoegaerts and Stephanie Olsen, “The History of Experience: Afterword,” in Kivimäki, Suodenjoki, and Vahtikari (2021), 378–379.

27 E.g., Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Towards a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Nancy T. Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

28 See Haapala, Harjula, and Kokko (2023), 2, 8–11.

such as the educational system and people's encounters with those institutions. In daily life, the welfare state is lived through various social benefits, services and institutions, some of which date back to earlier periods. The institutions and structures of welfare provision are based on shifting constructions of the "social" and generate experiences of the individual-society relationship.<sup>29</sup> Thus, focus on the lived welfare state is not an attempt to re-introduce the history from below approach; instead, it aims to apply a more comprehensive perspective in which micro and macro analyses are integrated.

As mentioned earlier, not all published histories of the welfare state cover education and schooling. For example, when the seminal publication on Danish welfare history excluded education from welfare policies, the omission was explained by an ongoing project on the history of education.<sup>30</sup> It must be noted, however, that Nordic scholars generally recognize interconnections between education and welfare policy. For example, an edited collection of essays *Education, State and Citizenship* explicated education as part of welfare policies.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, scholars of education have pointed out certain features of the Nordic welfare model that also apply to the educational system. Four cornerstones have been highlighted by the Finnish scholars Ari Antikainen and Risto Rinne. First, citizens' equal social rights (also to education); second, public responsibility for the welfare of all citizens (also with the help of education); third, attempts to achieve economic and gender equality (also in education); and fourth, full employment as a goal (also by educational means).<sup>32</sup>

Equality has been one of the most important goals of Nordic welfare policies, but the Nordic educational systems remained strongly segregated until the comprehensive school reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. The old dual systems with their elementary schools and grammar schools were replaced by compulsory schooling lasting nine years. In Finland, for example, the former system compelled children – or their parents – to choose between a lower and a higher level of education at the age of eleven, twelve or thirteen.<sup>33</sup> Comprehensive schools provided similar basic education for the whole age group, often followed by upper secondary education. However, many elements of

29 Minna Harjula, "Eletty sosiaalityö kahden sukupolven murroskokemuksena 1940–2000," in *Sosiaalityön käänneet*, ed. Johanna Moilanen, Johanna Annola, and Mirja Satka (Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 2020); Harjula (2023); Harjula (forthcoming 2023).

30 The Danish welfare history in seven volumes excludes education, health, and housing policies. *Dansk velfærdshistorie I–VII*, ed. Jørn Henrik Petersen, Klaus Petersen, and Niels Finn Christiansen (Odense: Syddansk universitetsforlag, 2010–2014); Five volumes of Danish educational history were simultaneously in process. *Dansk skolehistorie 1–5: Hverdag, vilkår og visioner gennem 500 år*, ed. Charlotte Appel and Ning de Coninck-Smith (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2013–2015).

31 Buchardt, Markkola, and Valtonen (2013). Other examples, e.g. Arild Tjedvoll, ed., *Education and the Scandinavian Welfare State in the Year 2000* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998); Trine Øland, Christian Ydesen, Marta Padovan-Özdemir, and Bolette Moldenhawer, *State-Crafting on the Fringes – Studies of Welfare Work Addressing the Other* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2019); Mette Buchardt, "The Nordic Model and the Educational Welfare State in a European Light: Social Problem Solving and Secular-Religious Ambitions When Modernizing Sweden and France," in *The Nordic Education Model in Context. Historical Developments and Current Renegotiations*, ed. Daniel Tröhler, Bernadette Hörmann, Sverre Tveit, and Inga Bostad (New York and London: Routledge, 2023).

32 Ari Antikainen and Risto Rinne, "Ylikansalliset paineet, pohjoismainen malli ja suomalainen koulutus," in *Tiedon ja osaamisen Suomi. Kasvatus ja koulutus Suomessa 1960-luvulta 2000-luvulle*, ed. Pauli Kettunen and Hannu Simola (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2012), 444.

33 Buchardt, Markkola, and Valtonen (2013), 14.

discriminatory practices and exclusions continued in the new equal educational system.

A good quality of mass education is an integral part of equal citizenship in all democratic societies.<sup>34</sup> Albeit education, schooling and knowledge production are crucial aspects of the Nordic welfare states, it has to be stressed that the welfare state need not be a necessary part of education. In relation to state and citizenship, education has elements of lived welfare, also in countries without a welfare state or before the era of the welfare state. If citizenship is understood as “a set of practices—juridical, political, economic and cultural—which define a person or through which persons define themselves as competent members of society,” as Bryan S. Turner has suggested<sup>35</sup>, schools and other educational institutions become vital arenas on which citizenship is constructed. With this in mind, we can study how competence was defined, constructed and constituted in the daily practices of education not only in the Nordic welfare states but also in other historical or geographical contexts.

Moreover, educational systems are tied to the implementation of social justice and education policy can be executed as a tool of social change.<sup>36</sup> Studies in the history of education and knowledge production contribute to a better understanding of the multi-layered historicity of welfare states and welfare policies.<sup>37</sup> Education policies are not constructed in a societal vacuum. As changes in educational systems are linked to citizenship, equality and justice, those changes turn issues of citizenship, equality and justice into daily encounters on the grassroots level of education. Various understandings of citizenship and competence were intertwined in the classroom. That was the level on which children and their educators interacted and communicated. Scholars may ask how citizenship was communicated to children and between children and how they understood citizenship in the making of modern societies and gradually expanding welfare policies. Further, they may ask what the role of the educators in developing democracy and in schooling citizens has been and how the grassroots levels of the educational systems have seen democracy and citizenship.<sup>38</sup>

The triangle of experience, education and the welfare state is further highlighted by the Polish scholars Magdalena Slusarczyk and Agnieszka Malek. In a recent book on experiences of the welfare-migration nexus they discuss children’s education and migration.<sup>39</sup> Slusarczyk and Malek address the role of educational systems and the

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34 Ibid., 20–21.

35 Bryan S. Turner, “Contemporary Problems in the Theory of Citizenship,” in *Citizenship and Social Theory*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage Publications, 1993).

36 Arild Tjedvoll, “‘Quality of Equality’: Scandinavian Education Towards the Year 2000,” in *Education and the Scandinavian Welfare State in the Year 2000*, ed. Arild Tjedvoll (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), 3–4; Sirkka Ahonen and Jukka Rantala, “Introduction: Norden’s Present to the World,” in *Nordic Lights: Education for Nation and Civic Society in the Nordic Countries, 1850–2000*, ed. Sirkka Ahonen and Jukka Rantala (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2001), 11; Buchardt, Markkola, and Valtonen (2013), 21.

37 On the multi-layered historicity of the welfare states, see Pauli Kettunen and Klaus Petersen, “Introduction: Rethinking Welfare State Models,” in *Beyond Welfare State Models: Transnational Historical Perspectives on Social Policy*, ed. Pauli Kettunen and Klaus Petersen (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011), 3–9.

38 Some of these questions were already addressed in Buchardt, Markkola, and Valtonen (2013).

39 Magdalena Slusarczyk and Agnieszka Malek, “He Has a Better Chance Here, So We Stay’: Children’s Education and Parental Migration Decisions,” in *Migration to and from Welfare States: Lived Experiences of the Welfare-Migration Nexus in a Globalised World*, ed. Oleksandr Ryndyk, Brigitte Suter and Gunhild Odden (Cham: Springer, 2021), 87–104; Education and migration is also discussed by Jin Hui Li and Mette Buchardt, “‘Feeling Strange’: Oral Histories of Newly Arrived



quality of education in parents' decisions to migrate, stay in or return to a country. Parents' future expectations vis-à-vis their children's opportunities are crucial factors in decision-making within the families. In the parents' view, school is an important element of the welfare state.

### Lived welfare state in the classroom

The grassroots level of education includes children, young people, teachers, other adults, the material settings of school buildings and infrastructure as well as the implementation of the curriculum. In other words, it means the daily practices through which people encounter the welfare state. How have various schools and institutions shaped children's citizenship, identities and competence in the modernizing states? This question, among others, is addressed by the historian Antti Malinen and the science journalist Tuomo Tamminen in their comprehensive study on children's friendship in twentieth-century Finland. The book is based on oral histories, written memories and other documents such as school essays. Another rich study of children's experiences of school and education in the 1920s and 1930s is Saara Tuomaala's doctoral dissertation of 2004.<sup>40</sup> Many adults recall their teachers and assign them a major role in their own individual-society relationship. A fair and understanding teacher could change the future prospects of a child coming from disadvantaged circumstances. For some children, school even constituted a safe haven from risks of violence and parental abuse. Support from the educator opened wider horizons and pushed working-class children forward to better positions. Likewise, an arrogant, sarcastic, or abusive teacher could feed and foster their pupils' bitterness and negative societal attitudes.<sup>41</sup> According to oral histories, it seemed to be easy to convince a rural smallholder's son or daughter to accept their inferior role in society.

In Finland, the introduction of compulsory education in the early 1920s started to convert working hands into writing hands as the historian Saara Tuomaala has argued. Cleanliness, diligence and obedience were made the new virtues of children coming from rural and urban working-class homes. Children were also taught to control and express their emotions in civilized and gendered manners.<sup>42</sup> On the basis of documents and oral histories from working-class communities Tuomaala shows how the state entered children's daily lives. Some children were receptive to the new values represented by the educational system and enjoyed their schooldays, whereas some other children remained skeptical and even unreceptive. Moreover, Roma and Sámi children were often beyond the reach of educators and their attempts to construct a modern Finnish childhood. In her analysis, Tuomaala highlights the processual nature

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Migrant Children's Experiences of Schooling in Denmark from the 1970s," *Paedagogica Historica*, online first (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2022.2065641>.

40 Antti Malinen and Tuomo Tamminen, *Leikitääkö? Lasten kaverisuhteet 1900-luvun Suomessa* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2022); Saara Tuomaala, *Työätekevistä käsistä puhtaiksi ja kirjoittaviksi: Suomalaisen oppivelvollisuuskoulun ja maalaislasten kohtaaminen 1921–1939* (Helsinki: SKS, 2004).

41 Malinen and Tamminen (2022); Tuomaala (2004), 316–33.

42 Tuomaala (2004), 271–73; Cleanliness was introduced in primary schools throughout the Nordic countries. See e.g., Kapitel 12 "Krop og sundhed," in Anne Katrine Gjerløff, Anette Faye Jacobsen, Ellen Nørgaard, and Christian Ydesen, *Dansk skolehistorie: Da skolen blev sin egen, 1920–1970* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2014).

of children's experiences, as both preconditions and outcomes of cultural and political processes in which past, present and future were activated.<sup>43</sup>

The nascent welfare state entered the schools in the form of material aid during the interwar period. Usually, the aid was distributed by teachers. In the 1920s in Finland, primary schools were instructed to provide meals for poor children.<sup>44</sup> The aim was to improve public health and children's wellbeing. However, sometimes the well-meant portion of watery soup or porridge highlighted class-based inequalities between children. Three separate categories of children were formed: the poorest children who were served food, other hungry children who were not considered sufficiently poor to receive aid, and better-off children bringing their own sandwiches and milk bottles to school. Food aid recipients were either envied as privileged or labelled as paupers by other groups. Distribution of clothes and shoes was another ambiguous element of poor relief that was brought to the classroom. Good shoes and warm coats facilitated school attendance; nevertheless, shoes given to poor children were often wooden clogs or clumsy, squeaky boots made of inferior leather.<sup>45</sup> The sensory elements of poverty were present in the daily practices of education as everyone was able to hear when a poor child approached the others.

Teachers were not the only representatives of the welfare state whom children met at school. Municipal physicians or district nurses – sometimes deaconesses – inspected primary school children, in urban schools more regularly than in rural schools. In 1937 school health care was made the responsibility of the National Board of Education. Visits by physicians or district nurses were recalled as exciting, but they could also be humiliating.<sup>46</sup> One boy recalls a lice inspection in the 1920s. A pauper boy was brought to the fore, and he had to hand over his clothes to the visiting nurse, who picked out the lice, counted and killed them. When the boy stripped down to his underwear, everyone saw that he was wearing several layers of his parent's torn clothes under his pullover.<sup>47</sup> It is also a common memory that rural children or urban working-class children were ridiculed for their dirty hands and faces. Other children and teachers also reacted to the smell of pupils' dirty clothes and dirty bodies. Poverty could be seen and heard, but it was also smelt.

Education as lived welfare gets more nuances if we look at boarding schools for deaf children, studied by the historian Hanna Lindberg.<sup>48</sup> Boarding schools for deaf people have both facilitated and repressed the agency of the group in question. The

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43 Tuomaala (2004), 35, 307–8; Saara Tuomaala, “Maalaislasten ja – nuorten moninaiset koulutiet,” *Kasvatus & Aika* 1, no. 1 (2007), 57.

44 Tuomaala (2004), 283–87. For similar examples from England and Wales, see Laura Tisdall, “‘The School That I'd Like’: Children and Teenagers Write About Education in England and Wales, 1945–79,” in *Children's Experiences of Welfare in Modern Britain*, ed. Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor (London: University of London Press, 2021), 198–99.

45 Malinen and Tamminen (2022), 126–27.

46 Tuomaala (2004), 264, 267–68, 274–75.

47 Tuomaala (2004), 275–76; Malinen and Tamminen (2022), 129.

48 Hanna Lindberg, “National Belonging through Signed and Spoken Languages: The Case of Finland-Swedish Deaf People in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000*, ed. Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki, and Tanja Vahtikari. (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021); Lauri Julkunen has studied Eino Karlsberg's youth in Kuopio deaf school. Lauri Julkunen, “Ääni ja kansalaisuus: Eino Karlsbergin nuoruus kuurona 1894–1902,” *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 119, no. 2 (2021), 165–79.

schools founded throughout Europe and America in the 18th and 19th centuries were the foundations of deaf communities, and the origin of deaf people's political agency. Through the concentration of deaf children in these physical places, national sign languages were developed. The schools were also the foundation for the political activity of the deaf community. Children continued to socialize with each other and formed local deaf clubs. The clubs gave rise to national associations (in Finland 1905), who worked for the rights of deaf people. Schools for deaf children, however, have also been seen as the main repressive institution of the agency of deaf people. Through the introduction of oralist education, i.e., instruction in speech and lip-reading, in the late 19th century, sign language was repressed, and would only be re-introduced in deaf schools in the late 20th century.

Hierarchies between children were an obvious part of the daily life of schools. Antti Malinen's research, among others, reports that the worst-off children were often bullied, excluded from other children's play, and even battered by other children. Malinen has not found many reminiscences in which the weakest children sought support from each other and formed their own communities, but some memories reveal that it might happen. For example, two orphan Roma boys who were placed in a poorhouse, tried to protect themselves against other children's violence but were generally on the losing side. Children who had older brothers (sometimes sisters) available might be protected by their siblings, but siblings were seldom placed in the same foster families.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, foster children were without family protection.

Bullying as a concept was not used in the 1930s and 1940s, but based on school memories, bullying as a practice was condoned and sometimes even encouraged by teachers. It could be used as an educational method. Telling tales about others was considered bad behaviour by adults. If children tried to report bullying or violence occurring in the school context, they could be punished. Among children, telling tales was also wrong and equally reprehensible conduct. Children soon learned to run away or fight their fights, keep quiet and not tell tales about other children.<sup>50</sup> In this respect, children were raised to become self-sufficient citizens who did not complain about small matters and who would not betray their peers.

School represented the principal form of welfare provision for many children who spent their childhood without closer contact with benefits and services provided by the welfare state. In post-WWII Finland, children were entitled to child benefits paid to their parents, and since the 1960s and 1970s many children, mainly in urban areas, were placed in public day care before reaching school age, but rural children were beyond the reach of day care facilities. The most powerful representative of the welfare state was the educational system itself.

## Conclusions

The history of experience was commonly launched by the new social history in the 1960s and 1970s. Experience as a historical concept was applied in the histories from below, but the linguistic turn in the 1980s and 1990s shifted the scholarly focus to discourse analysis. In German historiography, the concept of experience was theorized to meet the challenges of the linguistic turn. More recently, the history of emotions has strengthened interest in the conceptualizations of experience, and the new history of

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<sup>49</sup> Malinen and Tamminen (2022), 130–32.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 143–48.

experience has been developed by several historians of lived religion, lived nation and the lived welfare state. Studies in the lived welfare state highlight the construction of welfare states not only in legislation, policies and administrative structures but also in the daily practices of welfare state institutions and people's encounters with those institutions. The institutions and structures of welfare provision generate experiences of the individual-society relationship.

In the Nordic countries, educational systems are part of the lived welfare state institutions. In the daily life of the educational systems, welfare states materialize through the ways in which children as well as their teachers, experience the school system. Experience refers to a theoretically and methodologically conceptualized study of human experiences, not to a study of authentic or essentialist experiences. Children's encounters with their teachers and the school system shape their individual and collective ways of experiencing the welfare state. At school, children share their experiences and individual encounters are turned into collective resources. Children experience society through their experiences of education. Varying material and immaterial circumstances, preconditions, factors and opportunities to shape and share experiences constitute the process of experiencing among children in the Nordic welfare states.

Experiencing welfare state education is a multilayered phenomenon. Experiencing is an inherent part of the grassroots level of the educational system in which children and young people experience circumstances, events, interactions, encounters and other aspects of their material, social and emotional surroundings. These experiences are not only intellectual. They are also physical, emotional and sensory, as well as conscious and unconscious. Experiences of the educational system become social when they are acknowledged, reflected on and shared. Experiences of education as lived welfare do not remain mere individual and social reflections. When shared, experiences constitute collective resources, a social stock of knowledge, and accumulate in social institutions.

The history of experience approach may help to see both continuities and breaks with the past in a more all-encompassing manner. School is an arena where children experience society as encounters with adults and other children, and it forms communities of experience where they share, reflect and confirm their experiences. These experiences – and previous layers of them – constitute institutions and structures which for their part define children's experiences. Experiencing can strengthen trust in society, which is a typical feature of the Nordic societies, but it can also undermine trust in society. Examples from the historical research presented in this article suggest that education as lived welfare contributes to citizenship, belonging, trust in society (or lack thereof) and the general formation of the individual-society relationship.

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# Giving Language to Taboos: Nation and Religion in Modern Educational Reasoning

Daniel Tröhler

*Abstract* • Like all taboos, nation and religion are so powerful precisely because they are often not brought to language. Educators around the world see themselves as secular, not religious, and rational, not national, and they develop their elegant, moral, and bland arguments precisely on this premise. This is, of course, capable of gaining majority support because it keeps the sociological machinery of educational thinking stably alive, but epistemologically it is unsatisfactory. Educational reasoning is sometimes as elegant as the freestyle of a virtuoso ice skater, sometimes as captivating as a rhetorically gifted village preacher, sometimes as clumsy as a plow horse that thinks it is a dressage horse. Some are the stars in the arena of academic education, others the moralizers, and others the bland extras. This rather simple sociology of educational reasoning emphasizes the different roles that Academics occupy in what Fleck called a “thought collective,” but it obscures that “thought collectives” share common “thought styles” in which, often carefully administered by national professional associations, truth is produced. In education, these “thought collectives” have historically been shaped by two fundamental elements. They are veritable taboo subjects, which are presupposed but hardly ever reflected upon, namely religion and nation.

*Keywords* • nation, taboos, history of collective education, educational thinking.

*The author of this article was invited by the guest editors to write this reflective overview based on a keynote held at the Eighth Nordic Conference on the History of Education. However, this article has been subjected to double-blind peer review.*

## Introduction

Nation and religion are two of the great taboos in modern educational thinking, acting, organising.<sup>1</sup> They determine the way we perceive education as education, and they have all the more influence the more we keep silent about them. In this sense, it is particularly interesting to deal with them, to give them language. By “giving them language,” I do not mean things that are kept quiet even though they are known, such as private wealth, incest, or a criminal past. It is not about the eloquent silence, but about a silence of something of which one is not really aware.

My overall topic concerns our performances of thoughts, discussions, practices, and institutions in education.<sup>2</sup> The overarching thesis is that because we – researchers

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This article is based on a keynote address on occasion of the 8th Nordic Education History Conference at the University of Aalborg, Denmark, May 25–27, 2022. In order to maintain the original character of the lecture, only a few changes have been made for this written version.

- 1 It may seem superfluous to emphasize that I am not concerned here with the hidden nationalism in history or geography textbooks, nor with religious education in any form. However, for the sake of certainty, I like to underline that it is about the epistemology of educational research as such.
- 2 For the particular educational historiographic aspect of religion and nation, taking the case of Johann Ignaz von Felbiger and “his” normal method, see Jil Winandy, *National and Religious Ideologies in the Construction of Educational Historiography: The Case of Felbiger and the Normal Method in Nineteenth Century Teacher Education* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

in education, but also politicians, school teachers, administrators and even most parts of the populations in Western countries – think of ourselves as children of the Enlightenment, we believe our educational performances in particular in research to be largely factual and value-neutral. In doing so, however, we are mistaken, and our false assumptions about ourselves multiply the unspoken religious and national presuppositions that govern our thinking, our discussions, our practices, our educational institutions. My more concrete thesis, therefore, is that, in education, we start from unspoken, taken-for-granted assumptions, which are usually both religious (or denominational) and national. Our educational performances are thus framed by both, a denominational and a national, that is denomi-national discourse, that enables us to talk, think, and act, but that also makes it difficult for us to address it because, after all, it is precisely this discourse that enables us to act as experts in this constructed field. We perform the denomi-national discourse<sup>3</sup>, but we rarely think about the stage that makes our performance possible in the first place.

The discussion of the thesis has to do with historical consciousness. Historical consciousness is not the same as historical knowledge, such as that Denmark enacted school laws in 1814 but Sweden not until 1842, that the first non-German professors of education were Finnish nationalist Hegelians, and that one of the last Western countries to establish a chair of education was Norway, which filled the position with one of the first female professors ever, the psychologist Helga Eng, in 1938. Taken in isolation, the Finnish Hegelians of the 19th century are as insignificant as the first German professor of education, Ernst Christian Trapp; the Norwegian Helga Eng; or, similarly, the introduction of test psychology at Teachers College around 1900, the emergence of the comprehensive school in the Nordic countries after World War II, or the advent of PISA after 2000. They only become interesting when we understand them as events in the stream of history that were shaped by underlying discourses contending for dominance and that could have gone differently.

I am not suggesting that most publications on the history of education are conceived and written in a way that reflects the conditions under which the issues under study were able to become events in the first place (and silencing other options) that can be studied today. I suspect that it is the failure to consider, or the silencing of, these discursive contextual conditions of the objects of study that result in the limited interest that these studies in the history of education tend to generate. My point is that this kind of historical awareness is crucial to writing not only something interesting but something relevant. Personally, I have found it both interesting and relevant to understand how test psychologists working for PISA can be seen as Cold War-motivated, nationalist-imperial, U.S.-American activists whose socio-epistemology is ultimately grounded in Scottish Presbyterianism.<sup>4</sup> It has helped me explain the general number crunching, the belief in evidence, and the tendency to delegate decisions to so-called experts who did

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3 For the present context, I regard “discourse” as largely identical with “*langue*” (Pocock, 1987), “thought style” (Fleck, 1935/1979) or “style of reasoning” (Hacking, 1992).

4 Daniel Tröhler and Veronika Maricic, “Data, Trust and Faith: The Unheeded Religious Roots of Modern Education Policy,” in “Re-reading the OECD and Education: The Emergence of a Global Governing Complex,” edited by Tore Bernt Sorensen, Christian Ydesen and Susan L. Robertson, *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 19, special issue no. 2 (2021).

not emerge in the field of education until the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> This particular case of changing governance systems in education brings me to the core of my topic: nationalism and religion are often overlooked, ignored, unreflective preconditions for events, institutions, practices, and research that shape our educational performances.

The method for identifying such unspoken ideological-discursive contexts that frame us and our educational field differs from methods that are case-based, such as the reconstruction of the ideological and methodological roots of PISA. One has to be provocative, to lure these framing presuppositions out of their speechless hideaway in order to put them into words. Since this affects all of us in our self-understanding as educational researchers and teachers, we will have to reckon with resistance, with counterevidence, and also with the fact that the research findings will be met with ironic scepticism or quiet ignorance, with a pained smile or a shrug of the shoulders.

I would like to make my thesis plausible in four steps before I end my considerations with a short outlook. First, I aim to make clear how nationalised we are when we work academically in education (1). Second, out of courtesy or foolhardiness, I will refer to the Nordic states and ask if the same applies here (2). In a subsequent step, I will show how one of our objects of research, school systems, reflects the social philosophy inherent in religion (3). This will allow me, in the last substantive step, to address the denomi-national nature of our educational culture (4). At the very end, I will briefly discuss those who do research and their task of talking about what makes their performance possible (5).

### **The national(ised) academic author**

I begin with the aspect for which, admittedly, it is relatively easy to list counterexamples. Yet, I call these counterexamples exceptions to an effective epistemological phenomenon that I associate with the keyword “nation”. This includes observations that may seem like truisms and therefore not even worth mentioning, but we must be careful because truisms hold many secrets about our more-or-less secular belief systems. I will focus on four aspects: the *careers* of a typical academic author, on his or her research *topics*, on his or her *associations*, and on publication *organs*, through which research is made accessible. I assume that these aspects point relatively clearly to the national framing of a typical academic existence that is actually reproduced in university educational institutions.

*Authors' careers:* If we look back over the last 50 years, we can see that renowned professors have been appointed by universities in countries where they grew up. Diane Ravitch is American and worked in the US, Tomas Englund is Swedish and worked in Sweden, Heinz-Elmar Tenorth is German and worked in Germany, Antoine Prost is French and works in France, Marc Depaepe is Belgian and works in Belgium, and so on. Yes, there is counterevidence, and we can name perhaps 20, 30, or 40 – within some 2000 or 3000 less famous examples than the ones mentioned above and that support the observation. It may well be that, recently, things have changed at the postdoc level, but as a rule, these postdocs return to their home-countries after a couple of years being abroad.

*Authors' topics:* Usually, research focusses on domestic individuals, events, or institutions, and this is the case with Ravitch, Englund, Tenorth, Prost, and Depaepe,

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5 Daniel Tröhler, “Change Management in the Governance of Schooling: The Rise of Experts, Planners, and Statistics in the Early OECD,” *Teachers College Record* 116, no. 9 (2014a).

as well as with the vast majority of other authors who work their fingers to the bone in order to avoid getting drowned in the publication-driven business of academia. Again, there is counterevidence, but not too much. Here, in this context, it will be objected that in the north of Europe articles and chapters often cover more than one country. Often these cross-national essays or chapters are written by multiple authors, each describing their own country, such as – I only mention this example because it is a very good chapter – a recent paper covering the three nation-states of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, written by three authors who – you guessed it – work in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, respectively, and hold the respective citizenship: Magnus Hultén, Harald Jarning, and Jens Erik Kristensen’s “From Knowledge to Skills and Competence: Epistemic Reconfiguration in Nordic Basic Education, 1980–2020”.<sup>6</sup>

*Authors’ associations:* My talk is in the context of a conference organised by an association, and most researchers first make their research visible in conference posters or papers. These conferences are usually organised at the national level, such as AERA (American Educational Research Association), CIES (Comparative and International Education Society), DGfE (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft*), or BERA (British Educational Research Association). Again, there are actual or at least apparent exceptions, like our Nordic Education History Conference, or like ECER, which is organised by the European Educational Research Association and creates a transnational European forum for research. But it is such a thing with internationality, which always presupposes nationality, that membership in ECER presupposes membership in (and thus the existence of) a national association.

Even Luxembourg, which has only had its own university since 2003, has formed a national society for the sole purpose of becoming a member of EERA and thus enabling reduced ECER conference fees for people doing research in Luxembourg. And we also see that Northern Europe, with its NERA, is indeed an exception, although not an entirely flawless one: Finland has a Finnish Educational Research Association (FERA) in addition to NERA, and Sweden has a Swedish Educational Research Association (SWERA). In the UK, of course, there are also two associations: the British BERA and the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA). The same seems to be true for Cyprus with its CESA and CERA. National organisations are prevalent and sometimes hidden, but effective. Internationality is often a stirrup holder for nationality.

*Authors’ publications:* National associations aim to bring together researchers, mainly those who work in the country, and these are usually researchers with the same nationality as the association. They provide the space for the cultivation of what, following Ludwik Fleck,<sup>7</sup> is called a “thought collective,” which in turn cultivates a particular “thought style.” This starts with the calls for papers, the peer review processes, and the selections of experts, and this goes on to posters, individual presentations, whole panels, and, perhaps to a lesser degree, keynotes. But this is only the first step, for it then goes into the publication phase 2.0.: the printing phase. Who are the editors; what is the publication organ, the journal, or the book series; and by which publisher? Take the example of the most highly endowed journal, the *Review of Educational*

6 Magnus Hultén, Harald Jarning and Jens Erik Kristensen, “From Knowledge to Skills and Competence: Epistemic Reconfiguration in Nordic Basic Education, 1980–2020,” in *The Nordic Education Model in Context: Historical Developments and Current Renegotiations*, ed. Daniel Tröhler et al. (New York: Routledge, 2022), 236–54.

7 Ludwig Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, ed. Thaddeus J. Trenn and Robert K. Merton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, original 1935).

*Research*. This journal is an organ of an association that organises meetings, but these are not meetings for an international organisation but a national, perhaps imperial one: AERA, and this journal is managed exclusively by US-Americans in terms of content and editing.

The same observation can be made using almost any other example, such as the Comparative International Education Society (CIES) and its *Comparative Education Review*. Sometimes there are no national associations behind a nationally characterised journal, such as the English *Journal of Research in International Education* (JRIE); the Spanish *Revista de Investigación Educativa* (Journal of Educational Research); or the Swedish *Pedagogisk forskning i Sverige* (Educational Research in Sweden), a journal focusing on Swedish topics with an editorial board that is made up of people from Linnaeus University and supported by a national council, the *Medlemmar i tidskriftens nationella råd* (Members of the Journal's National Council). There are exceptions, like the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE) and its affiliated journal, *Paedagogica Historica*, but these are exceptions. The publication of research is, not only in journals, very often and as a rule, nationally connoted.

Evidently, the institutionalised author in education research is a largely nationalised one.

### **The Nordic context: the exception?**

Two objections may now be raised, namely that here in the North this situation is largely different and that it seems only natural that researchers – especially those in historical educational research – should concern themselves with national topics. This makes sense given that archives are nearby and that students, who will not infrequently go into the teaching profession, are interested in national school history rather than international history.

The second objection, the naturalness of working with local, regional, or national archives rather than those abroad, is tricky because the “natural” is one of those things where we tend to get trapped. Beyond the fact that libraries and archives are never organised on universal rational principles,<sup>8</sup> on closer observation, the “natural” often turns out not to be natural at all but “cultural,” and by that an expression of power relations. It is no coincidence that when someone wants to become a citizen somewhere else the procedure for doing so is called “naturalisation”; although this process is just a matter of going to a state, becoming familiar with its basic cultural principles – the nation, and making them one’s own. And that is, at least in part, an educational process with moral components, which again is quite different in many places.

I limit myself to the Nordic countries. Norway, for example, requires that someone has lived in Norway for at least seven years without a criminal record, has learned the Norwegian language, and has familiarised themselves with Norwegian culture and values; this is then assessed in a test in which he or she is asked about citizenship issues and social studies. Sweden, on the other hand, does not require proof of language skills, knowledge of the country, financial independence, or a written or oral “declaration of loyalty”: One has only to prove a minimum stay of five years and the residence

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8 Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

permit must be permanent, their identity must be clearly proven, and they must have no outstanding debts to the state or criminal misconduct in Sweden. The situation in Denmark is quite different again. There, a permanent residence of nine years is required; no tax debt; no entry can exist in the criminal record; and a language, history, and tradition test must be passed; in addition, the existence of a legal source of income must be proven, and an oath of allegiance to the Danish Constitution must be taken. Finland is somewhere in between, with quite some importance laid on language skills that have to be proven in a test. So much for naturalness, which so often contains whole systems of cultural values.

National-cultural peculiarities, which can hide behind arguments of “naturalness,” can evidently be found behind supra-national constructions of different nation-states, too. According to the Norwegian and Finnish historians Øystein Sørensen and Bo Stråth, *Norden* is such a cultural construction,<sup>9</sup> and according to the Danish historian Mary Hilson, the Nordic model is a model with five exceptions, each of the nation-states in question being an exception.<sup>10</sup> This exceptionalism can be evidenced in two ways: either all members involved want to be different from each other – this is the normal characteristic of all nation-states – or they are exceptional because they work more closely together than others in many ways. According to this second view, the inhabitants of the Nordic countries are often confident of not being as nationally limited as their European brothers and sisters in Italy, Hungary, France, or Germany, as they are part of the “Nordic model,” more social, more democratic, more emancipatory, and less violent<sup>11</sup> (though they make up for it with their flourishing business of writing brutal and gruesome crime novels). Yet, an extra-Nordic view of Northern Europe does show national differences – the exceptionalism of the first reading, as one can see ironised in the *Atlas of Prejudices*.<sup>12</sup>

Sport is of course also part of a nation’s cultural self-image. As for national sports, it is ski jumping and pesäpallo in Finland; hockey and football in Sweden; skiing, foremost cross-country skiing, in Norway; and football in Denmark. Yet, the best Nordic football player is probably not the Danish Michael Laudrup, but the Swedish son of Bosnian immigrants, Zlatan Ibrahimović, and his leading position might, one day, be challenged by the Norwegian Erling Haaland. In turn, the Danes beat the Germans in the final of the 1992 European Football Championship, almost making up for the disgrace of 1864, when they lost Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia. I have been told that these two dates, 1864 and 1992, are central landmarks of Danish national consciousness. And both events took place without the help of their Nordic brothers and sisters.

Sport and identity may be a subject with which many intellectuals do not want to deal. Perhaps this is because they themselves are unsporting or else because they distrust the overt nationalism often associated with sport – for instance, at world championships or the Olympics – even though they are not in favour of globalisation, either. Between nationalism and globalism, the construction of the North lends itself

9 Øystein Sørensen and Bo Stråth, eds., *The Cultural Construction of Norden* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997).

10 Mary Hilson, *The Nordic Model: Scandinavia Since 1945* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008).

11 Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

12 Yanko Tsvetkov, *Atlas of Prejudice: The Complete Stereotype Map Collection* (S.l.: Alphadesigner, 2017).

precisely to emphasising otherness vis-à-vis the rest of the world while also practising national differences, perhaps without paying too much attention to them, for these can be considerable, especially in the field of education.

These differences become evident in education policy, where Sweden has departed the furthest from the model called the Nordic model of education developed in the post-war period.<sup>13</sup> Private schooling is flourishing in Sweden, including at the elementary level,<sup>14</sup> and individual achievement and selection have again become basic principles that have eclipsed ideas of cooperation.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps this phenomenon becomes even clearer in our field of research. If we look at the *Nordic Network for Historians of Education*, we see that this network is part of the *Uppsala Studies of History and Education* (SHED), that is in the hand of a national group of researchers. The undeniable Swedish dominance in the field of history of education can also be seen in the editorial staff of the *Nordic Journal of Educational History*, who are, so to say, all located in Sweden, except for Johannes Westberg, who recently left Örebro for Groningen.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, the *Nordisk tidsskrift for pedagogikk og kritikk* (Nordic Journal for Pedagogy and Criticism) is, like the *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education*, firmly in the hands of the Norwegians. The *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* and *Nordic Studies in Education* are the exceptions as it has members on its editorial boards who come from all the Nordic countries, even from Iceland.

### Educational systems and the social philosophy of religion

Next to the national taboo, we now need to speak of the religious, which is closely interconnected with the first, as a short glance at contested parts of the world makes clear. In 2020, the Turkish President Erdogan re-staged the reversion of the world-famous Hagia Sophia into a mosque to please his faithful Muslim voters. In February 2022, President Putin got support for his war in the Ukraine by the Moscow Patriarch Kyrill I. Some 30 years ago in the Yugoslavian countries, you would not only find peoples trying to create autonomous nation-states, but these also according to three religious affiliations: the Catholic, the Orthodox, and the Muslims. For many decades now, we have been seeing a religious conflict in Northern Ireland and British or Irish Republican Nationalism. We are also seeing how the authorities in Burma are chasing Muslims out of the Buddhist country; how India's President Modi has declared Muslims to be second-class Indian

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13 Lisbeth Lundahl, "Marketization of the Urban Educational Space," in *Second International Handbook of Urban Education*, ed. William T. Pink and George W. Noblit (Cham: Springer, 2017).

14 Hultén, Jarning and Kristensen (2023); Malin Ideland, "Google and the End of the Teacher? How a Figuration of the Teacher is Produced Through an Ed-tech Discourse," *Learning, Media & Technology* 46, no. 1 (2021); Malin Ideland and Margareta Serder, "Edu-business Within the Triple Helix. Value Production Through Assetization of Educational Research," *Education Inquiry* 14, no. 3 (2022).

15 Åsa Melander, "The Educationalization of the Swedish Welfare State and the Expectations of School Teachers," in *The Nordic Education Model in Context. Historical Developments and Current Renegotiations*, ed. Daniel Tröhler et al. (New York: Routledge, 2023).

16 While this paper is being revised (October 2022), news has spread that a Norwegian Education History Network (*Utdanningshistorie i Norge*) was being planned, for the time being based at the USN (Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge). This may break up the Swedish dominance somewhat, but of course, not the principle of the national in organising and framing research.

citizens;<sup>17</sup> and how the same has been happening in Israel, not only with Arab Israelis but also with African Jews who practise a distinct form of Judaism.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, the idea that these religious phenomena connected to national aspirations concern only others and not us is misleading, for what we see in these “other places” are simply aggressive manifestations of what we all nourish across the world with everyday symbols and practices that can be labelled “banal”.<sup>19</sup> A good first clue – for Northern Europe – is apparent on the national flags of the Nordic countries: they all carry the Christian cross.

These flags represent the national identity of the respective nation-state through the symbol of Christianity. In research, national flags are “described as modern objects of worship and as the extension of a secular form of divinity.”<sup>20</sup> This is mirrored in the constitutions. In those of Denmark and Norway, it is stated that the king shall be a member of the Lutheran Church and the state church shall be Lutheran. They are in quite good company, by the way; the German Constitution starts with “Aware of his responsibility before God and man,” and the Swiss Constitution starts: “In the name of God Almighty!” Across the Atlantic, “In God We Trust” is the official motto of the United States.<sup>21</sup> And, let us not forget, many people in the North decorate their Christmas tree with the national flags.

It can be argued that flags date back centuries and that people now live in a secular age governed by educated, rational citizens informed by modern science – like our self-image as researchers. However, we are well advised to be cautious about the secularisation thesis, as we are told by an array of scholars, among them Mette Buchardt’s work.<sup>22</sup> We should at least distinguish between institutional secularisation and cultural secularisation, that is, between the decline of the church as an institution in shaping public and private life and people’s religious attitudes or dispositions that in modern times are often related to the nation.<sup>23</sup> To equate these two different kinds of secularisation is more or less wishful thinking on the part of Western intellectuals and actually a poor premise for good historiography.

17 Fazal Rizvi, “Nationalism, Populism and Education in a Globalizing India,” in *World Yearbook of Education 2022: Education, Schooling and the Global Universalization of Nationalism*, ed. Daniel Tröhler, Nelli Piattova and William F. Pinar (New York: Routledge, 2022), 185–200.

18 Marva Marom, “A Second Exodus: Ethiopian Jews in Israel Between Religion, Nation and State,” in “Education, ‘Doing Nation,’ Nation Building and the Development of National Literacies,” ed. Daniel Tröhler, *Croatian Journal of Education* 22, special issue no. 2 (2020).

19 Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995)

20 Gabriella Elgenius, *Symbols of Nations and Nationalism: Celebrating Nationhood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 28.

21 US Congress, House, Reaffirming “In God We Trust” as the Official Motto of the United States Resolution of 2011, H Res. 13, 112th Cong., 1st sess., introduced in House January 26, 2011, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-112hconres13rh/pdf/BILLS-112hconres13rh.pdf>

22 Mette Buchardt, “Lutheranism and the Nordic States,” in *Luther: Zeitgenössisch, Historisch, Kontrovers*, ed. Richard Faber and Uwe Puschner (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017); Mette Buchardt, “Between ‘Dannelse’ and ‘Real Life’. National Cultural Christianity in a Nordic Cold War Education Reform Process,” *International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 10, no. 2 (2020a); Mette Buchardt, “The Political Project of Secularization and Modern Education Reform in ‘Provincialized Europe’: Historical Research in Religion and Education beyond Secularization, R.I.P.,” *International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 11, no. 2 (2021).

23 Daniel Tröhler, “Secularization, the Education of the Heart, and the Modern Nation-State: The Case of Swiss Reformed Protestantism and its European Resonance” (forthcoming).



Most researchers of nationalism point either to the religious roots of nationalism or at least to the fact that under nationalism the nation has become sacralised. For example, in his book *Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Anthony D. Smith defines the nation as “a community of faith and as a sacred communion.”<sup>24</sup> This idea is not new and can be traced back to Rousseau’s concept of civil religion in his *Social Contract*<sup>25</sup> or to Durkheim’s sociology of religion. Durkheim’s book on the concept addresses the absolute social necessity of modern rituals and ceremonies for the moral conduct of societies’ members.<sup>26</sup> This again corresponds to one of the relatively uncontroversial definitions of the “nation,” by the eminent French intellectual Ernest Renan in 1882, which rejected all quasi-ontological definitions of the nation because the “nation is a soul, a spiritual principle.”<sup>27</sup>

Few state institutions are as clearly defined to give permanence to the sacralised nation as the school, whether in school laws, curricula, textbooks, transitional arrangements, or teacher training. One can limit oneself to the most formal aspect of the school, the structure, where the close relationship between religion and education is perhaps most obvious. Further above, I have touched upon the Nordic comprehensive school model, which has been strongly under pressure in Sweden for some years and which separates students through a selection process as late as possible. A comparison with systems in conservative Catholic and Calvinist countries or regions reveals how strongly this has to do with religiously conditioned sociopolitical ideas.

Consider the Free State of Bavaria in southeastern Germany, which, like all other German states, has sovereignty over the education system. At the bottom, there is the kindergarten, which is not state organised but offered by foremost religious organisations: kindergarten for children between the ages of four and six is seen as an institution of moral, value, and social education. Kindergarten is followed by the elementary school, a comprehensive school that lasts four years, from Year 1 to Year 4. After these four years, at the age of ten, students are then selected for the three tracks of the secondary school, either *Mittelschule*, *Realschule*, or *Gymnasium*. The *Mittelschule* prepares students for lower vocational training, the *Realschule* for more demanding professions, and the *Gymnasium* for university. With some minor differences, the same system is used in Austria.

Hence, while the Lutheran-dominated Nordic countries with the idea of comprehensive schools tend to educate children together for some ten years and select children only at the age of sixteen, children in some conservative Catholic countries are selected at the age of ten, with, as we know, decisive consequences for their future life. Conversely, it is true that Calvinist countries have comprehensive schools as the Lutheran countries do, but in these Calvinist countries, there is often an elaborated elitist private school system, which stratifies the student population socially from birth,

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24 Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 24.

25 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Social Contract,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Social Contract and the First and the Second Discourses*, ed. Susan Dunn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, original 1762).

26 Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915, original 1912), 427.

27 Ernest Renan, *Qu’est-ce qu’une Nation?* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1882), 27.

so to speak. This reflects the Calvinist conviction in a weak state and high personal responsibility, so that the state is primarily concerned with the unprivileged children. In these countries, the idea of school vouchers has become popular, according to which tax money should not go to schools but given to parents, who then decide to which school their children should go and pay for it with these vouchers. This system, therefore, favours the already privileged families who have the time to take their children to distant schools in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon, once again manifesting the Calvinist ideas of personal responsibility, individual merit, and little state interference.

On a very mundane level, then, it becomes apparent that even the formal structure of national school systems reflects at least a part of the prevailing religious denomination and its inherent ideas of social structure and justice. But it is not only about denomination, as there are also national peculiarities within a denominational realm, for instance in Lutheranism.

### Denomi-national configurations of schooling

Not all Calvinist countries have strong private school systems, and not all Catholic countries practise early selection. While the school systems can have visibly basic religious structures, they also have national idiosyncrasies or configurations. This can be shown in the Lutheran realm by looking at differences between the Nordic states – which I will collectively pull together for simplicity’s sake – and the Lutheran parts of Germany.

The differences I am interested in can be imagined, for example, in the concept of “people”. While the Nordic states have a conception of *folket* that is more-or-less comprehensive or encompassing, in Lutheran Germany, the collective term *Volk* meant the great mass of people below the nobility and the upper bourgeoisie who was to remain excluded from political participation. In the Nordic states, in contrast, we find a popular but non-populist tendency directed against the nobility, which exerted the most influence in Sweden and Denmark, or against the civil servant elite, which dominated in Norway.<sup>28</sup> In a constellation that must have seemed very strange to Germany, absolutists in Sweden in the 17th century insisted on a coalition of king and peasants against the nobility; in Denmark, and later also in Norway, the insistence was on a coalition of king and citizens.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, Nordic societies have hardly ever experienced anti-parliamentarian mass mobilisation.<sup>30</sup> This was quite different in Germany, where higher education led to strong social mobility from the upper middle classes to the aristocracy (*Bildungsbürgertum*), with a strong demarcation “against the bottom”. This largely social and political exclusion of the *Volk* in turn led to massive unrest and protests of the “lower classes,”<sup>31</sup> which could only be appeased towards the

28 Daniel Tröhler, “The Nordic Education Model: Trajectories, Configurations, Challenges,” in *The Nordic Education Model in Context: Historical Developments and Current Renegotiations*, ed. Daniel Tröhler et al. (New York: Routledge, 2023).

29 Sørensen and Stråth (1997), 7.

30 Henrik Stenius, “The Good Life is a Life of Conformity: The Impact of Lutheran Tradition on Nordic Political Culture,” in *The Cultural Construction of Norden*, ed. Øystein Sørensen and Bo Stråth (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997), 170; Martin Schröder, *Integrating Varieties of Capitalism and Welfare State Research* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 144–57.

31 Richard Tilly, “Unruhen und Proteste in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Kapital, Staat und*

end of the 19th century with Bismarck's top-down social legislation.

This constellation has to do with a national interpretation of Luther's rather implicit two-worlds doctrine, according to which the world on earth may be ruled unjustly, without criticism or even rebellion being allowed, while the world in heaven is just. This, in turn, has resulted in a specific, strong reason of state that has also become visible in the education system, as the example of 18th Prussia shows. But why? In the first half of the 18th century, Prussia had developed from a rather unimpressive electorate into a serious European monarchy within the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, challenging not only Catholic France outside the empire but also Catholic Habsburg, the traditional leader of the Holy Roman Empire. In doing so, one was especially concerned in how the cultural form of barbarism ascribed to the Germans since Tacitus' *Germania* (AD 98/1999) – which was attributed by Western intellectuals to all forms of life in Eastern Europe and Russia<sup>32</sup> – was put into perspective: Eastern Europe was to begin east of Prussia, but without ascribing Prussia to the antithesis of barbarism, to Western civilization:<sup>33</sup> As an alternative to barbarism and Western civilization, the Prussians claimed to represent a culture (*Kultur*) whose core was not modern, useful scientific knowledge, but, for the upper ranks, *Bildung*.<sup>34</sup> This double anti-Catholic and anti-barbarism front demanded discipline and efficiency and was enabled not only by the development of a disciplined army, but also by an efficient, pietistic model of *Volks*-education<sup>35</sup> that provided a loyal mass from which to recruit for both the lower local administration of the state and the army. The elite of the state administration and the army, however, remained reserved for the nobility and the upper middle class, who raised their children at home.

Accordingly, the widely admired education system in Prussia in the 18th and 19th centuries had been established for the *Volk* and not the *folket*. After 1800, when the *baccalaureate* was established as a prerequisite for entrance to university, the state continued to organise the normal free education system for the *Volk*, whereas the *Gymnasien* offered paid preschools, in which the elementary school children of privileged parents were taught, among other subjects, Latin. Latin competence, in turn, was a prerequisite for transfer to the *Gymnasium*, which led to the *baccalaureate*, which in turn was the condition of entry to the university, university degrees being a prerequisite for the higher civil service positions in the state. Their catchword was

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*Sozialer Protest in der Deutschen Industrialisierung. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. Helmut Berding, Jürgen Kocka and Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 143–74.

32 Wolff, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

33 The vulnerability of this cultural anti-Western and anti-barbarian self-assertion was demonstrated three days after the German invasion of Belgium in August 1914. The French philosopher Henry Bergson, who had indeed admired German “culture,” wrote as a reaction to the German aggression: “The struggle against Germany is the very struggle of civilisation against barbarism,” to which Germany had “relapsed” (Bergson [1914] 1972, 1102).

34 A text by Moses Mendelssohn in 1784 shows how these terms were perceived as new: “The words enlightenment, culture (*Kultur*), *Bildung* are still new arrivals in our language. They belong before the hand merely to the book language. The common crowd hardly understands them.” Nevertheless, Mendelssohn believed that they represented facts of the sociable culture (*geselliges Leben*) that indeed distinguished the Germans from others (Mendelssohn 1784).

35 Mette Buchardt, “Church, Religion, and Morality,” in *A Cultural History in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Daniel Tröhler (London: Bloomsbury, 2020b).

not *Pflicht* (duty), as in the case of *Volks*-education, but *Bildung*, the aesthetic inward perfection of the individual soul, ideally conveyed through Greek and Roman antiquity.

This dual educational policy was legitimised by a particularistic educational philosophy, a *Bildungs-philosophie*, that still receives almost undivided approval in Germany, at least from educational researchers.<sup>36</sup> The most frequently cited super-father of the style of thinking that configures around or epitomises this notion of *Bildung* is Wilhelm von Humboldt. As with many other heroes of educational history, Humboldt is quoted more often than he is read. He is reduced to two or three quotes, with one standing out:

The true end of Man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal and immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development [*Bildung*] of his powers to a complete and consistent whole.<sup>37</sup>

This quote is not about knowledge or skills, but about *Bildung* understood as an inward harmonious whole of inherent powers. It reflects Lutheran dualism, according to which the inwardness of man is sharply separated from his physical and material world. That is why, in this text, Humboldt refuses the implementation of a constitution which makes equal citizens out of different people. The decisive issue is never the “outer,” the political, but the “inner,” the aesthetical, which is to be *gebildet*. This is not to be done, however, through knowledge, empiricism, social interaction, or democracy, but through the inward aesthetical experience, which was seen exemplarily realised in Greek antiquity, and this had curricular consequences insofar as the *Gymnasium* focussed strongly on the mastery of Greek and Latin in order to make *Bildung* possible for the elite.<sup>38</sup>

This dual structure is still somehow at play today. Most of the Lutheran dominated states (*Bundesländer*) in Germany have, like the Nordic countries, a comprehensive school, but it is one that runs parallel to the *Gymnasium*, aiming at *Bildung*. This reveals a nationally conditioned internal Lutheran difference. Whereas in Germany, with its socially stratified idea of *Volk*, questions of democracy related to education were hardly ever discussed, in the Nordic countries, with their clearly more comprehensive understanding of *folket* (again, I ignore the intra-Nordic differences), there was much more interest in the connection between education and democracy.<sup>39</sup>

### Outlook: Giving language to the denomi-national frame of education performances

When we are to perform education in thought, talk, organisation, or research, we perform nation and religion by implementing their hidden or inscribed values and norms in the institutions and theories. As alleged children of the Enlightenment –

36 Rebekka Horlacher, *The Educated Subject and the German Concept of Bildung: A Comparative Cultural History* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

37 Wilhelm von Humboldt, *The Spheres and Duties of Government* (London: John Chapman, 1865, original 1792).

38 Daniel Tröhler, “The German Idea of *Bildung* and the Anti-Western Ideology,” in *Theories of Bildung and Growth: Connections and Controversies Between Continental European Educational Thinking and American Pragmatism*, ed. Paul Siljander, Ari Kivelä and Ari Sutinen (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012), 149–64.

39 Stråth, Bo. *Language and the construction of class identities. The struggle for discursive power in social organisation: Scandinavia and Germany after 1800* (Gothenburg: Department of History, 1990).

I come back to my overarching thesis, we have little sensitivity to either nation or religion, certainly not when it comes to ourselves. Religion and nationalism concern not us, but others: the people in the near and far neighbouring countries, who are labelled as nationalists while we may be patriots, or the migrants who come to us, who are religious or even fundamentalist while we are rational or perhaps compassionate. Our own image, dear to us as heirs of the Enlightenment, constructs the image of the Other,<sup>40</sup> which is immediately problematised and educationalised insofar as we, as enlightened and solidary people, have developed educational tools in the form of tolerance education or intercultural learning.

We ourselves have been so massively educationalised in recent centuries – and here I am referring to the historical consciousness I mentioned at the beginning – that we no longer even know how strongly we have internalised religion and nation, both of which having high energy potentials to make certain kinds of people, not least the academic researcher.<sup>41</sup> We are no longer aware of them, and we see them only in the realm of the other from ourselves. Obviously, we are, at best, shining examples of a fundamentally false self-image in which arrogance and patronising others go hand in hand, and we will continue to do so unless we begin to strip these taboos of the incredible power over us that they derive precisely from the wordlessness, the silencing, that they enjoy.

If we are so concerned with being rational, we should start thinking about the discourses that would have us believe that we are rational, unbiased, value-neutral. Only that would enable us to stop reproducing dominant educational ideologies and theories that come from either national<sup>42</sup> or religious epistemologies<sup>43</sup> or a denominational mixture of both. We will then research the historical consciousness of our own historicities, exploring and discussing the historical conditions of our own epistemological roles in the field of education and its performances, bringing taboos to the fore, and giving them words to free us from their dictates over us.

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40 A prime example is how especially the intellectual French elite of the 18th century – sustainably! – created “Eastern Europe” as the Other (that is as antithesis to their own “civilization,” i.e. as barbarism) (Wolff, 1994).

41 I acknowledge in this context the important publication on methodological nationalism by Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (2003). While they start from the national idea *as such*, which has characterized social science research and shaped its focus on immigration, I am less concerned with a general concept of the nation as an epistemological formative force than with the question of how nationalism has affected the *respective* social ideals differently in the individual nation-states. These international differences can be illustrated very nicely by the example of reactions to the “social question” in the late 19th century, which was addressed and problematized differently in each nation-state and which then gave rise to completely different educational theories (Tröhler, 2014b).

42 Stephanie Fox, “The Entanglement of Nation and Epistemology: Glances into the Backyard of Academic Dignity,” in “Education, ‘Doing Nation,’ Nation Building and the Development of National Literacies,” ed. Daniel Tröhler, *Croatian Journal of Education* 22, special issue no. 2 (2020).

43 Daniel Tröhler, “The Lasting Legacy of the European Reformation of the 16th Century: Protestant Foundations of Modern Educational Reasoning,” *Journal of Beliefs & Values. Studies in Religion & Education* 42, no. 2 (2020), 258–276.

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## Contemporary Nordic Histories of the Universities: The Renewal of An Old Field

*Johan Östling*

*Abstract* • Historians of the universities have not always belonged to the avantgarde of historical research. On the contrary, many studies of the universities have tended to be rather traditional and narrow-minded. In recent years, however, the surge in the history of knowledge has opened up novel perspectives and given new impulses to how to write the history of the universities. In this presentation, Johan Östling, director of the Lund Centre for the History of Knowledge (LUCK), will highlight some of these new trends and approaches. Among other things, he will show how global history, media history and the history of the humanities can enrich the history of universities.

*Keywords* • Nordic universities, history of knowledge, history of university

*The author of this article was invited by the guest editors to write this reflective overview based on a keynote held at the Eighth Nordic Conference on the History of Education. However, this article has been subjected to double-blind peer review.*

### House biographies and the jubilee syndrome

The university has a grand and extensive past. On ceremonial occasions it tends to be presented as one of the European societal institutions with the longest unbroken tradition. Against this background, it should be possible to write the history of the university employing many different approaches. Nevertheless, it is remarkable how limited the historiography of the university has been.<sup>1</sup>

Or to put it differently: historians of the universities have not always belonged to the avantgarde of historical research. On the contrary, many studies of the universities have tended to be rather traditional and narrow-minded. In recent years, however, novel perspectives have opened up and new impulses how to write the history of the universities have emerged. This is a very welcome development, especially if you are convinced, as I am, that historical insights are indispensable for understanding contemporary processes and phenomena. Today's universities, in the Nordic countries as well as in the rest of the world, are complex organizations with multiple social, educational and scientific missions. The historiography must similarly be multifaceted and cannot be based on inward-looking or self-gratulatory accounts.

In this paper, I will briefly highlight some of the new trends and approaches in historical scholarship. First of all, however, a few words about the genre of university history. Since

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This article is based on the plenary lecture that I gave at the Nordic Education History Conference, Aalborg, 26 May, 2022. Even though references have been added and some of the discussions have been expanded, I have tried to preserve the original structure and tone.

<sup>1</sup> This and the following paragraphs draw on my account in Johan Östling, *Humboldt and the Modern German University: An Intellectual History*, transl. Lena Olsson (Lund: Lund University Press/Manchester University Press, 2018).

the very beginning, there has been a close relationship between university history and the historical jubilees of the academy.<sup>2</sup> This has resulted in a “jubilee syndrome” (Sivert Langholm) that has meant that there exist a great number of thick books on universities, which not always have a critical or contextual dimension (to be fair, this is a potential problem for all history writing that is motivated by institutional jubilees, including organizations, private companies and governmental departments). A significant majority of these works deal with individual universities, almost without exception written by academics with strong connections to the universities in question. Far from all of these “house biographies” (Sheldon Rothblatt) have been written by professional historians, and they were far from always linked to newer currents within historical research.<sup>3</sup>

The German historians Matthias Asche and Stefan Gerber have argued that university history as a genre has flourished in periods of academic crisis and rapid change. They highlight the decades around the year 1800 and the period from the founding of the German Empire to the First World War as illustrative examples. During these periods the university and its understanding of itself was rocked to its foundations, and this seems to have given rise to a need for examining the historical development of the institution. This is probably true today as well.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the university history that is being written is still embarrassingly conventional. However, the last twenty years, and with increased intensity since around 2010, the history of the university has experienced something of a renaissance: the field has been vitalised. Several analysts have connected this reawakening within university history to the radical changes in academic reality around the year 2000. Like the subject of history per se, university history has been transformed through the influence of linguistic and cultural theories. The rituals, myths and conceptual worlds of academia have become key areas of research. Other catalysts have been gender history, media history and studies of systems of power and organisational systems. The chronological focus has shifted: the modern era has been brought into focus.<sup>5</sup>

## New Nordic histories

These new tendencies are also visible in some of the new major Nordic histories that have been published since the early 2010s. Four examples will illustrate that also jubilee

2 Sheldon Rothblatt, “The Writing of University History at the End of Another Century,” *Oxford Review of Education* 23, no. 2 (1997); Rainer A. Müller, “Genese, Methoden und Tendenzen der allgemeinen deutschen Universitätsgeschichte: Zur Entwicklung einer historischen Spezialdisziplin,” *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 20 (2000); Pieter Dhondt, “University History Writing: More Than A History of Jubilees?,” in *University Jubilees and University History Writing: A Challenging Relationship*, ed. Pieter Dhondt (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015).

3 Sivert Langholm, *Helheten och delene: Hvordan skrive en 200 års historie for Universitetet i Oslo?* (Oslo: Oslo: Forum for universitetshistorie, Universitetet i Oslo, 1996), 2–3; Rothblatt (1997), 154.

4 Matthias Asche and Stefan Gerber, “Neuzeitliche Universitätsgeschichte in Deutschland: Entwicklungslinien und Forschungsfelder,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 90, no. 1 (2008).

5 Anne Rohstock, “The History of Higher Education: Some Conceptual Remarks on the Future of a Research Field,” in *Education Systems in Historical, Cultural, and Sociological Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Tröhler and Ragnhild Barbu (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2011); Sylvia Paletschek, “Stand und Perspektiven der neueren Universitätsgeschichte,” *N.T.M.* 19, no. 2 (2011); Sylvia Paletschek, “The Writing of University History and University Jubilees: German Examples,” *Studium: Tijdschrift voor Wetenschap- en Universiteitsgeschiedenis / Revue d’Histoire des Sciences et des Universités* 5, no. 3 (2012); Anders Ahlbäck and Laura Hollsten, “Changing the Narratives of University History,” *Kasvatus & Aika* 9, no. 3 (2015).

histories can be innovative and open to new impulses.

The undoubtedly largest history of the university project in the Nordic countries during the 21st century was based at Oslo. When the Norwegian university celebrated its bicentenary in 2011, a large number of historians (Jorunn Sem Fure, Jan Eivind Myhre, Kim G. Helsvig, Fredrik W. Thue and other) had been involved, under the direction of John Peter Collett, in producing a nine-volumes work. The first six volumes were chronologically organised; the three remaining ones thematically. The emphasis shifted depending on who the lead author was: perspectives from history of science were prominent in some volumes, while politics, economics, and social conditions took centre stage in others. Taken together, the work became more than a story of a scientific and educational institution; it was an interpretation of the birth and development of the modern Norwegian nation seen from the point of view of the history of advanced knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

Also in the new volumes on the history of Åbo Akademi University, questions on the institution's role and significance in the national project are central. Founded as a Swedish-speaking university in 1918, that is in the wake of Finland's independence, Åbo Akademi's importance to the Finno-Swedish culture and identity is of particular interest. In connection with the centenary in 2018, three books were published. Nils Erik Villstrand wrote a monograph on the creation of the university and its general development up to the end of the Second World War. Laura Hollsten edited a volume of studies devoted to the history of science and knowledge, whereas Anders Ahlbäck and Henry Nygård published an edited volume on the university's place in society.<sup>7</sup>

When Lund University celebrated 350 years between 2016 and 2018, there was already a number of older studies on the institution's past to build on, from novels and student memoirs to scholarly books and a solid four-volume work from the 1960s. In connection with the new anniversary, however, a number of new publications were published, books in which I myself was to some extent involved. A popular, richly illustrated overview was published (with Björn Magnusson Staaf and Fredrik Tersmeden as the main authors) as well as a scholarly volume edited by Gunnar Broberg and David Dunér focusing on the university's relationship with society at large. In addition, an extensive history of literature and authors associated with Lund University

6 John Peter Collett, *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–2011. Bok 1, 1811–1870: Universitetet i nasjonen* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011); Jon Røyne Kyllingstad and Thor Inge Rørvik, *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–2011. Bok 2, 1870–1911: Vitenskapenes universitet* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011); Jorunn Sem Fure, *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–2011. Bok 3, 1911–1940: Inn i forskningsalderen* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011); Jorunn Sem Fure, *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–2011. Bok 4, 1940–1945: Universitetet i kamp* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011); Fredrik W. Thue and Kim G. Helsvig, *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–2011. Bok 5, 1945–1975: Den store transformasjonen* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011); Kim G. Helsvig, John Peter Collett and Anne Vaalund, eds., *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–2011. Bok 6, 1975–2011: Mot en ny samfunnskontrakt?* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011); Peder Anker, John Peter Collett and Anne Vaalund, eds., *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–2011. Bok 7, Samtidshistoriske perspektiver* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011); Jan Eivind, *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–2011. Bok 8, Kunnskapsbærerne: Akademikere mellom universitet og samfunn* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011); Tor Ivar Hansen, John Peter Collett and Anne Vaalund, eds., *Universitetet i Oslo 1811–2011. Bok 9, Studentminner* (Oslo: Unipub, 2011).

7 Nils Erik Villstrand, *Åbo Akademi i sin början: 1918–1945* (Turku: Åbo Akademi förlag, 2019); Laura Hollsten, ed., *Åbo Akademi och kunskapen: Perspektiv på villkoren för skapandet av vetenskap, 1918–2018* (Turku: Åbo Akademi förlag, 2018); Anders Ahlbäck and Henry Nygård, eds., *Åbo Akademi och samhället: Perspektiv på växelverkan mellan samhällsförändring och universitet, 1918–2018* (Turku: Åbo Akademi förlag, 2018).

was published, as well as a comprehensive book on the history of the Faculty of Law.<sup>8</sup>

The latest addition to Nordic university history comes from Bergen. In 2022, a three-volume work on the university's 75-year history was published, with Astri Andresen, Dunja Blažević and Kari Tove Elvbakken as editors. A total of eighteen authors have contributed and the main theoretical source of inspiration has been the history of science. The first volume deals with the creation of the university and its material, institutional and social conditions, while the contributions in the second volume focus on the scientific actors, disciplines and research fields. The concluding volume deals with the university in society and its relations with the education system, business and the state.<sup>9</sup>

All of the above-mentioned Nordic works can be said to be examples of the renewal of university history that has taken place in recent decades. Analytical inspiration has been drawn from cultural history, history of science, history of education, gender history and media history, but also from more classical political, economic and social history. The universities have often situated in their relevant local, regional, national and to some extent international contexts. There still tends to be a positive basic attitude towards the university depicted and the people who inhabited it, but critical discussions exist and the accounts are not hagiographical.

### International sources of inspiration

In the international scholarly literature, other new perspectives and innovative approaches can be found that could enrich Nordic historiography even further. I will here present a few recent studies.

Inspiration can of course be drawn from global history that emphasizes entanglements and interactions across national borders. A good example of this type of historiography is provided by Emily J. Levine in *Dreamland of Humanists*. In this book, she examines the establishment of the University of Hamburg after the First World War. Levine focuses on Aby Warburg, Ernst Cassirer and Erwin Panofsky and their quest to found a new cultural science. Setting her story in the liberal and mercantile Elbe metropolis, she gives the historiography of the Weimar Republic – which so often has revolved around the radical and polarized Berlin – more facets. In a captivating final chapter, she describes the fate of the Hamburg school when everything Jewish was expelled from Germany and what happened to the intellectual legacies on the other side of the Atlantic. As always when ideas are circulating, they are potentially transformed.<sup>10</sup>

8 Björn Magnusson Staaf and Fredrik Tersmeden, *Lunds universitet under 350 år: Historia och historier* (Lund: Lunds universitet, 2016); Gunnar Broberg and David Dunér, eds., *Beredd till bådaderna: Lunds universitet och omvärlden* (Lund: Lunds universitet, 2017); Katarina Bernhardsson, Göran Bexell, Daniel Möller and Johan Stenström, eds., *En lundensisk litteraturhistoria: Lunds universitetet som litterärt kraftfält* (Gothenburg: Makadam, 2017); Kjell Å Modéer, *Det förpliktande minnet: Juridiska fakulteten i Lund 1666–2016* (Stockholm: Santérus, 2017).

9 Astri Andresen, Dunja Blažević and Kari Tove Elvbakken, eds., *Vitenskap og vitenskapshistorier. Universitetet i Bergen 1946–2021: Bind 1, Politikken og hverdagen* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2022); Astri Andresen, Dunja Blažević and Kari Tove Elvbakken, eds., *Vitenskap og vitenskapshistorier. Universitetet i Bergen 1946–2021: Bind 2, Disipliner og forskningafelt* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2022); Astri Andresen, Dunja Blažević and Kari Tove Elvbakken, eds., *Vitenskap og vitenskapshistorier. Universitetet i Bergen 1946–2021: Bind 3, Kunnskapen i samfunnet* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2022).

10 Emily J. Levine, *Dreamland of Humanists: Warburg, Cassirer, Panofsky, and the Hamburg School* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). See also Emily J. Levine, *Allies and Rivals: German–*

Combining a traditional university history focus with a global outlook, Tamson Pietsch's thesis *Empire of Scholars* is of great interest. She analyses the extensive academic networks built up during the Victorian age of globalization. In Cape Town, Sydney and Toronto, new universities were founded in the middle of the 19th century, often as local initiatives. During the end of the century these became increasingly associated with London, Oxford and Cambridge. Through scholarships, exchange programs and personal connections, they gradually became part of a British academic imperial community. This had as a premise that the members shared a language, a culture and a worldview. A professor in Edinburgh or Manchester could correspond extensively with colleagues in Adelaide and Montreal, but be ignorant of what was going on in Heidelberg or Montpellier. On that point, Pietsch illustrates a paradox of globalization, as valid today as in the 19th century: a community can include large parts of the globe, but still only include a small part of the world.<sup>11</sup>

Even general historical phenomena tend, on closer inspection, to turn out to have their specific national characteristics. This is, for instance, obvious when reading Nikolai Wehr's *Protest der Professoren*. This is not yet another study of student radicalism – but of the counterattack of the professors against the left-wing movement. In 1970, an association of academic teachers was formed in West Germany, “Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft”. In the eyes of the left-wing students, they represented a reactionary fraction, and that view has lived on in historiography, but Wehrs argues that they were made up of an unorthodox mix of conservatives, liberals and social democrats. There were those who tried to protect their privileges, but there were also those who defended classic academic freedom and ideas of *Bildung* in a time of rapid change.<sup>12</sup>

As so often in postwar Germany, the university debate in the wake of 1968 also gained its special character and intensity from being an aspect of the confrontation with the Nazi legacy. Academic *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, more or often less complete, is a constantly recurring theme in the essays in *Universität, Wissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit in Westdeutschland*, published by, among others, a leading figure in contemporary German research on the history of the universities, Sylvia Paletschek. The editors' point of departure is that the debate about the university must be seen as an integral part of societal transformation.<sup>13</sup>

Another form of critical historiography has emerged in North America in the last decade. New research, not least directed at the oldest institutions of learning in the United States, has demonstrated how slaves were involved in the construction of university buildings and how funding was an integral part of the slave economy.

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*American Exchange and the Rise of the Modern Research University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

11 Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World, 1850–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). Other ways of writing transnational histories of the universities are offered in Charlotte A. Lerg, *Universitätsdiplomatie: Wissenschaft und Prestige in den transatlantischen Beziehungen 1890–1920* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019) and Tamson Pietsch, *The Floating University: Experience, Empire, and the Politics of Knowledge* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023).

12 Nikolai Wehrs, *Protest der Professoren: Der “Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft” in den 1970er Jahren* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2014).

13 Sebastian Brandt et al., eds, *Universität, Wissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit in Westdeutschland: (1945 bis ca. 1970)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2014).

Several of the most famous North American institutions have recently been drawn into animated discussions about their past. The critical examinations have had different targets: Princeton's first nine presidents were slave owners, and both Brown and Yale are named after slave traders, while Georgetown University at one point sold a large amount of slaves to solve internal financial problems. In the contemporary debate, demands have been raised for historical investigations and financial compensation on the part of the universities.<sup>14</sup>

Still other studies have recently shown how the modern universities have been part of large-scale political projects. During the 1960s, almost 200 new universities were founded around the world. As educational institutions, they were characterized by ideas about a radical renewal of knowledge institutions. In a scholarly volume edited by Jill Pellew and Miles Taylor, these "utopian universities" are analyzed and their pedagogical, social and architectural legacies they left behind. In another recent study, Davarian L. Baldwin argues that the expansion of universities in the United States in recent decades is part of urban planning that, in a neoliberal spirit, contributes to gentrification and social segregation.<sup>15</sup>

### Why university history?

In our time, the university is the bearer of many promises. It is expected to provide education for today and tomorrow, create knowledge and learning, stimulate regional and national economies, serve as a critical authority, and be a forum for fresh ideas.

All over the world – for a long time in Europe and North America, but increasingly also in Asia and on other continents – enormous sums are invested in universities and research institutes every year. Since the year 2000, the number of students taking academic degrees in China has increased almost tenfold, the annual figure now stands at more than 8 million. Fifteen years ago, Ethiopia had two universities; today there are about thirty. In Europe, too, huge expansion is a reality. In Great Britain, there were 46 universities in the early 1990s; now there are over 140.

Consequently, the wealth and welfare of nations and individuals are tied to the university in a way that was not the case a mere couple of decades ago. Against this background, it is evident that the history of the university contains too many potential insights to be left to collectors of anecdotes and writers of chronicles. It has to be integrated in a broader history of knowledge that reflects the conditions of peoples' lives and the transformation of society at large.

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013) and Alfred Brophy, James T. Campbell and Leslie M. Harris, eds., *Slavery and the University: Histories and Legacies* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Jill Pellew and Miles Taylor, eds., *Utopian Universities: A Global History of the New Campuses of the 1960s* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021); Davarian L. Baldwin, *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities are Plundering Our Cities* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2021).

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## Between Tradition and Experiment: The Idea of a New University

*Maria Simonsen*

**Abstract** • From the mid-1960s to the mid 1970s, three new universities were established in Denmark: Odense (1966), Roskilde (1972) and Aalborg (1974). Until then only two universities existed in Denmark: Copenhagen (1479) and Aarhus (1928). Located on the outskirts of the major cities, the new institutions played an important part in reforming and transforming higher education in Denmark. The youngest university, Aalborg University, is approaching its 50th anniversary. This is an opportunity to take a step back and examine the university in long-term perspective. In this article, I investigate the discussions and expectations concerning the establishment of the university in the period 1958–1974. Based on contemporaneous debates in the regional newspaper *Aalborg Stiftstidende* and interviews with several key figures, the study seeks to analyze the underlying ideas and ideals which characterized the discussion by asking the following questions: What was the projected purpose of the new university? What ideals were expressed in the debate? In the last part of this article, I will reflect on the historiographical developments in the history of the university. In recent years, several new approaches have expanded the field and made visible new aspects of the institutions' histories. I will discuss why a focus on the ideas, ideals and expectations of the university, and thereby of the university as a knowledge institution, is essential to include in a study of its history.

**Keywords** • university, university centre, knowledge ideals, circulation of knowledge, Denmark

*In order to maintain the integrity of the peer review process, guest editor Mette Buchardt has mediated the contacts between the author (who is one of the editors for this issue) and the reviewers of this article.*

Not long after the 44-year-old Carl Willum Hansen (1914–2002) was appointed principal of the newly established Aalborghus State Gymnasium in 1958, he began to argue for university education in Northern Jutland. “Where should the student of 1970 study?” asked Willum Hansen in the regional newspaper *Aalborg Stiftstidende* during the autumn of 1960.<sup>1</sup> With his article, Willum Hansen wanted to redirect focus to the lack of educational opportunities in the area, and to pitch the idea of a university in one of Denmark’s northernmost parts, Aalborg – more than 400 km from the capital Copenhagen. This idea would later create fundamental changes not only in Aalborg, but in the entire North Jutland region.

One of Willum Hansen’s main conclusions was that more and more people from the region were passing the high school diploma (*da. studentereksamen*). There was, therefore, a need to provide qualified labour for the growing gymnasium. Statistics showed that, over the course of 5–6 years, the number of students would almost

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Willum Hansen, “Hvor skal studenten anno 1970 studere?” *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, September 16 (1960), 10. *Aalborg Stiftstidende* (since 1999 *Nordjyske Stiftstidende*) was (and still is) the largest regional newspaper in North Jutland. All Danish newspaper headlines and quotations in the text have been translated into English. The Danish headlines and quotations are always placed in their entirety in the footnote. From here on, all translations from Danish to English are my own.

double, and if action was not taken quickly, there would soon be a shortage of teachers and institutions.<sup>2</sup> The expected increase in the number of students would also create another problem. At the time, the existing programs at Denmark's two universities in Aarhus and Copenhagen did not have the capacity to educate all the new prospective students. Therefore, an expansion not only of the gymnasiums, but also a development of the higher education system was necessary for the northern region, as well as for other parts of Denmark, to meet these emerging requirements.<sup>3</sup>

Another important reason for creating more and better educational opportunities was a fear of 'brain drain'; that the region's young people simply moved away from home to get an education and subsequently became so established in the new places that they did not return. The geographical location of higher education in Denmark was very much on Willum Hansen's mind. As principal, he could see how a large number of young people from Northern Jutland, who otherwise had the skills for higher education, were held back by the region's lack of educational opportunities.<sup>4</sup> The ever-increasing number of students should, he argued, have an opportunity to continue their studies in their home region. Furthermore, he saw the university project as an important part of regional development and did not think that there should be too great a difference between the opportunities in the outskirts of Denmark and in large cities such as Aarhus or Copenhagen. In the chronicle, Willum Hansen stated that "[the] competition between metropole and province need not be harmful or ridiculous, and local patriotism can be a beautiful expression of the feelings you have for the place where you live and work."<sup>5</sup>

One consideration was the practical circumstances concerning the establishment of a university. Another, which Willum Hansen stressed at the end of the article, was his idea about the future university: what kind of a university should it be? According to Willum Hansen the new university should embrace the natural sciences, law, medicine, and the humanities. "People do not live on bread alone," he wrote, and he continued, that in practice, "one experiences time and time again how aspects of the work that apparently have no invited connection can have a mutually fruitful effect."<sup>6</sup> In other words: Willum Hansen wanted a traditional university located in the working-class town.<sup>7</sup>

Willum Hansen was far from the only one in North Jutland who dreamed of developing educational opportunities in the late 1950s. At the same time as he aired his thoughts on the university for the first time, a group of business people and politicians named the 'Business Council of North Jutland' (*da. Nordjyllands Erhvervsråd*) had begun to work purposefully to improve the educational opportunities in the region,

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2 Hansen, (1960), 10.

3 Ibid.

4 "Det fjerde universitet bør placeres i Aalborg," *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, September 18 (1963), 10.

5 "Konkurrencen mellem byer og egne behøver ikke at være skadelig eller latterlig, og lokalpatriotisme kan være et smukt udtryk for de følelser, man nærer for det sted hvor man bor og virker." Hansen, (1960), 10.

6 "I praksis oplever man gang på gang hvordan sider af arbejdet, der tilsyneladende ikke har nogen indbydes forbindelse, kan virke gensidigt befrugtende." Hansen, (1960), 10.

7 Jes Adolphsen, *AUC's 10 års jubilæum: I satte os i jeres baner. Interviews med 19 vigtige personer i AUC's historie* (Aalborg: Aalborg University Press, 1984), 14–15.

and especially for the establishment of several higher education institutions in Aalborg.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Willum Hansen, they had a strong focus on improving technical education. Their primary objective was to establish a department of the Danish engineering academy in Aalborg. Despite the different approaches to the development of the educational opportunities, Willum Hansen was soon integrated in the work of the business council.

On September 1, 1974, fifteen years after Willum Hansen had shared his thoughts on university education in North Jutland, Aalborg University Centre was inaugurated. How did the discussions about the future university develop? What characterized the debate? What expectations were there in the local area, which was known to be a regular working-class town? In this article, I will narrate the very early history of Aalborg University from its inception as an idea in the late 1950s to its inauguration in the autumn of 1974. I investigate the discussions and expectations concerning the establishment of the university centre that were initiated by Willum Hansen's chronicle. Based on the regional newspaper *Aalborg Stiftstidende* and interviews with several key figures, the study seeks to analyse the underlying ideas and ideals which characterised the discussion about the university in Aalborg.

From the beginning, *Aalborg Stiftstidende* became an essential arena for discussing a possible university in North Jutland. Supporters and opponents regularly aired their arguments for and against the location of a university in Aalborg. In this article, I have particularly focused on submissions from some of the leading players in the Business Council of North Jutland, as this was where many ideas and ideals about a possible future university were presented. However, I also include submissions from students and people outside the business council. Although the university discussion also greatly interested the high school students in Aalborg, they did not submit many discussions to the newspaper, or they have not been published.

In connection with Aalborg University's 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a number of interviews were conducted with several people from the circle around the Business Council of North Jutland, the planning group for Aalborg University Centre, as well as the interim board, who managed the university centre until the first university election in 1976. These interviews are central for understanding the background of Aalborg University.<sup>9</sup>

In the second part of the article, I will reflect on historiographical developments within the field of university history. I discuss why focusing on the ideas and ideals of the university is essential to include in a study of university history and how it can contribute to a development of the field. In doing so, I also include perspectives from the history of knowledge. The history of knowledge has gained ground in several research fields in recent years, and has inspired new perspectives, for example on the history of education. In the second part of the article, I will give some examples of how the history of knowledge can be used to shed new light on university historical research.

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<sup>8</sup> The Business Council of North Jutland later changed its name to North Jutland Committee (*da. Nordjyllandsudvalget*). Niels Østeraas, *En pressionsgruppe med succes: Historien om Nordjyllandsudvalget for højere læreanstalter* (Aalborg: Aalborg University Press 1984), 7; Adolphsen, (1984), 10–13.

<sup>9</sup> Adolphsen, (1984); Peter Ditlev Oldenburg, *Glimt fra nordjysk universitetshistorie gennem 40 år* (Aalborg: Aalborg University Press, 1999), 190–91.

### The idea of a new university

From the mid-1960s to the mid 1970s, three new universities were established in Denmark: Odense University in 1966, Roskilde University Centre in 1972, and finally, Aalborg University Centre in 1974. The establishment of the new Danish universities were part of a broad international phenomenon that was connected with the development of the welfare state in several northern European countries.<sup>10</sup> During the 1960s, a reform of higher education was discussed in large parts of the western world.<sup>11</sup> Since the 1960s, hundreds of new research institutions were established across the globe.<sup>12</sup> Often these institutions constituted experimental spaces, with fresh takes on both curriculum and pedagogy, as well as “different forms of governance from the rest of the higher education sector.”<sup>13</sup> The new universities also stood out for their geographical placement and campus architecture. Universities did not necessarily belong in old traditional buildings placed in the middle of the city. These new placements necessarily affected the campus architecture of the new universities, which often followed the architectural trends of the time. The different innovations and changes in and around the educational system all contributed to nuancing the idea of what a university was expected to be.

During the 1960s, the number of students at the Danish universities increased dramatically. The system was booming. From the period 1960 to 1968, the universities experienced a tripling in the number of students. A new generation of students, one with a broader social and cultural background than had hitherto been seen was interested in and had the possibility of accessing higher education. Denmark was therefore in urgent need of new higher education institutions. To accommodate the increased number of students, the Danish parliament decided to establish several new universities throughout the country. The decision was immediately followed by a larger discussion concerning where in the country the new institutions should be located. It soon became clear that several important regional political issues were at stake.

The plans to establish new university centres were closely linked to the expansion of the university in Copenhagen.<sup>14</sup> Discussions strongly emphasised that the purpose of the new universities was to relieve the traditional ones, and several politicians thought that the educational needs were greatest in the eastern part of Denmark (Zealand and Funen).<sup>15</sup> Some politicians and academics, from the metropolitan area in particular, found it difficult to see why it was necessary to place a university in Aalborg – one of Denmark’s peripheral regions.<sup>16</sup> In an interview for the local newspaper, the former minister for education Helge Larsen (1915–2000) stated that he believed that the

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10 Peter Mandal Hansen, *Aalborg Universitets campus arkitektur* (Aalborg: Aalborg Universitet 2014), 6.

11 See, for example, Thomas Karlsruhn’s presentation of the discussions in Thomas Karlsruhn, *Universitetets idé: Sexton nyckeltexter* (Gothenburg: Daidalos, 2016), 17–157.

12 Jill Pellew and Taylor Miles eds., *Utopian Universities: A Global History of the New Campuses of the 1960s* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 1.

13 *Ibid.*, 4.

14 Else Hansen, *Professorer, studenter og polit.er: Om velfærdsstatens universitetspolitik 1950–1975* (Copenhagen: Museums Tusculanums Forlag, 2017), 332.

15 J. Munck Nordentoft, “Træk af universitetstankens historie,” in *Et nordjysk universitetscenter*, ed. Alfred Bøgh et al. (Aalborg: Nordjyllands Universitetsforening, 1970), 15–20.

16 *Ibid.*

explanation was “that a certain tradition is needed to choose higher education, and that this tradition is better incorporated in Zealand.”<sup>17</sup> This point of view contrasted greatly with the attitude towards higher education in neighbouring Norway and Sweden, where the establishment of new universities was largely seen as an important part of the development of different regions, and a number of universities were established far to the North, including Umeå University in 1965, Luleå in 1971 and Tromsø in 1972.<sup>18</sup>

Danish society changed significantly in several ways throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The development of the welfare state and the improved economy for the country as a whole and for the individual families, in particular, meant that society changed fundamentally. In the great period of the welfare state, 1956–1973, a large number of schemes of social security benefits were introduced in order to secure more equality in society and a dignified existence for all citizens. The educational institutions were among the most important institutions in the welfare state.<sup>19</sup> All levels of education – from primary school to university – were seen as important elements for the possibility of social mobility. The mantra was that “educational choices should be determined by the individual’s interest and abilities, and not their social and geographical background.”<sup>20</sup>

These changes also affected the universities. As more and more people had the opportunity to study at the university, society demanded more and more specialized labour. 1960s society demanded experts with an understanding, to name a few examples, of social issues, planning, mass media, and the developing world.<sup>21</sup>

It is amidst all this that we should situate discussion of the university in Aalborg. Ever since the debate about the new universities had begun at a national level, politicians, business communities, and people with connections to educational institutions from Northern Jutland had tried to promote Aalborg as a new Danish university city. Nevertheless, there were also internal disagreements. Not everyone from Northern Jutland supported Willum Hansen’s idea of a university in the region.

### Pros and cons of a university in Aalborg

The debate concerning the establishment of a university in Aalborg was not only centred on the location. It also concerned which kind of university it should be, and what type of student one was to attract. The politicians’ ideas behind Aalborg University were in several ways similar to those which led to the establishment of the university in Roskilde.<sup>22</sup> Both institutions were expected to spearhead the reform of university education in Denmark. However, the regional conditions at the two universities were very different and this also influenced the discussions and expectations that the local

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17 Han mente at forklaringen var, ”at der skal en vis tradition til for at vælge højere uddannelse, og den tradition er bedre indarbejdet på Sjælland.” The quote is taken from Peter Plenge, *Aalborg Universitet – fra idé til virkelighed: Peter Plenges 40 års jubilæum* (Aalborg: Aalborg University 2011), 4.

18 Hansen, (2017), 332. The three universities are just a few examples of institutions that were located on the outskirts of the major cities.

19 Hansen, (2017), 14.

20 ”Uddannelsesvalg skulle afgøres af den enkeltes lyst til evner, ikke social og geografisk baggrund.” Hansen, (2017), 15.

21 Hansen, (2017), 12.

22 Allan Clausen, *Kampen for et nordjysk universitet* (Aalborg: Aalborg University Press, 1984), 2.

advocates for the university expressed. Due to its proximity to Copenhagen, the university in Roskilde did not have the same focus on regional development. At the same time, regional development was a central argument for establishing a university in Aalborg.<sup>23</sup>

What kind of university did the proponents have in mind? Reading the debates in *Aalborg Stiftstidende* in the months after the publications of Willum Hansen's article, it is clear that it was not a traditional university. Although Willum Hansen had already aired the idea about establishing a university in Northern Jutland at a public meeting the year before,<sup>24</sup> it was his article in *Aalborg Stiftstidende* in 1960 that accelerated a public debate on the need for the development of university education in the northern part of Denmark.<sup>25</sup> Shortly after the publication of his article, the regional newspaper gave voice to both supporters and opponents of his idea.<sup>26</sup> In the article "Strongly Divided Opinions about a University in Northern Jutland," one reads that the idea had a mixed reception among 24 key personalities of the region.<sup>27</sup> Some fully supported the establishment of a university and felt, as Willum Hansen, that it was an urgent matter.<sup>28</sup> One of them who backed the idea was chief physician H.O. Bang, who, in particular and unsurprisingly, argued for the establishment of a medical faculty, citing the nationwide shortage of doctors. Others were more sceptical, and a few completely rejected the idea. The critical voices argued that the region had other educational problems that needed to be solved before establishing a university.<sup>29</sup>

The rich cultural and student life that today characterises Aalborg and the region of Northern Jutland, was significantly different in the 1950s and 1960s. Heavy industry characterized the city of Aalborg. In particular, the shipping, cement and tobacco industries left their mark on the city with C.W. Obels Tobaksfabrik and Aalborg Shipyard as the area's largest private employers, although agriculture and fishing were the dominant occupations in the rural municipalities. Focus was on developing the types of education that could support existing businesses.<sup>30</sup>

One of the critics who had a different perspective was the police chief Torben Engelsted. According to him it was nothing less than a terrible idea to place universities in the Danish province: "For a young person at the most receptive age, it is not without significance that he spends a few years in a big city, and, with all due respect to our three big provincial cities, they cannot come close to replacing Copenhagen."<sup>31</sup> A university should be established in a region where there were already several cultural institutions

23 Oldenburg, (1999), 5–7.

24 "Universitet i Aalborg?" *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, September 3 (1960), 10.

25 Clausen, (1984), 5.

26 Oldenburg, (1999), 190–191.

27 Erik Randel, "Stærkt delte meninger om et universitet i Nordjylland," *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, September 9 (1960), 1, 9–10.

28 H.O. Bang, "En læges synspunkt: Nordjysk universitet?," *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, September 27 (1960), 10.

29 Clausen, (1984), 5.

30 Per Bo Christensen and Jens Topholm, *Aalborg under stilstand og fremgang fra 1814 til 1970* (Aalborg: Aalborg Stadsarkiv, 1990), 403.

31 "For et ungt menneske i den mest modtagelige alder, er det ikke uden betydning, at han tilbringer nogle aar i en virkelig storby, og med al respekt for vores tre store provinsbyer kan de dog ikke paa langt nær erstatte København." Torben Engelsted, "En jurists synspunkt: Mere om universitetet," *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, October 10 (1960).

such as museums and theatres – a well-developed cultural environment. Engelsted believed that, the cultural aspect was one of the things that Aalborg simply lacked.<sup>32</sup>

Despite criticism, the work on Willum Hansen's idea began to take shape. In the first half of the 1960s, the North Jutland Committee (*da. Nordjyllandsudvalget*), a committee that was set up originally to create educational opportunities specifically for engineers, began work on promoting the idea of a university in the region.<sup>33</sup> In the years that followed, the committee made a great effort to engage a range of key personalities, such as politicians and regional business people as well as the trade unions, in the matter, while the committee also worked to convince politicians in the capital Copenhagen of the importance of placing a new university in the northern region of Denmark.<sup>34</sup>

In the end, the work of the committee succeeded. In June 1970, the Danish parliament decided to establish a university centre in Aalborg and that the teaching should begin in the academic year 1974/75.<sup>35</sup> Despite the political decision, some tried to prevent the establishment of the university right up until the inauguration. Politician and later Minister of Education Bertel Haarder continued to fight against the university until it became a reality. According to Haarder, there was no need to train more high school teachers in the early 1970s. Furthermore, he was against the experimental pedagogical approaches that were practiced at the university centres in this period.<sup>36</sup>

After years of discussion and debate, which has since been described as 'the North Jutlandic fight', Aalborg University's first rector, the Swedish historian Jörgen Weibull (1924–1998), made his speech at the inauguration on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1974. Denmark had built its fifth university, and Aalborg, the capital of North Jutland, had finally become a university town.

Aalborg University was not established as a university in name, but as a university centre. The term 'university centre' had been part of the 1960s reform policy in the field of education. It was not something that the Ministry of Education in Copenhagen had developed itself, but rather part of a European trend where education was invested in in new ways, as part of the development of welfare states after the Second World War. In Great Britain and the United States, new universities were built, which both academically and architecturally broke with the traditionally academically strictly organized faculties and institutes.<sup>37</sup>

There was widespread agreement that new universities should not be direct copies of the old ones.<sup>38</sup> Together with another new university, Roskilde University Centre, which was located in the east of Denmark, the university in Aalborg was seen as a more experimental institution both in terms of research and pedagogical approach compared with the traditional universities. From the perspective of the national

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32 Engelsted (1960).

33 Adolphsen, (1984), 10–18.

34 Clausen (1984), 8–9; Sven Caspersen, *Årsberetning 1974–1976* (Aalborg: Aalborg Universitetscenter, 1976), 8.

35 "Forlag til Lov om Københavns universitets placering og universitetscenter." The bill was proposed on November 28, 1969, and passed on June 4, 1970. See appendix 3 in Ditlev (1999), 221; "Universiteterne. Forslag om placering," *Politiken*, November 11 (1969), 40.

36 Oldenburg, (1999), 23–25.

37 Mandel (2014), 6.

38 Hansen (2017), 327.

politicians, the universities in Roskilde and Aalborg aimed to reduce the pressure on the old universities, especially the University of Copenhagen, but also to challenge them through interdisciplinary and project-based work. Thus, in the establishment of Aalborg University, both national and regional interests were at stake. Each perspective contained different ideas (and agendas) for the university, as well as for how these ideas should be put into practice.

### The idea of a university

The debate that Willum Hansen started about higher education is a small piece in a much larger discussion about the different ideas behind the university's purpose and meaning. The idea of what a university is and is expected to be is as old as the university itself and is something that has been discussed many times throughout history.<sup>39</sup> The establishment of many new universities, especially in the western world, in the 1960s and 70s sparked a new debate. The debate was centred on the changes several universities underwent, not least the many reforms that wavered over the educational systems in this period.<sup>40</sup> However, as shown in the first part of the article, the discussions that took place in the North Jutlandic region were about more than a reform of the education system. They were also debates about regional development; for instance, about the future educational possibilities for the young people in an area that in several ways was considered as the rural fringe of Denmark.

The importance of being a part of the surroundings was a point of view that was highlighted several times when Jørgen Weibull, held his speech at the inauguration of Aalborg University: "Participate not only in this party," he instructed his audience, "but also in our everyday life, let the university centre slide in as a natural part of life in North Jutland."<sup>41</sup> His call for engagement with the surrounding community was not without thought. Ever since the debate about establishing several new universities in Denmark had begun at a national level in the 1950s, the issue of geography had been at stake. His call applied to all – employees, business, organisations, unions, students – who would encounter the university in their everyday life.

What was the projected purpose of the new university in the northern part of Denmark? In the study of the ideas that characterized the debate about Aalborg University in the early history of the institution, two points in particular stand out: the importance of a close connection to the local and regional environment and the wish to reform the education system. The last point was, as already mentioned, characteristic not only of Aalborg University but of the reform of the higher education system which took place especially in the western part of the world throughout the period. The demand for reform

39 Karlsohn, 2016, 19–21; See also Johan Östling, *Humboldt and the Modern German University: An Intellectual History* (Lund: Lund University Press, 2018); Jens Erik Kristensen, ed., *Ideer om et universitet: Det moderne universitets idehistorie fra 1800 til i dag* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2007), 24–71.

40 See for instance Thomas Karlsohn's introductory article in *Universitetets idé: Sexton nyckeltexter*, where he gives a detailed description of the idea of the university in the present and in history as well as he describes several of the changes that the universities in the western part of the world have gone through from the 1960s and onwards. Karlsohn, (2016), 17–157.

41 "Deltag ikke bare i denne fest, men også i vores hverdag, lad universitetscenteret glide ind som en naturlig del af livet i Nordjylland." Jørgen Weibull, "AUC skal være en del af Nordjylland," in *AUC i debat. 50 kronikker fra Aalborg Stiftstidende 1972–1983*, ed. Sven Caspersen and Ernst-Ullrich Pinkert (Aalborg: Aalborg University Center and Aalborg Stiftstidende, 1983), 34.



came both from the political side as well as from teachers, students and other key actors in the university's life and work in the wake of 1968.

The debate about the establishment of Aalborg University differs significantly from the other Danish universities. A special feature was the local commitment to the institution. "There is no university in this country and hardly many other places either, which from its inception has done such intense work to integrate into the society in which it has been located, as is the case with Aalborg University Centre," a journalist wrote in 1983.<sup>42</sup> Carl Willum Hansen believed that the establishment of a university in the region would make much-needed improvements to the educational conditions of North Jutland's young inhabitants.<sup>43</sup> The university ended up doing much more than that. The university changed the region, but the region has, to an equal extent, also shaped Aalborg University and made it what it is today.

### Histories of the Scandinavian universities

University history is in many ways a vast field. In the Scandinavian countries, the tradition of writing the history of these learned institutions stretches back at least to the seventeenth century.<sup>44</sup> With this long tradition in mind, one could imagine that the history of universities throughout the ages has been approached in a myriad of ways. It is surprising, therefore, how few fluctuations have occurred within this historiographical tradition.<sup>45</sup> Despite the advanced age of the genre, university history is characterised by its uniformity. Johan Östling has indicated that it "ought to be possible to write the rich history of the university employing dissimilar focal points; it should be possible to vary its theme. Nevertheless, it is remarkable how limited the historiography of the university has been."<sup>46</sup>

University history is a genre that is particularly marked by the so-called 'jubilee syndrome' and a certain degree of self-justification.<sup>47</sup> Critical studies have been few and far between. There are, of course, several good reasons why the 'jubilee' approach dominates the genre. The university historical publications are often motivated by and published in connection with different kinds of celebrations, just as it is often the university's own people who are behind the written word. No one wants to ruin the party. Another characteristic of these jubilee histories is that they often are focused on one individual institution without contextualising the university in question within the historical and educational landscapes in which it originates and operates.

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42 "Der er intet universitet her til lands og næppe ret mange andre steder heller, der fra sin start har gjort et så intenst arbejde for at integrere sig i det samfund, hvori det er blevet placeret, som tilfældes er med Aalborg Universitetscenter." Børge Rønnow, "Nordjydernes Universitet," in *AUC i debat. 50 kronikker fra Aalborg Stiftstidenden 1972–1983*, ed. Caspersen and Pinkert, 10–11.

43 "Universitet i Aalborg?" *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, September 3 (1960); Hansen, (1960).

44 Gunnar Broberg and David Dunér eds. *Beredd till bådaderna: Lunds Universitet och omvärlden* (Lund: Lund University, 2017), 22–33.

45 Östling (2018).

46 Johan Östling, Erling Sandmo, David Larsson Heidenblad, Anna Nilsson Hammar, and Kari H. Nordberg, "Introduction," in *Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations in the History of Knowledge*, ed. Östling et al. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2018), 2. See also Johan Östling, "Bortom konventionens gränser: Universitetshistoria som idé- och kunskaphistoria," in *Universitetets gränser*, ed. Peter Josephson and Thomas Karlsohn (Gothenburg: Arche Press, 2019), 250–271.

47 Östling (2018), 3; Sivert Langholm, *Helheten och delene: Hvordan skrive en 200 års historie for Universitetet i Oslo?* (Oslo: Forum for universitetshistorie, Universitetet i Oslo, 1996).

A large part of the history of Danish universities can be placed under this jubilee category. Research on the history of the younger Danish universities especially is limited and often biographically oriented.<sup>48</sup> Several anniversary writings have been published that tell the histories of the establishment of universities with a classic focus on the so-called founding fathers, while questions about for example university policy, conflicts or gender often are entirely absent.<sup>49</sup> However, a few exceptions are important to mention.<sup>50</sup> Else Hansen's two books about Roskilde University Centre and the university policy of the welfare state, *En koral i tidens strøm. RUC 1972–1997* (1997) and *Professorer, studenter og polit.er: Om velfærdsstatens universitetspolitik 1950–1975* (2017), and Jens Frøslev Christensen's descriptions on the conflicts at Copenhagen Business School in 2011, *Oprøret på CBS* (2016), are examples of publications that dare to challenge the genre and address the conflicts that have also been a central part of the universities' histories.<sup>51</sup> This is also the case for Ning de Coninck-Smith's pathbreaking research on female students and employees at Aarhus University.<sup>52</sup> There is no doubt that the newer studies are evolving the genre from a Danish perspective.

Nevertheless, there is still a need for more research-based studies of the individual universities, as well as for histories of the Danish university. Narratives about the individual institutions tend to close in on themselves, where a broader story might be able to embrace a more versatile or multifaceted history about the universities' goals and meanings instead of treating the individual university as separable from the intellectual, societal and cultural contexts in which it was formed.

Although the present study also limits its focus to a single university and has a considerable focus on several of 'the founding fathers', it tries to make the gap smaller by offering a novel approach that focusing on the ideas and expectations that have characterised and influenced the identity of the university centre in a politically charged time. The fight for a university in Northern Jutland has been the focal point for several smaller publications about the origins of Aalborg University. In these publications, it is usually people who were themselves involved in the events who tell the story. This is not necessarily a problem. The fact that the authors have been part of an organisation and then convey part of its history can also be a strength. The authors possess a very special internal knowledge of their institutions. However, they tend to focus more on people and personal relations than the situation of the university's history in a larger context.

Although anniversaries are still the starting point for many publications, research into the history of universities has developed significantly over the past decade. A

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48 On the history of the three Danish universities The University of Southern Denmark, Roskilde University and Aalborg University, see Jeppe Nevers, *En verden af viden: Syddansk Universitet, 1966–2016* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag 2016); Else Hansen, *En koral i tidens strøm: RUC 1972–1997* (Roskilde: Roskilde Universitetsforlag, 1997); Marianne Rostgaard, *Aalborg Universitet – en billedfortælling* (Aalborg: Aalborg University, 2014); Hansen (2017).

49 A detailed information about the literature on Danish universities in the period 1950–1975 can be found in Hansen (2017), 31–38.

50 See also Else Hansen's discussion about the university history in Denmark. Hansen (2017), 26–38.

51 Jens Frøslev Christensen, *Oprøret på CBS: Forandring, ledelse og modstand i en professionel organisation* (Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur 2016).

52 Ning de Coninck-Smith, "Gender Encounters University—University Encounters Gender: Affective Archives Aarhus University, Denmark 1928–1953," *Women's History Review* 29, no. 3 (2020), 413–28.

new and rapidly developing approach focuses on the history of knowledge. In the beginning of the twenty-first century more and more scholars, historians especially, began to describe their research as part of the history of knowledge.<sup>53</sup> In the anthology *Circulation of Knowledge. Explorations in the History of Knowledge*, the editors stress how the status of knowledge nowadays is entirely contested: “Political and economic aspirations are closely bound up with knowledge institutions, yet at the same time leading politicians question scientific truths, and the new media landscape is awash with so-called alternative facts.”<sup>54</sup> Dominant themes in the present debate have always affected historians’ work with the past. Since the turn of the millennium, questions about knowledge have characterised much research and have thus also gathered historians in the new field.<sup>55</sup>

In his comprehensive study of the Humboldt University,<sup>56</sup> Johan Östling takes his point of departure from a knowledge-historical perspective and he emphasizes that writing

a history of the university as a history of knowledge implies an important clarification: discussions about the idea of the university are not just part of a public debate on ideas or a national tradition. They represent an aspect of the changing nature and institutional foundations of knowledge: the kind of knowledge that is worth achieving, the way in which it is generated and mediated, what its organisation and structure look like, and so on.<sup>57</sup>

Universities and other research institutions have never been closed entities isolated from the surrounding society. Rather, they are flexible institutions that have adapted to the demands, wishes and pressures of their surroundings. The Danish historian Else Hansen has stressed how “research and teaching are designed in a delicate balance between demands from the society that finances the institutions, demands from the disciplines’ own circle of immersion and new insights and the students’ demands for relevance.”<sup>58</sup>

The various people who belong to the university create, develop, and circulate a wealth of different forms of knowledge: practical knowledge, tacit knowledge, structural knowledge, scientific knowledge. These are all forms of knowledge that can form the basis of a historical study of the university as a knowledge institution. Knowledge is established and circulated in interaction with various people and institutions within and outside the university sphere. A study of the circulation of knowledge at the

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53 See Johan Östling, “Vad är kunskapshistoria,” *Historisk tidsskrift* 135, no. 1 (2015), 109–19.

54 Östling et al. (2018), 10.

55 Simone Lässig, “The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda,” *Bulletin of the GHI Washington* (2016), 29–58; Maria Simonsen and Laura Skouvig, “Videnshistorie: Nye veje i historievitenskaberne,” *Temp – tidsskrift for historie* (2019), 5–26.

56 Östling et al., (2018), 8.

57 Ibid.

58 “Universiteter er fleksible institutioner, der gennem historien har tilpasset sig krav, ønsker og pres fra de samfund, som har understøttet universiteterne, og som har modtaget viden og uddannede kandidater fra universiteterne. Forskning og undervisning udformes i en delikat balance mellem krav fra det samfund, som finansierer institutionerne, krav fra fagenes egen kreds om fordybelse og nye indsigter og studenternes krav om relevans.” Hansen (2017), 11.

universities makes visible how knowledge is converted, anchored, and changed and thus also the universities strong interaction with the outside world throughout the ages.

Another Scandinavian historian, Thomas Karlsohn, has previously described thoroughly, the idea of the university, its purpose and meaning, is historically contingent.<sup>59</sup> The role and function of the university is not set in stone, but constantly up for discussion, depending, among other factors, on the changing perceptions of the importance of knowledge and research.<sup>60</sup>

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59 Karlsohn, (2016), 17–157.

60 Else Hansen, “Hvordan bruges universitetshistorie?” *Uddannelseshistorie. Årbog for Selskabet for Skole- og Uddannelseshistorie* 43 (2009), 88–98.

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## Does Curriculum Fail Indigenous Political Aspirations? Sovereignty and Australian History and Social Studies Curriculum

*Mati Keynes, Beth Marsden & Archie Thomas*

**Abstract** • Through analysis of curricular materials (syllabus documents and supplementary readers) from the late-nineteenth century to the present, this article explores the role of school curriculum in shaping understandings of Indigenous political aspirations in the Australian context. It juxtaposes curricular materials with significant occasions of Indigenous political activism in Australia since the late-nineteenth century: the Coranderrk campaign of the 1870–80s, the Wave Hill Walk Off in 1966, the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in 1972, and the Bicentenary protests of 1988. From this analysis, five narrative sub-themes were developed—Invisibility, Benevolence, Obfuscation, Innocence, and Acknowledgement—which captured the ways that Indigenous sovereignty, nationhood, and political legitimacy had been represented. In drawing out some continuities and changes to curricular representations of First Nations’ and settler sovereignty, nationhood, and political legitimacy over a one hundred year period, this article highlights the uneven ways that curriculum has, and continues to, represent political possibilities on the Australian continent. This article offers insights for Nordic contexts where there are also contests about legacies of colonialism in the public sphere, including in education.

**Keywords** • Indigenous education; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education; settler colonialism; Indigenous politics; history education

### Introduction

There is a groundswell of concern surrounding ways that curriculum, school-based and beyond, can address justice and truth in the present. In Australia, there is growing momentum for meaningful curricular reform expressed, for example, in the Yoorrook Justice Commission’s recent call to “overhaul history curriculum” in the state of Victoria.<sup>1</sup> This imperative in Victoria is likely to be echoed in the four other Australian jurisdictions where treaty processes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Australian states and territories—which incorporate truth commissions—are underway or proposed.<sup>2</sup> In late 2023 there will be a national referendum on whether to establish an Indigenous ‘Voice to parliament’ in the Australian constitution, a body

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1 First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria, “‘Tyerri Yoo-Rrook’ (Seed of Truth): Report to the Yoo-Rrook Justice Commission,” June 2021.

2 Following Australian convention, we capitalise Indigenous. We use this term to refer to Indigenous people internationally, and ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’ in Australia. When the distinction is necessary, we use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, First Nations’ people, or refer specifically to the Indigenous Country or Nation. We use ‘Aboriginal’ in contexts where Aboriginal, rather than Torres Strait Islander people, are the dominant population group.

which would support processes of treaty and truth-telling.<sup>3</sup> After several decades of distracting ‘history wars’ and conservative dissension about history curriculum, the political climate appears primed for meaningful curricular reform.

However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have long pointed to the failures of school curriculum, particularly history curriculum, to accurately represent their experiences and enact social transformation.<sup>4</sup> This raises questions about the decolonial potential of history curriculum. Curricular reforms tend to be complex struggles between powerful groups and social movements to legitimate their knowledge, and generally result in compromises favouring the powerful.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Canada’s far-reaching curricular reforms following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of 2009–2015, scholars have shown how Indigenous knowledges, including histories of state-sponsored violence such as Residential Schools, have been enclosed in ways that do not disrupt or decolonise the political unit of ‘Canada’ as the unquestioned frame of reference giving sense to the story of the nation.<sup>6</sup> Challenging these limited approaches to history curriculum is also a prescient concern in the Australian context, and in Nordic contexts—including in Sweden, Finland, and Norway—where truth commissions are ongoing and which are likely to have significant implications for the education sector.

In this article, we examine how school curriculum has constructed understandings of sovereignty, nationhood, and political legitimacy on the Australian continent across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We focus on significant occasions of First Nations’ political activism in Australia since the late-nineteenth century. Following First Nations’ scholars and activists, we recognise these as meaningful expressions of enduring First Nations’ sovereignty and self-determination.<sup>7</sup> Then, we juxtapose these moments against Australian school curricular materials (syllabus documents and supplementary readers) used at and around the time. Inspired by a recent, large-scale study of representations of First Nations’ political aspirations in Australian news media from 1972 to 2017, we draw attention to the role of school materials in shaping understandings of First Nations’ political demands and aspirations in the Australian context.<sup>8</sup> By analysing the stories, discourses and narratives about sovereignty, nationhood and political legitimacy embedded in curriculum, we explore curricula as contested artefacts amidst current debates over treaty, truth-telling, and decolonisation.

3 Referendum Council, “Final Report of the Referendum Council,” June 30, 2017, 31.

4 See, for example, Anita Heiss, ed., *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2017), 14, 88, 117, 122, 137; Referendum Council, “Final Report of the Referendum Council,” June 30, 2017, 17, 19, 32; Doris Paton, “Walking in Two Worlds,” *Independent Education*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2012.

5 Michael W. Apple, *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age*, third edition (New York: Routledge, 2003).

6 James Miles, “Curriculum Reform in a Culture of Redress: How Social and Political Pressures Are Shaping Social Studies Curriculum in Canada,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 53, no. 1 (2021), 47–64.

7 Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); John Maynard, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The Origins of Australian Aboriginal Activism* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007).

8 Archie Thomas, Andrew Jakubowicz, and Heidi Norman, *Does the Media Fail Aboriginal Political Aspirations?: 45 Years of News Media Reporting of Key Political Moments* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2020).



## Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination

In 1770, Captain James Cook and crew of the British *Endeavour* ‘claimed’ the eastern portion of the Australian continent taking possession for the British crown. In 1788 the First Fleet under command of Captain Arthur Phillip invaded the land of the Gweagal clan of the Dharawal nation at Kamay (Botany Bay), and shortly after, the colony of New South Wales was formally proclaimed. This was the first of many illegal claims across the Australian continent grounded in *terra nullius*, the fiction that land “belonged to no one.” That claim was grounded in a Westphalian conception of sovereignty and a Western ontological system of extractive, possessive relations. The failure to negotiate with or recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as “distinct political communities with an inherent right to sovereignty and self-government” has “structured the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Australian state.”<sup>9</sup> Today, the Australian state remains the only former British settler colony to have no treaties with Indigenous peoples.

Our analysis centres Indigenous sovereignty as enduring, dynamic, and distinct from the British, Westphalian conception of sovereignty asserted upon invasion. On the Australian continent there are multiple Indigenous polities with self-determining rights distinct from the wider settler body politic. Indigenous scholars in the Australian context, including Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Amangu Yamatji historian Crystal McKinnon for example, have theorised Indigenous sovereignty as ontological—ways of being—that are “inextricably connected to being in and of our lands” and not reducible to a Western legal framework.<sup>10</sup> Fiona Nicoll explains Indigenous sovereignty is “less a desire for European concepts, institutions and values” than it is a “refusal to recognise the legitimacy of the sovereignty in the name in which their [European] invasion continues to be justified.” This makes sovereignty a “challenge to the legitimacy of non-Indigenous habitation and governance.”<sup>11</sup> As Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million has explained, “Indigenous people pre-exist nation-states and reject nation-state authority to grant them a right to a political self-determination that they have never relinquished.”<sup>12</sup> Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination remain vexed realities for settler states that expose their tenuous political legitimacy.

These historically troubled relations between Indigenous polities and nation states also characterise the Nordic region. In Finland, Norway, and Sweden, there are no treaties with the Indigenous Sámi people of Sápmi. There are Sámi Parliaments in each state that do not provide self-government, but which afford varying degrees of consultation and mechanisms for the oversight of Sámi interests.<sup>13</sup> Kalaallit Nunaat

9 Alison Whittaker, Harry Hobbs, and Lindon Coombes, eds., *Treaty-Making – 250 Years Later* (Alexandria: The Federation Press, 2022).

10 Crystal McKinnon, *Striking Back: The 1980s Aboriginal Art Movement and the Performativity of Sovereignty*, *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2021); Moreton-Robinson (2015).

11 Fiona Nicoll, “Defacing Terra Nullius and Facing the Public Secret of Indigenous Sovereignty in Australia,” *Borderlands* 1, no. 2 (2002), 1.

12 Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013).

13 Nordic Policy Centre, “Sámi Parliaments,” *The Australia Institute*, accessed 22 Oct 2022, [https://www.nordicpolicycentre.org.au/Sámi\\_parliaments](https://www.nordicpolicycentre.org.au/Sámi_parliaments)

(Greenland) was a Danish colony until 1953, when it was incorporated into the Danish Realm as an autonomous territory, notably, without consultation. Today, Greenland is a self-governing country within the Danish Realm with a large majority Indigenous Inuit population, yet key aspects of Greenlandic politics remain under Danish control including foreign policy and security. As noted, there are truth commissions currently ongoing in Norway, Finland, and Sweden concerning the treatment of the Sámi people, and following the Greenlandic Reconciliation Commission (2014–2017), in June 2022 a large-scale investigation into Danish wrongdoings in Greenland was announced, with Danish cooperation.<sup>14</sup>

History and social studies curricula has been a favoured tool of Australian governments to legitimate white possession. From the nineteenth-century through to the 1960s, instruction in history and civics was intended to develop citizenship and patriotism, and conveyed a white settler-national master narrative of benevolent progress.<sup>15</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been campaigning since at least the late-nineteenth century for a truthful acknowledgement of dispossession and colonial violence in curriculum and beyond, as part of a broader suite of political aspirations including land repatriation and treaty-making. First Nations scholars have urged these be understood as expressions of Indigenous sovereignty and not only as responses to colonial domination.<sup>16</sup> The Australian settler state has ignored, engaged, and failed those aspirations in countless ways.

In the Nordic states, self-determination, in and through education, has been an important priority for Sámi people and communities. Histories of education have been important for establishing truths about systemic wrongdoing directed towards Sámi people in the past. This includes histories of missionary education for Sámi children since the 1600s, as well as post-1800 efforts at nationalisation and associated racialized and assimilatory schemes, such as the ‘nomad school’ system of compulsory boarding schools for Sámi children in Sweden and state policies of ‘Norwegianisation’ operative in Norway from roughly 1850 to 1980.<sup>17</sup> Education schemes with assimilatory effects have been the subject of recent truth and justice processes in the Nordic states including the contemporary commissions.<sup>18</sup> The status of Sámi education, including

14 Martin Breum, “The Largest Ever Probe into Possible Historical Danish Wrongdoings in Greenland is About to Begin,” *Arctic Today*, accessed 22 May 2023, <https://www.arctictoday.com/the-largest-ever-probe-into-possible-historical-danish-wrongdoings-in-greenland-is-about-to-begin/>

15 M. Keynes, “History Education, Citizenship and State Formation,” in *Handbook of Historical Studies in Education*, ed. Tanya Fitzgerald, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Singapore: Springer, 2020).

16 Crystal McKinnon, “Indigenous Music as a Space of Resistance,” in *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity*, ed. Tracey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmonds (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 255–72.

17 Daniel Lindmark, “Sámi Schools, Female Enrolment, and the Teaching Trade: Sámi Women’s Involvement in Education in Early Modern Sweden,” In *Sámi Educational History in a Comparative International Perspective*, ed. Otso Kortekangas, Pigga Keskitalo, Jukka Nyssönen, Andrej Kotljarchuk, Merja Paksuniemi, and David Sjögren (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 13–26; Charlotta Svonni, “The Swedish Sámi Boarding School Reforms in the Era of Educational Democratisation, 1956 to 1969,” *Paedagogica Historica*, (July 5, 2021), 1–19; Henry Minde, “Assimilation of the Sami – Implementation and Consequences,” *Acta Borealia* 20, no. 2 (December 1, 2003), 121–46.

18 Daniel Lindmark and Olle Sundström, *The Sami and the Church of Sweden: Results from a White Paper Project* (Möklinta: Gidlunds förlag, 2018).

representations of history, language and political aspirations in current national school curricula, differs across the Nordic states.<sup>19</sup> While a full summary is not possible here, research on representations of Sámi people and culture in national standards has been largely critical. For instance, Charlotta Svonni's analysis of the 2011 Swedish national curriculum found Sámi knowledge, including history, culture, and contemporary perspectives, was marginalised,<sup>20</sup> while research on Norwegian social studies textbooks and curricula has found essentialist, stereotypical, and othering representations of Sámi people therein.<sup>21</sup>

### Sources and methods

School curriculum materials are a powerful heuristic for considering the positioning and privileging of certain stories, and the tensions and anxieties surrounding sovereignty, nationhood and the state's legitimacy. We adapted the 'story-discourse-narrative' approach to discourse analysis. This approach focuses on identifying the immediate 'story' told in representations of Indigenous peoples, and comparing it to contemporaneous Indigenous representations to analyse how a settler or Indigenous standpoint generates a particular lens in texts (Thomas et al., 2020). We adapted this comparative aspect to juxtapose actions of sovereignty and self-determination of (Australian) national significance and importance to the Aboriginal polity with how curriculum has been used to construct and legitimate white settler conceptions of sovereignty, nationhood, and political legitimacy. We undertook an initial round of deductive coding using these three overlapping themes. We then explored the discourses called upon in the curriculum—understood as ways of knowing and talking about people and ideas that are both products of, and produce, the realities of Indigenous-settler relations. Lastly, we considered how these discourses developed broader national narratives about Australia.<sup>22</sup> Through that process, we identified five repeated and overlapping narrative sub-themes that capture how Indigenous sovereignty, nationhood, and political legitimacy had been represented: Invisibility, Benevolence, Obfuscation, Innocence, Acknowledgement (see Table 1). Our analysis draws attention to the ways that curriculum has been troubled by enduring Indigenous sovereignty.

We concentrated on popular and readily accessible curriculum materials used in the state of Victoria. Our aim was not to find a quantitatively representative sample of curricular materials, but to zoom in on an instructive case that can prompt broader investigation across both the Australian and Nordic contexts. The primary sources

19 Pigga Keskitalo, "Timelines and Strategies in Sami Education," in *Indigenising Education and Citizenship*, ed. Torjer Andreas Olsen and Hilde Sollid (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 2022), 33–52.

20 Charlotta Svonni, "At the Margin of Educational Policy: Sámi/Indigenous Peoples in the Swedish National Curriculum 2011." *Creative Education* 6, no. 9 (2015), 898–906.

21 Kristin Gregers Eriksen, "Teaching About the Other in Primary Level Social Studies: The Sami in Norwegian Textbooks," *JSSE - Journal of Social Science Education* 17, no. 2 (2018), 57–67; Kristin Gregers Eriksen, "The Indigenous Sami Citizen and Norwegian National Identity: Tensions in Curriculum Discourses." *Human Rights Education Review* 1, no. 2 (2018), 25–45; Eimi Segarra Segarra, "Representation of Indigenous Peoples in the Education Curriculum in Norway and Alberta, Canada A Postcolonial Analysis," Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Iceland, 2019.

22 Archie Thomas et al., 2020.

analysed in this article include state-produced supplementary reading materials—the *Victorian Readers* (1928–1950s), the *School Paper* (1896–1971)—and official syllabus guideline documents produced by the Education Department.<sup>23</sup> We begin our comparison with a key moment of sovereign activism in Indigenous politics—the 1880s Coranderrk campaign—and close one century later with the Treaty '88 campaign and the (re)articulation of Indigenous political aspirations. The methodological approach is necessarily shaped by the historical contexts of curriculum, as explained within each section.

Table 1

Sub-Theme	How sub-theme is reflected in narratives	Engagement with impacts of colonisation on Indigenous people
Invisibility	Indigenous people are either not mentioned at all, or are imagined as disappeared	None
Benevolence	The state and settler individuals are portrayed as paternalistic, and/or progress and enlightenment is represented as 'naturally' unfolding due to white 'civilisation'	Colonisation is considered beneficial for Indigenous people
Obfuscation	State and individual settler violence is obscured, elided, minimised, and/or made to seem natural or necessary	The impacts of colonisation are considered inevitable
Innocence	Injustice/violence is positioned as past and temporal distance between past violence/dispossession is emphasised	The impacts of colonisation are considered regrettable yet fixed
Acknowledgement	Distinct Indigenous aspirations, sovereignty, nationhood, political legitimacy are acknowledged	The impacts of colonisation are acknowledged with an emphasis on damage/survival. Acknowledgment of Indigenous refusal/resilience/self-determination is rare.

### Protectionism and the Coranderrk Campaign

In 1861, the colony of Port Philip (later the state of Victoria) established a system of reserves for Aboriginal people. The colonial government held the erroneous view that Aboriginal people would soon 'die out' and decided to confine Aboriginal people on reserves and missions under the authority of 'protectors' in a series of policies and legislation which has collectively become known as 'protectionism'. Coranderrk, one of the six main reserves, was established in 1863 and was located closest to the growing city of Melbourne on the land of the Wurundjeri people. Like many of the other reserves, the site for Coranderrk was selected by Wurundjeri leaders, on fertile country in the Yarra Valley. It was a successful and productive farm that, by the early 1870s, was highly coveted by settlers who exerted pressure on the government to open

<sup>23</sup> Victoria Education Department. *The Victorian readers*, 1928–1930; Victoria Education Department. *The School Paper for class III*, 1896–1911; Victoria Education Department. *The School Paper for grades V and VI*, 1912–1968; Education Dept. of Victoria, *Meteor*, 1969–1971; Education Dept. of Victoria, *Orbit*, 1969–1971.

the land up for purchase. The government coerced residents at Coranderrk to relocate elsewhere, leading to a worsening of conditions and increasingly restrictive rules controlling Wurundjeri peoples' lives.<sup>24</sup> The community at Coranderrk campaigned to protect the reserve and stop further dispossession. They drew on the support of influential white supporters, wrote letters and petitions to government ministers and newspapers, and sent deputations to Melbourne over several years, in an early example of organised resistance centred on land-rights and self-determination. It culminated in the 1881 Parliamentary Coranderrk Inquiry (*'The Board Appointed to Enquire into, and Report upon, the Present Condition and Management of the Coranderrk Station'*) held in Melbourne and at Coranderrk.<sup>25</sup>

The Coranderrk community's campaign and their success in securing an inquiry drew sustained attention to Indigenous political aspirations for land and for the end of protectionism. Unfortunately, it afforded no lasting guarantees for the residents. The government eventually sold off and closed Coranderrk in 1924 after passing new highly restrictive legislation with assimilationist intent. Importantly, the Inquiry has created a lasting public record of Aboriginal activism and testimony that continues to be significant for Aboriginal communities in Victoria and more widely.<sup>26</sup>

### Early twentieth century curriculum

In the twenty-odd years between 1872 and 1895, shortly after the passage of the Constitution Acts, Education Acts were passed in the six Australian colonies. These were known popularly as the 'free, compulsory and secular' acts and purported to extend elementary education to all, regardless of gender, religion or race. The immense bureaucratic effort of implementing the Acts meant that compulsory elementary schooling rolled out slowly throughout the next century. Common educational materials used in colonial Port Philip and later Victoria, for instruction in reading, spelling and comprehension, included the *Royal Readers* (1877-1928), *Victorian Readers* (1928-1950s), and *School Paper* (1896-1968). These materials have received extensive scholarly attention as important sources for understanding how the state sought to shape children as British subjects and Australian citizens.<sup>27</sup> Largely, readers oriented learners as members of the British Empire and used history to legitimate the actions of state-builders as part of a racialised and gendered narrative of progress.<sup>28</sup> The *School Paper* provided a supplementary 'Australian flavour' to the imported reading books from Britain, and first emphasised Australia as an outpost of Empire and then

24 Giordano Nanni and Andrea James, *Coranderrk: We Will Show the Country* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2013).

25 Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2005), 166–181.

26 Jennifer Balint et al., "The 'Minutes of Evidence' Project: Creating Collaborative Fields of Engagement with the Past, Present and Future," in *Settler Colonial Governance in Nineteenth-Century Victoria*, by Lynette Russell, ed. Leigh Boucher (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015).

27 Phillip Anton Cormack, "Children's School Reading and Curriculum Innovation at the Edge of Empire: The School Paper in Late Nineteenth-Century Australia," *History of Education Review* 42, no. 2 (2013), 153–69; Sianan Healy, "Race, Citizenship and National Identity in The School Paper, 1946–1968," *History of Education Review* 44, no. 1 (2015), 5–22.

28 Rosalie Triolo, "Our War and the Pacific': Allies and Enemies in Victoria's Education Department Publications, Australia, 1914–18," *History of Education Review* 39, no. 2 (2010), 14–23.

a place of economic and ‘racial’ progress.<sup>29</sup> Scholars have identified themes such as Empire, noble deeds, adventure, exploration, race, honour and duty as common to these texts throughout the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>30</sup> We develop this work to explore how the materials represented Aboriginal sovereignty, nationhood, and legitimacy, through discussion of three sub-themes: obfuscation, invisibility, and innocence.

Events such as the closure of Coranderrk, and the political campaigning of the residents to challenge restrictive and racist legislation, did not register in curriculum documents throughout the twentieth century. Instead, curriculum documents largely reflected the sub-theme of the obfuscation (and justification) of settler violence. For example, materials routinely depicted white settlers as experiencing extreme adversity and seeking to ‘tame’ the hostile landscape and its owners. An extract from George Essex Evans’ poem ‘The Nation Builders’ in the *Victorian Reader* VIII from 1929 illustrates this:

A handful of heroes scattered to conquer a continent—  
Thirst, and fever, and famine, drought, and ruin, and flood,  
And the bones that bleach on the sandhill, and the spears that redden with blood.  
And the pitiless might of the molten skies at noon on the sun-cracked plain,  
And the walls of the northern jungles shall front them ever in vain,  
Till the land that lies like a giant asleep shall wake to the victory won,  
And the hearts of the Nation Builders shall know that the work is done.<sup>31</sup>

Here, the struggle of ‘pioneers’ against the landscape, climate, and Indigenous people are romanticised as a necessary, heroic battle on multiple fronts that ought to be recognised by the greater populace. In these struggles against adversity, settler violence is positioned as a ‘natural’ response, a view which ties into obfuscation as well as themes of innocence and invisibility. The naturalisation of this violence was bolstered by Whiggish conceptions of history as a march of progress and related eugenicist ‘dying race’ theories. A prominent example of this is ‘The Last of His Tribe,’ a poem first published in 1864 by Henry Kendall and long published in the *Victorian Readers*.<sup>32</sup> As the title implies, the poem depicts the lonely death of a sole Aboriginal man, lamenting the loss of his family, culture and community, presumably as a result of colonisation. The 1930 publication of the *Victorian Readers: Fourth Book* contains a one verse-poem by Mary Gilmore, ‘The Lost Tribes,’ that closely echoes Kendall’s: “Never again from the night, the night that has taken/ Shall ever the tribes return to tell us their tale/ They lie in a sleep, whence none shall ever waken/ To make a shadow at noon or follow the quail.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Cormack (2013), 157.

<sup>30</sup> Cormack (2013); S. G. Firth, “Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School 1880–1914: An Analysis of School Texts,” *Melbourne Studies in Education* 12, no. 1 (1970), 123–59; A. R. Trethewey, “Social and Educational Influences on the Definition of a Subject: History in Victoria, 1850–1954,” in *Contemporary Studies in the Curriculum*, ed. Peter William Musgrave (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1974), 95–112.

<sup>31</sup> *Victorian Reader: Eighth Book*, (Education Department Victoria, 1929).

<sup>32</sup> Henry Kendall, “The Last of His Tribe,” *Victorian Reader: Eighth Book*, (Education Department Victoria, 1929) 10–11. The poem was first published in *The Poetical Works of Henry Kendall*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1923).

<sup>33</sup> Mary Gilmore, “The Lost Tribes,” *Victorian Readers: Fourth Book* (Education Department Victoria,

Open violence against Indigenous people was ongoing during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, and a range of overtly oppressive legislation sought to control Indigenous people while claiming to ‘smooth the pillow of the dying race.’

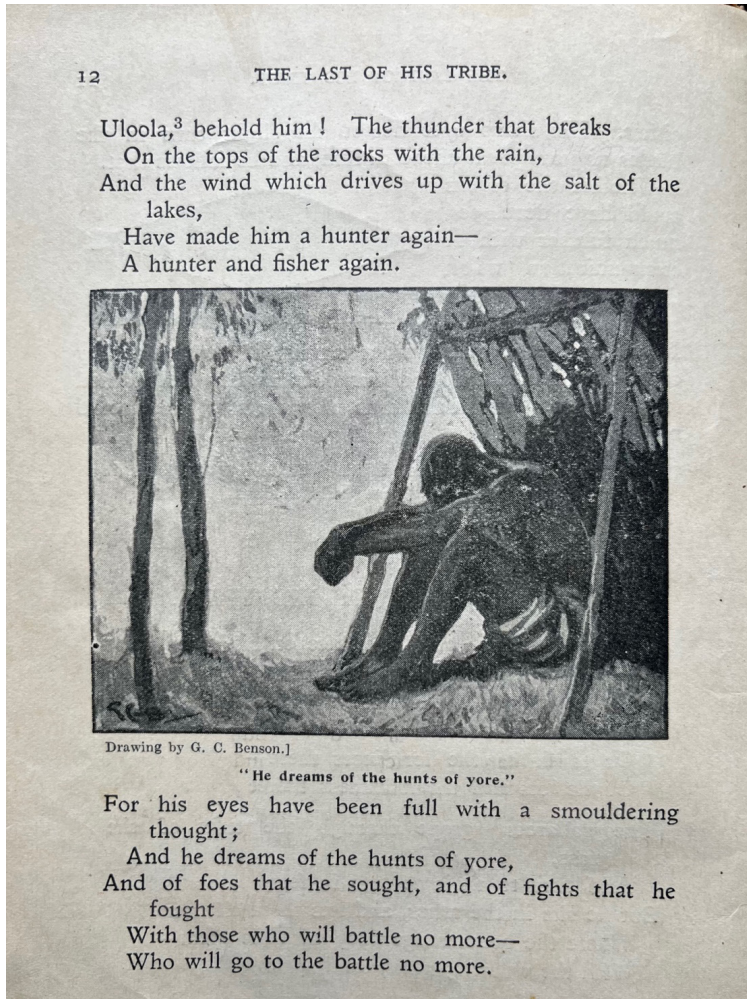


Figure 1

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Other narratives centre on imminent violence between settlers and Indigenous people. Paternalistic sentiments are also common throughout, reflecting the theme of benevolence. For example, ‘A Black Heroine’ from the September 1954 *School Paper* describes a response of a group of Aboriginal people to several white settlers travelling up a river. The narrator explains, a “white man slowly raised his gun to his shoulder.”

After a young Aboriginal girl diffuses the potential for violence, the white man with the gun claims it was a joke:

It was then that the stranger lowered his weapon and spoke quickly to his dark companion. "I would not have shot any of them," he said. "I just wanted to see what they would do; but it was a mean joke to play. Tell them, Tommy, that it was only a joke. I'll leave them this bit of tobacco and sugar, to let them know how much I admire the little girl's courage." And that, surely, is one of the stories of the white man's meeting with the blacks that is worth the telling.<sup>34</sup>

School materials also routinely objectified Indigenous people using offensive racial stereotypes and homogenous descriptions. These devices were used to create emotional distance between the presumed audience of these texts (white teachers and learners) and Indigenous people. They worked to legitimate violence and dispossession as racially sanctioned and reflect the themes of innocence and obfuscation. A piece describing the discovery of "a few scattered stones," titled 'The Old Inhabitants' and authored by renowned war correspondent CEW Bean, illustrates some of the ways that temporal distance was used to legitimate white possession and so-called 'civilisation'. It noted:

Those stones spoke of an age before the dawn of history. On the spot where we stood, we knew that someone—some one in the blank, utter darkness before Australian history began, some human being belonging to a time of which no history will ever be written, nor yet even the bare outline of it will ever be known—some women in a long-forgotten camp must have knelt there and polished those flat stones with the grinding to powder of the fruit of the nardoo, the blackfellow's poor equivalent of flour.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, and perhaps surprisingly, materials from this period also routinely and explicitly acknowledged settler dispossession of Indigenous lands, a move which implicitly acknowledges Indigenous sovereignty and which reflects the theme of acknowledgement. For example, in a reference to the reserve system and government protectionist policies, the 1911 edition of *The School Paper* for Class III, a piece titled 'How the Australian Blacks Lived' noted:

There are several centres in Victoria where the few blacks that remain now live. Houses have been put up for them by the Government, and they are given clothes and food, and kindly treated. In spite of the care that is taken to make them comfortable, I think they were, perhaps, happier before the white people came and took their country from them.<sup>36</sup>

## From assimilation to self-determination: the 1966 Wave Hill Walkoff and the

<sup>34</sup> Victoria Education Department, *The School Paper for grades V and VI*, February 1954.

<sup>35</sup> CEW Bean, "The Old Inhabitants," *Victorian Reader: Eighth Book*, Education Department Victoria, 5–8, first published in *The 'Dreadnought' of the Darling* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956).

<sup>36</sup> Some forty years later, this implied recognition of sovereignty remained evident: in Feb 1951, *The School Paper* serial "Billy Bear and the Aborigines" noted matter-of-factly that "Bill meets a dark-skinned boy and girl-their tribes once owned our land."



## 1972 Tent Embassy

From the 1930s, there was a marked rise in organised Aboriginal political activity in south-eastern Australia. This included the formation of the Aborigines Progressive Association and the Australian Aborigines League, marked by key protests such as the Day of Mourning in Sydney in 1938 and the Cummeragunja Walk-Off in 1939. Leaders such as Bill Ferguson and William Cooper drew on a range of broader political discourses of rights to campaign for land rights, political representation, and the vote. Cooper's protest against the Nazi government of Germany was likely intended to also draw attention to the persecution of Aboriginal people by Australian governments.<sup>37</sup> In the post-war era, as the atrocities of the Holocaust contributed to growing awareness in Western societies of the dangers of racial discrimination, Australian governments and society became increasingly uncomfortable about the position and treatment of Indigenous people. While there were some moves to extend greater citizenship rights to Indigenous people, increasing unfavourable international interest in the rights of Indigenous people contributed to state and federal-level debates over citizenship rights, including the vote.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, a policy shift occurred—at different times in different states—towards the cultural and economic assimilation of Indigenous people.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 2: “Aborigines day of mourning, 26 January 1938,” Q 059/9 Mitchell Library (Printed Books Collection).<sup>40</sup>

37 Gary Foley, “Australia and the Holocaust: A Koori Perspective,” in *The Power of Whiteness and Other Essays: Aboriginal Studies Occasional Paper (1)* (Melbourne: Centre for Indigenous Education, University of Melbourne, 1999), 74–87.

38 John Chesterman and Brian Galligan, *Citizens Without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 161–62.

39 Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800-2000* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000), 439–43.

40 Reproduced with permission of the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, Q 059/9 Mitchell Library (Printed Books Collection).

The momentum of Aboriginal political movements grew during this period. The 1965 Freedom Rides (modelled on those in the US) through NSW, and the fight to retain the sole remaining Aboriginal reserve at Lake Tyers reserve in Victoria in the same year, exposed the incongruity of assimilation legislation that claimed to enable Aboriginal people's access to economic and social 'equality' with the desire of Aboriginal people for self-determination.<sup>41</sup>

During this period, organised campaigns for land, often using union tactics and supported by unionists, were taking place across the country, with increasing frequency and publicity. In 1965 in the Northern Territory, a move by the North Australian Workers Union to amend the agreement on working conditions for pastoral workers to remove discrimination against Aboriginal workers was opposed by pastoralists, and although the government agreed to the amendment, they delayed implementation for three years. In 1966, Vincent Lingiari, a Gurindji man upon whose lands the Wave Hill cattle station was located, led a strike in protest of the poor working conditions the Gurindji people endured under the control of the Vestey Brothers, who owned the station. Ostensibly a campaign for working rights, it became a struggle for control over the land. The strikers remained for seven years as illegal 'occupiers' of their own land. During this period the Gurindji people campaigned for their land to be returned to them, sending a petition to the British Crown's representative in Australia—the Governor-General—who rejected the claim. The strikers sought publicity for their cause and gained support from around the country before a change of federal government in 1972. In 1973, the station lease was surrendered and divided between Gurindji and the Vestey Brothers. In 1975, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam visited and ceremonially handed back a small parcel of land to the Gurindji, captured in a famous image of Whitlam pouring sand through Lingiari's hands.<sup>42</sup>

A successful federal referendum in 1967, following Indigenous campaigning, gave the federal government the power to overrule states and make special laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, the referendum made "very little obvious difference in the years immediately following."<sup>43</sup> Then in 1971, the Yolngu land rights case (known as the Gove case) was defeated and the idea of Aboriginal native title to land rejected. As the conservative federal government continued to stall on land rights and the states clung to assimilationist policies, sections of the Aboriginal rights movement turned to radicalism.

In January 1972, four Aboriginal men set up a camp on the lawns of Parliament House, Canberra. They named themselves the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, to symbolise the Aboriginal claim for sovereignty, and demanded native title in Australian cities as well as national land rights legislation, immediate compensation of \$6 billion, and for an Aboriginal state across the Northern Territory.<sup>44</sup> The protest grew swiftly, and

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41 On the Freedom Rides, see Charles Perkins, *A Bastard Like Me*, (Ure Smith, 1975); Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2002); for the fight for Lake Tyers, see Sue Taffe, "Fighting for Lake Tyers," *The La Trobe Journal*, 85 (2010), 157–70.

42 See Charlie Ward, *A Handful of Sand: The Gurindji Struggle, After the Walk-Off*, (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2016).

43 Jennifer Clark, *Aborigines and Activism: Race and the coming of the sixties to Australia* (Crawley, WA: UWA Press, 2008), 211.

44 Kevin Gilbert, *Because A White Man'll Never Do It* (New York: HarperCollins, 1973).

the Embassy sent its ‘diplomats’ all around the country to protests. By May 1972, the government attempted to shut the protest down, but the government’s efforts only helped to grow the movement as more supporters joined in attempts to defend the Embassy from police. These Embassy protests sparked over two decades of sustained campaigns for land and treaty rights across Australia.

### Mid-twentieth century curriculum

While there was a plethora of First Nations’-led campaigns for rights and self-determination during the 1960s, these events did not penetrate the school curriculum significantly. Instead, in the post-war era until the late-1960s, school materials reflected subtle shifts in Australian politics and society, with the themes of obfuscation, innocence and invisibility remaining dominant in materials. The growth of Australian economy and industry become increasingly prominent in historical narratives of pioneers conquering the harsh landscape, under threat from dangerous weather and animals, with the theme of obfuscation enduring through the positioning of Indigenous people as ‘hostile’ to white settlement. Take this example from, ‘The story of sheep in Australia’ from the September 1954 *School Paper*:

You must remember that the pioneers encountered great hardships....there were floods, followed by droughts; there were hostile aborigines [sic], and others who were not hostile but who, like the “jolly swagman”, thought that the “wooly kangaroos” were meant to be eaten.

First Nations’ people were excluded from the increasingly affluent white Australian society in the post-war period. When First Nations’ people were represented in school materials, it was as being outside modern Australia, both physically and culturally, in contrast to white man’s ‘achievements’, themes which reflect the themes of innocence and benevolence. In late-1960s materials there was a heavy emphasis on representations of foreign cultures and on understanding students from far off places. This reflected the UNESCO-driven agenda of developing ‘international understanding’ as part of a post-war concern with combating racial intolerance, as well as Australia’s increasing intake of migrants from Europe, receding British influence, and emphasis therefore on assimilation of racialised ‘others’ into the white nation.<sup>45</sup>

During this period, Australian governments became increasingly sensitive to international scrutiny regarding Indigenous people and to racial discrimination more broadly. Representations of colonial-era violence shifted from being characterised by inevitability to include sentiments of reticence and regret by the mid-1960s, reflecting changing moral attitudes to violence in the post-war era. This is clear in changing representations of early colonisers in the school materials. For example, in 1929, colonial ‘explorers’, such as Scotsman Angus McMillan, had been described in the *Victorian Reader* as such:

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<sup>45</sup> Education Dept. of Victoria, *Meteor*, 1969–1971; Education Dept. of Victoria, *Orbit*, 1969–1971; Matilda Keynes and Beth Marsden, “Ontology, Sovereignty, Legitimacy: Two Key Moments When History Curriculum Was Challenged in Public Discourse and the Curricular Effects, Australia 1950s and 2000s,” *History of Education Review* 50, no. 2 (2021): 130–45.

If any men were ever worth your knowing, these are they: and, if you once get to know them intimately in their own records, you will have men to remember and admire all your life.<sup>46</sup>

By 1951, McMillan was described in the *School Paper* as being “[a]lways a friend of the natives” and was “made protector of the local aborigines [sic] and stood very high in their regard.”<sup>47</sup> In a 1965 issue, however, the poem, ‘Croajingalong’ more accurately depicted the violent, exterminatory actions of McMillan, who “strode through wilderness that has become the busy Orbost road.”<sup>48</sup> The poem explicitly acknowledged McMillian’s participation in a massacre of an Aboriginal community, however, it justifies his action. The poem showed that “strong Black warriors” had “raided Peter Imlay”, “speared Peter’s cattle” and “killed a white cook” (real-life events that took place as part of the rescue of a kidnapped Aboriginal girl). The poem described the “white man’s vengeance”, “how settlers armed with shot-guns wiped out the Doora tribe”, before declaring that “All this is ancient history.”

In distinction from the early twentieth century materials, these did not acknowledge dispossession. Instead, they constructed First Nations’ people as invisible in contemporary society, and belonging to a past time, while positioning settlers’ wrongdoings as “ancient history.” This reflected the assimilationist notion that there were no Aboriginal Victorians remaining, albeit underpinned by sentiments of regret. Yet at this time in the 1960s, Aboriginal civil rights movements were growing in prominence and awareness of both the impact and ongoing effects of colonisation was increasing. Declaring a colonial massacre “ancient history” creates division between past and present in a political context where Aboriginal people were using sophisticated methods to organise large-scale protests and collective actions for self-determination.

### Reconciliation and the 1988 Bicentenary Protest

The attitude of many Aboriginal people towards the federal government had increasingly soured in the lead up to the 1988 Bicentenary of British invasion. Then-Prime Minister Bob Hawke had failed to deliver on his promise for national land rights while simultaneously pushing for Aboriginal involvement in Bicentenary celebrations. The leaders of the Aboriginal movement saw an opportunity to pressure Hawke while the world watched.<sup>49</sup> Preparations for the celebrations had been in place for nearly a decade. As a privately funded re-enactment of the First Fleet sailed into Sydney Harbour on January 26, 1988, alongside the government sponsored parade of ‘tall ships’, First Nations’ protestors from all over the country were there to greet it. The protests were led by the Treaty ’88 campaign. In their statement of principles, they declared Australia had been invaded by a foreign power with no treaty, but that “legal and political channels have been exhausted” within Australia and the future for treaty-making was in international law.<sup>50</sup>

46 *Victorian Reader: Eighth Book*, (Education Department Victoria, 1929), 95.

47 “Explorers and Pioneers: MacMillian and Strezlecki,” *The School Paper: Grades V&VI*, August 1951.

48 “Croajingalong,” *The School Paper: Grades V&VI*, 1965; Beth Marsden, “‘The System of Compulsory Education is Failing’: Assimilation, Mobility and Aboriginal Students in Victorian State Schools, 1961–1968,” *History of Education Review* 47, no. 2 (2018), 20.

49 Lorena Allam, “‘Like Writing in the Sand’: Media Discourse, the Barunga Statement and the Treaty ’88 campaign” in Archie Thomas et al, (2020), 87–98.

50 “Aboriginal Sovereignty – Treaty ’88 Campaign,” 1988, *Reason in Revolt* [website], accessed 31 Jan 2022, <https://www.reasoninrevolt.net.au/bib/PR0000385.htm>

The problem in Australia had been that ‘the thief is the judge’, reflecting the disappointment at the failure of the legal challenge to British sovereignty in 1979 (the Coe case). Later in 1988, the Barunga statement was delivered to Hawke at the Jawoyn community in Barunga by Wenten Rubunjta and Galarrwuy Yunupingu, the outcome of extensive Aboriginal discussions. The statement’s demands included self-determination, land rights, compensation for land loss, protection of sacred sites, the return of remains, linguistic and cultural rights, and the rights enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights. It called for laws for a national elected Aboriginal body, national land rights, and recognition of customary law by police and justice systems.<sup>51</sup> It concluded by urging the Australian government to support international law-making in support of Indigenous rights, and to negotiate a Treaty. Famously, Hawke signed the statement, and his last official act as Prime Minister was to hang the Barunga statement in Parliament House—however, his government made little progress on the statement’s goals.

### Late-twentieth century curriculum

The latter decades of the twentieth century saw growing public awareness of Australia’s foundation in frontier violence and racism, owing largely to successful campaigning of First Nations’ people. At the same time, the school history curriculum was characterised by intense contestation. From the late 1980s, the curriculum policy landscape shifted considerably in Victoria. The curriculum was slowly devolved from being educator-controlled and brought under the influence of new managerialist bureaucracies.<sup>52</sup> During the 1990s, history in the compulsory years remained entirely subsumed within an integrated social studies curriculum, making it difficult to know what was taught as history.<sup>53</sup> However, in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) 1991 senior Australian History syllabus we found a distinctively revisionist discourse that, for the first time, engaged closely with nationhood and legitimacy as contested concepts. In this final section, we analyse that new syllabus and its subsequent revisions between 1991-1999, amidst broader political backlash to acknowledgement.

The representational character of the history discipline itself was foregrounded in the ‘Introduction’ to the syllabus, which noted that “History is” both “the study and practice of making meaning of the past” and the “study of issues and problems of establishing and representing that meaning.” As Cairns has argued, “students were encouraged to challenge the notion of history as definitive, and to question how and for what purpose it becomes established and legitimated.”<sup>54</sup> The syllabus emphasised

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51 Allam (2020).

52 Craig Campbell and Helen Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Crow’s Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2014), 224–26. The Blackburn report of 1985 argued that upper secondary courses, originally designed for a minority, were now unsuited to the wider range of abilities of students, which led to the recommendation of the Victorian Certification of Education (VCE), finally introduced in 1991.

53 The SOSE Key Learning Area comprised the subjects of history, geography, economics, as well as Aboriginal Studies, Asian Social Studies, Studies of Religion and work education. See; Catherine Harris and Colin Marsh, “SOSE Curriculum Structures: Where to Now?” (ACSA Biennial Conference, Melbourne, 2007), 5. Rebecca Cairns, “The Representation of Asia in Victorian Senior Secondary History Curriculum” (Ph.D. thesis, Deakin University, 2017), 101, <https://dro.deakin.edu.au/eserv/DU:30107919/cairns-thererepresentation-2018.pdf>.

54 Cairns (2017), 112.

concepts such as power, race, gender, class and ideology and was quite explicitly ‘bottom up’ in its orientation.<sup>55</sup> The national story was critiqued for its silences concerning women and Aboriginal peoples’ contributions to national life. The study commenced with conceptions of history and historical revisionism, stating that “Australian history has often been represented as a single collective memory which functioned to shape the past into a cultural tradition.”<sup>56</sup> It also noted:

Australian cultural identity [...] had been seen by some as an actual reflection of Australian people, and by others as a galvanising mythology [...] more recently [it] has been perceived as an artificial imposition upon diverse cultures and identities, relying on constructions of the ‘other’ and the denial of difference.

In drawing explicit attention to the contested construction of Australian national identity, the syllabus unsettled the role of history curriculum itself in constructing representations of nationhood and explored its political and social implications.

Notably, the syllabus made explicit reference to “displacement”, “invasion” and “exclusion” in reference to Indigenous-settler relations, reflecting the theme of acknowledgement.<sup>57</sup> In distinction to earlier materials, the syllabus highlighted examples of Aboriginal resilience and self-determination noting: “Aboriginal people responded [to European economy and British law] by adapting their cultural practices and finding new ways of maintaining and expressing identity.” It noted the “displacement of Aboriginal modes of production and people” because of “European invasion.” The syllabus was intended to work as a framework to be elaborated at school level. This represented a considerable focus on the effects of and responses to colonisation compared with both prior, and later, more content-driven syllabus documents. The syllabus also maintained a sustained attention to the representational character of history, in three of four depth studies. This emphasis was gradually removed from later documents.

Finally, the syllabus also explicitly historicised the imposition of European modes of governance and political legitimacy, and the ongoing exercise of power and authority, including implications for Aboriginal people. It noted, for example:

The Europeans brought with them traditions and practices about the way power and authority should be organised, controlled and distributed. These practices reflected political values and beliefs about decision making, citizenship, participation and law enforcement which provided the basis for the way society developed and its relationship to the existing Aboriginal society.

In addition, reflective of the theme of acknowledgement, it also listed Aboriginal people as one of the “groups who advocated changes to the organisation and distribution of

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55 Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board, *History: Study Design*. (Carlton, Vic.: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board, 1990), 2. The ‘Aims of the study’ were broad and wide-reaching, comprising both specific skills (such as ‘responding to historical evidence’) but also far-reaching goals (such as ‘develop an understanding of the importance of social memory and the role of history in society’).

56 Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board, 1990, 47.

57 Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board, 1990, 48–50.

power” and directed students and teachers to consider their arguments. This is a rare example of curriculum explicitly engaging Aboriginal political activism and aspirations.

Sweeping changes to Victorian education followed the election of the neo-conservative Kennett government in 1992.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, in 1991, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody delivered its final report, making 339 recommendations for reform. This included recommendation number 290:

That curricula of schools at all levels should reflect the fact that Australia has an Aboriginal history and Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters. It is essential that Aboriginal viewpoints, interests, perceptions and expectations are reflected in curricula, teaching and administration of schools.<sup>59</sup>

In 1992 Prime Minister Keating explicitly acknowledged, for the first time, the culpability of white settler descendants for the harm caused by British colonisation and its legacies. However, the Victorian Curriculum Standards Framework (CSF) for primary and secondary schools in the compulsory years was published in 1995. It recommended reform of teacher training, TAFE, adult and pre-school education to suit a new focus on standardisation. The mid-1990s also marks the acceleration of the discourse around so-called “black armband” history—a label adopted by critics to dismiss revisionist accounts of national history for their challenge to settler narratives.<sup>60</sup> Conservative historians and politicians targeted ‘postmodern’ history in a sustained attempt to deny the violence of Australian colonisation.<sup>61</sup>

Subtle changes are evident in the 1994 senior history syllabus. References to the construction of Australian history as a single collective memory were removed. References to “European invasion” were replaced with “British Settlement”, a change made at the Kennett Government’s request.<sup>62</sup> References to the “Displacement of Aboriginal people” were retained as was their “exclusion from political participation.”<sup>63</sup> However, by 1996 the Aims of the study had been pared back, and excluded “race, gender, class and ideology” and the “implications” of historical representations. Recognition of a dominant construction of Australian history was reframed as the search for identity, labelled neutrally as “a continual

58 Amanda Watson, “Recent Curriculum Developments in Victoria,” in *Honing the Craft: Improving the Quality of Music Education; Conference Proceedings of the Australian Society for Music Education, 10th National Conference* (Australian Society for Music Education. National Conference, Hobart Tasmania: Artemis Publishing, 1995), 6–7.

59 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, “Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody: National Report” (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991), <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/>.

60 Anna Clark, “History in Black and White: A Critical Analysis of the Black Armband Debate,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 26, no. 75 (2002), 1–11.

61 Geoffrey Blainey, “Sir John Latham Memorial Lecture, Appeared as ‘Drawing up a Balance Sheet of Our History,’” *Quadrant* 37, no. 7–8 (1993): 10–15; Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How a Discipline Is Being Murdered by Literary Critics and Social Theorists* (Paddington: Macleay, 1994).

62 Ruth Learner and Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, *History: Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design* (East Melbourne: VCAA, 2004), 62; Cairns (2017), 126.

63 In the Koori History Syllabus, reference to invasion was removed and replaced with settlement. The concentration on “Invasion, Occupation, Resistance” was replaced with “Koori response to British colonisation” and the significant semantic qualifier added that noted “their [Koori] perception of that occupation as an invasion” (emphasis mine). See Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board, 83.

theme in Australian history.” A thematic focus on culture, economy, social life and power was replaced with a chronological approach from the colonial period to 1920, and a concentration on “everyday life” during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the subsequent 1999 iteration, colonisation and settlement were used in place of invasion, and dispossession was described as “possession of the land.” The syllabus noted that “For Aborigines [sic] the impact of colonisation was devastating” and cited “the introduction of new disease, competition over resources, frontier violence and cultural misunderstanding” as leading to “increasing strains on traditional lifestyles and cultures.”<sup>64</sup> The chronological approach in 1996 and 1999 saw the return of familiar developmental narratives in the syllabus including the return of the theme of benevolence contained in the idea that “Australia’s history is characterised by expansion.”<sup>65</sup>

The 1999 syllabus stated that “Aborigines [sic] continued to be marginalised in Australian society” during the twentieth century and noted the “erosion” of Aboriginal peoples’ political rights. This marked a shift away from “exclusion” to more agentless forms of expression reflecting narratives of benevolence and obfuscation. In Unit 4, ‘Everyday life in the twentieth century: 1901-1945’, the syllabus noted that “Government policy towards the Aboriginal people continued to marginalise and discriminate against these Australians. Aborigines [sic] were not recognised in the official census, and reserves and missions controlled the daily lives of these people.” Compared with the emphasis in 1990 on “displacement”, “invasion” and “exclusion”, there was a clear shift towards more benign language, and consolidation of the narratives of benevolence, innocence, and obfuscation. Importantly, the 1999 syllabus noted for the first time that “In the 1980s and 90s, moves were made towards a policy of reconciliation with Australia’s indigenous [sic] people.”<sup>66</sup> This development was framed within a paragraph focused on how international migration and the emergence of multiculturalism reshaped Australian society in the post-war period. The syllabus also listed “the Mabo and Wik decisions” and for the first time, “the Stolen Generation”, as part of a list of events leading to “public debate and division.”<sup>67</sup> Example learning activities provided in the syllabus treated directly with colonial injustice, but largely framed these using benevolent and agentless language. For example, suggested activities included: “discuss the impact of European arrival on Aboriginal people and consider the changing nature of the European-Aboriginal relationship over time”, and “undertake a short mapping activity focusing on the spread of settlement.”<sup>68</sup> The preference for words such as “arrival” and “spread” mark a clear departure from earlier agentic language. The revisions to the original 1991 VCE syllabus consolidated a backlash to the revisionist and progressive quality of the original syllabus. Established conceptions of settler nationhood and political legitimacy were gradually reinstated and by 1999 the theme of acknowledgment has been drastically diminished.

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64 Board of Studies, *History Study Design* (Carlton, Vic., 1999), 110–16.

65 Board of Studies (1999), 116.

66 *Ibid.*, 116.

67 *Ibid.*, 116.

68 Board of Studies (1999), 124.



## Concluding discussion

In this article, we have examined how school curriculum has constructed understandings of sovereignty, nationhood, and political legitimacy on the Australian continent across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the early twentieth century, as residents at Coranderrk campaigned for self-determination and rights despite being subject to highly restrictive policies, school materials conveyed narratives of British exceptionalism and nationalism and affirmed settler political legitimacy by positioning Aboriginality as ‘primitive’. Notably, materials also explicitly acknowledged white theft of land. By the mid-twentieth century, amidst a background of increasingly sophisticated and widespread First Nations’ political activity, school materials shifted to reinforce Australian conceptions of nationhood and political legitimacy (rather than British) and emphasised, for the first time, the inclusion and understanding of non-white, racialised ‘others’ (but not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people). These moves were reflective of increasing consciousness and international pressure concerning racial intolerance and state violence. Yet, themes conveying the backwardness and invisibility of First Nations’ people were strengthened in materials during this period, while acknowledgement of dispossession was omitted. Finally, a new history syllabus in the early 1990s contained the first sustained acknowledgement of Aboriginal political aspirations and the impacts of colonisation, but the backlash was swift and fierce. While the 1991 history syllabus did not go so far as to acknowledge First Nations’ sovereignty, contested conceptions of nationhood and political legitimacy were reflected in both the content and the form of the syllabus. The backlash that followed indicates the power inherent in ‘unsettling’ national narratives by questioning the ways settler legitimacy and nationhood are constructed in and through curriculum, vis-à-vis Indigenous nationhood, political legitimacy, and potentially, also sovereignty.

Since 2010, with the introduction of the national curriculum, it has been compulsory to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across all subject areas and levels. This ‘cross-curriculum priority’ was deemed an item of national significance.<sup>69</sup> Revisions to the subject area of history from 2010 included new emphases on histories of injustice such as forced child removal and Indigenous campaigns for rights.<sup>70</sup> The Year 10 depth study ‘Rights and Freedoms’ focused on human rights since 1945, includes “the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for rights and freedoms.” This includes a focus on the Stolen Generations and forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from their families well as the significance of various civil rights movements including: “1962 right to vote federally; 1967 Referendum; Reconciliation; Mabo decision; Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations), the Apology.”<sup>71</sup> While these are undoubtedly significant moments, they are also all instances where the settler state accommodated some of the political aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Myriad instances of First Nations’ self-determination that have been opposed or ignored by settler governments have not been included.

69 Jacinta Maxwell, Kevin Lowe, and Peta Salter, “The Re-Creation and Resolution of the ‘Problem’ of Indigenous Education in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cross-Curriculum Priority,” *Australian Educational Researcher* 45 (2018), 161–77.

70 Keynes and Marsden (2021).

71 *Australian Curriculum: History*. Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2010.

The selection of these moments shows the metanarrative at play in the inclusion of histories of injustice and First Nations' campaigns for rights and freedoms. In extending selective rights to First Nations' people, the national story is presented as progress towards tolerance, and past injustices are cleaved away from the present and positioned as errors on the pathway to greater enlightenment. This process in the 2000s was occurring at the same time as discourses of apology and 'closing the gap' sought to inaugurate a new era of reconciled nationhood while working to decouple a policy focus on Indigenous 'disadvantage'.<sup>72</sup> This temporal positioning of increasing state benevolence demonstrates how settler legitimacy is reinforced through disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty in curriculum. The effect of this is consolidated in other parts of the history curriculum by placing Indigenous peoples' status and rights alongside those of migrant groups. In the Canadian context, Miles called this the "embedding of multicultural discourses" where the settler nation-state is exalted "as the only sovereign actor" and colonialism is represented as "just another example of historical injustice faced by a minority group on the path to recognition and acceptance in a multicultural state."<sup>73</sup> In this way, the history and present of First Nations' sovereignty and self-determination continues to be largely excluded from school curriculum.

There are three main ways that our historical analysis in this article might be useful for scholars and policymakers in Nordic contexts and beyond. The first is political. In this article, we have chosen to centre significant occasions of First Nations' political activism in Australia, which we recognise as meaningful expressions of enduring First Nations' sovereignty and self-determination. In juxtaposing these with representations in the school curriculum, it becomes apparent how educative materials have consistently failed First Nations' political aspirations. The second is methodological. Our story-discourse-narrative approach and the analytic sub-themes we developed—Invisibility, Benevolence, Obfuscation, Innocence, and Acknowledgement—could potentially be utilised in Nordic curricular analyses and compared for similarities and differences. Finally, our analysis in this article stimulates an insight which might be useful in the Nordic region where processes of historical truth-telling and debates about how to represent historical injustices in, or 'decolonise' curriculum, are ongoing. As we have shown in this article, one hundred years of continued political campaigning and agitation of First Nations' people in Australia, including some that have utilised state-sponsored political processes such as the Coranderrk Inquiry, has made little impact on how school curriculum has conveyed deep narratives of nationhood, political legitimacy, and sovereignty. Our historical analysis has shown that there is a clear tendency for curriculum to adhere to narratives that, despite some subtle shifts in emphases, remain centred on legitimating *settler* nationhood, political legitimacy, and sovereignty. While there is considerably more emphasis on the inclusion of Indigenous histories and cultures in the contemporary curriculum, so long as these fail to acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, they will continue to legitimate settler colonialism.

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72 Matilda Keynes, "Rhetoric of Redress: Australian Political Speeches and Settler Citizens' Historical Consciousness," *Journal of Australian Studies* (2023), online first: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2023.2217824>

73 Miles (2021), 13.

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## The Children's Scale in Finnish Kindergarten Interiors from 1920s to 1980s

Taina Sillanpää

**Abstract** • The purpose of this article is to offer a perspective on spatial history in Finnish kindergartens' surroundings, especially through design that emphasizes children's scale. The timeline of the article is from the 1920s, when the vocative kindergarten teachers took responsibility for kindergarten design, till the 1980s, when professionals designed kindergartens. The article focuses on the vertical level, which defines the height of children's activity and how the idea of children's scale affected interior design during the timeline. One theoretical starting point is Edward Soja's concept of Thirdspace, which is applied to combine experiential narratives related to childhood, contemporary materials about conversations that took place at the studied time, and spatial regulations and design related to ideological, political, and cultural structures. From the 1920s to the 1980s, children's scale is highlighted and linked to homelike surroundings with miniaturization in scale to affordances concerning a human body scale, dimensions, and children's agency. In 1970s, due to the emerge of the Day Care Act, children's scale extended more broadly to the environment and children's dimensions than in the kindergarten era.

**Keywords** • spatiality, Finnish kindergarten history, children's scale, thirdspace, Edward Soja

### Introduction

Finnish early childhood pedagogy has its roots in the kindergarten ideology developed by Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852). Hanna Rothman (1856–1920) founded the first folk kindergarten in Helsinki in September 1888 and, together with her colleague Elisabeth Alander (1859–1940), developed the Froebelian pedagogy in Finland for many decades.<sup>1</sup> They both studied in Pestalozzi-Froebel-Haus in Berlin with Henrietta Schrader-Breyman (1827–1899) as their teacher. She was Friedrich Froebel's student, close relative and familiarized with both Pestalozzi and Froebel's ideas.<sup>2</sup> Rothman and Alander also spoke for the cozy, homelike atmosphere, which was at the center of public debate at the turn of the century, for example, in the writings of Ellen Key.

Architect Birger Federley designed the first building, originally intended as a kindergarten, in Forssa in 1901 for the children of the employees of the Finlayson-Forssa Oy's factory. In the early stages, however, most kindergartens operated in primitive premises in temporary rented apartments, from which objects and supplies had to be moved out of sight to make way for other activities. The criticism focused on

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1 Froebelian ideas were introduced to Finland already in the 1860s by Uno Cygnaeus (1810–1888), who was the founder of the elementary school system in Finland and wanted to combine the idea of the kindergarten with the school system. His ideas were only partially realised and did not have continuity in the way he had hoped. Sisko-Liisa Hänninen and Siiri Valli, *Suomen lastentarhatyön ja varhaiskasvatuksen historia* (Helsinki: Otava, 1986), 52–58.

2 Taina Sillanpää and Inkeri Ruokonen, "Finnish Kindergarten Work: 125 Years Children's Experiences in Arts Education," in *Voices for Tomorrow: Sixth International Journal of Intercultural Arts Education*, ed. Heikki Ruismäki and Inkeri Ruokonen (Helsinki: Unigrafia, 2014), 7–24.

the temporary nature of kindergarten facilities, the lack of opportunities for outdoor activities and the wide range of uses of the apartments.<sup>3</sup>

This article studies two different periods in Finnish kindergarten history, the kindergarten period from the 1920s to the 1970s and the period after the Day Care Act in 1973 from the 1970s to the 1980s. The article uses the terms kindergarten and daycare center depending on the time. The spatial solutions of these periods have common features, such as children's scale, but also differences, which can be explained, among other things, by the change in educational views and by the change in the need for kindergartens from half-time to full-time, which also caused changes in spatial design. My research questions are: How was children's scale argued? What kind of speech about kindergarten childhood did it represent; what were the voices of the users, decision-makers, and professional designers? Users in this context refer to the meanings and experiences of written memory data that adults share about their childhood. What was the role of adults' ergonomics?

In this article, I use the concept of *Thirdspace* as a key concept of analyzing space and its changes in the kindergarten context. One can understand space as relationally and dynamically produced in social relations between environment and human beings. Space always encompasses its collective definitions and ideas and is never a neutral background for action.<sup>4</sup> In my research, I locate the relationality of space as a dialogue between meaningful experiences related to the state of childhood and the rules that have arisen in the activities, as well as the ideological and cultural structures associated with kindergarten and its facilities. Spatial agreements and specifications have an impact on how children move, act, and play in different spaces. Personnel, especially teachers, have also modified kindergarten spaces by designing, furnishing, and decorating the environment.

Written autobiographies and memories are a distinctive Finnish method of collecting memory-based research materials of the past. The Finnish Literary Society (SKS) has collected written traditions and memories since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Written narratives are used, for example, for studying daily life, and experiences of childhood.<sup>5</sup> Researchers have analyzed Finnish childhood experiences through written and oral memory data. For example, ethnologist Pirjo Korhokangas has a groundbreaking study about reminiscing childhood work and play in a Finnish rural environment, and folklorist Elina Makkonen on factory childhood in Kaltimo.<sup>6</sup> Historian Antti Malinen has studied post-war childhood, such as the significance of nature in the lives of children living in difficult conditions, and historians Essi Jouhki and Kaisa Vehkalahti landscapes and growing environments in Northern Finland that open up from post-war childhood memories.<sup>7</sup> Research into the history of early childhood education is limited in Finland,

3 Supervision reports from Elsa Borenus collection, EB 16 ja 17, The Labour Archives (Tyark), Helsinki.

4 Mari Vuorisalo, Niina Rutanen and Raija Raittila, "Constructing Relational Space in Early Childhood Education," *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development* 35, no. 1 (2015), 67–79.

5 Pirjo Korhokangas, *Muistoista rakentuva lapsuus: Agraarinen perintö lapsuuden työnteon ja leikkien muistelussa* (Helsinki: Suomen muinaismuistoyhdistys, 1996).

6 Korhokangas (1996); Elina Makkonen, *Muistitiedon etnografiaa tuottamassa* (Joensuu: Joensuun yliopiston humanistisia julkaisuja 2009).

7 Antti Malinen, "Kaverit, koirat ja joenmutkat: Lasten emotionaaliset turvapaikat 1940–50-lukujen Suomessa," *JECER* 8, no. 2 (2019), 332–61.; Essi Jouhki and Kaisa Vehkalahti, "Reconstructed Landscapes of Northern Youth: Reading the Autobiographies of Finnish Youth, 1945–1960," in *Reconstructing Minds and Landscapes Silent Post-War Memory in the Margins of History*, ed. Marja Tuominen, T.G. Ashplant and Tiina Harjumaa (New York: Routledge, 2021), 131–49.

and researchers have started to utilize early childhood memory data only in recent years.<sup>8</sup>

In the narratives of my research, the authors describing their kindergarten childhood have, through their actions, built and transformed space and, on the other hand, maintained spatial solutions throughout the period under study. When examining the memory data through source criticism, the question is, do writers convey their experiences. Individually experienced reality is always tied to a collective and socially shared history, although these bonds can be unconscious and unrecognizable. One can view childhood sometimes through very romantic spectacles.<sup>9</sup> These limitations can also be the most fascinating aspects of oral history. We can formulate questions such as what the writer wants to remember and why?

### Previous research and theoretical background

Space and place as concepts have become important themes through which to study childhood institutions. The spatial history of childhood has been studied from many perspectives, for example, through playgrounds and School buildings.<sup>10</sup> Spatiality in early childhood surroundings through a historical context has also been explored, for example, in the Swedish preschool context by Johannes Westberg, Sophia Grunditz, as well as Sara Backman Prytz and Josefin Forsberg Koel.<sup>11</sup> In Finland, spatiality in the context of the history of early childhood education is a new research area<sup>12</sup>.

The theoretical starting point in this article is geographer Edward W. Soja's concept of *Thirdspace*.<sup>13</sup> Spatiality is elevated, alongside sociality and temporality, as equally valuable in both an empirical study and theoretical concept. Sociality, history, and

8 Tytti Puuronen, "Ebeneserin lastentarhan lapset" muistelevat Ebeneserin lastentarhan toiminta 1920–1950-luvuilla (Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2017, Master's thesis); Taina Sillanpää, *Tila, lapsi ja toimijuus: Lastentarha- ja päiväkotiarjen muutokset ja jatkuvuudet muistitietoaaineistoissa* (Helsinki: Unigrafia, Doctoral Thesis, 2021).

9 Kaisa Vehkalahti and Essi Jouhki, "Lapsuuden ja nuoruuden historian näkökulmia muistitietotutkimukseen," in *Muistitietotutkimuksen paikka*, ed. Ulla Savolainen and Riikka Taavetti (Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden Seura, 2022), 367–91; Sillanpää, (2021), 34–35.

10 Roy Kozlovsky, "Adventure Playgrounds and Postwar Reconstruction," in *Designing Modern Childhoods. History, Space and the Material Culture of Children*, ed. Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck-Smith (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 171–90; Anna Larsson, "Sources and Interpretations: A Children's Place? The School Playground Debate in Postwar Sweden," *History of Education* 42, no. 1 (2013), 115–30; Essi Jouhki, "Politics in Play: The Playground Movement as a Socio-Political Issue in Early Twentieth-Century Finland" *Paedagogica Historica*, epub ahead of print (2023); Marta Gutman, "The Physical Spaces of Childhood," in *Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*, ed. Paula S. Fass (London: Routledge, 2013), 249–66; Lisa Rosén Rasmussen, "Building Pedagogies: A Historical Study of Teachers' Spatial Work in New School Architecture," *Education Inquiry* 12, no. 3 (2021), 225–48.

11 Johannes Westberg, "Det uppfostrande rummet: Om liberala och disciplinära styrningsrationalitetens materiella kultur i svenska förskolor under första hälften av 1900-talet," in *Fostran i skola och utbildning: Historiska perspektiv*, ed. Anna Larsson (Uppsala: Fören. för svensk undervisningshistoria, 2010), 60–80; Johannes Westberg, "Designing Preschools For an Independent and Social Child: Visions of Preschool Space in the Swedish Welfare State," *Early years* 41, no. 5 (2021), 458–75; Sofia Grunditz, *Vilan i förskolan 1910–2013* (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, Doctoral Thesis, 2018); Sara Backman Prytz and Josefin Forsberg Koel, "Flickors och pojcars lek i dockvrå och dockskåp: Normativa förväntningar och hierarkier i förskolan vid mitten av 1900-talet," *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 10, no. 1 (2023), 41–64.

12 Sillanpää (2021).

13 Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and Imagined Places*. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1996); Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

spatiality are intertwined simultaneously and intricately. According to geographer Doreen Massey, spatiality takes shape over time and is social in nature.<sup>14</sup> The ideas of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre have influenced Soja, who argued that space is at once a physical, social, and discursive construction and shapes through the way it is built, lived, and imagined.<sup>15</sup>

According to Soja, spatiality consists of the perceptible, sensory, and material *Firstspace* (perceived space), *Secondspace* (conceived place) containing experiences and impressions and *Thirdspace* (lived space), which represent the relational, intergenerational and multidimensional aspects of the environment.<sup>16</sup> *Thirdspace* includes *Firstspace* and *Secondspace*, but is not a combination of them and, in addition to the lived space, also includes public or hidden community rules and principles, laws or regulations in the environment. The views of both Soja and Lefebvre have influenced studies of spatiality in today's early childhood education environments in Finland. Niina Rutanen has utilized Lefebvre's thinking in her research on the lived space produced by young children.<sup>17</sup> Raija Raittila has used the concept *Thirdspace* when studying encounters between children and the urban environment, as well as small group activities and play areas.<sup>18</sup>

In this article, I use Soja's idea of *Thirdspace* as a pursuit of change and connect it to changes in the spatiality of kindergarten surroundings. How humans perceive, interpret, and act can shape their spatial practices in daily life. Personal interpretations (memory data) connect to the social and cultural aspects of the spaces, in the structures of kindergarten's official knowledge, political decisions, and various legitimized practices, values, regulations, and attitudes connected to spatial design that guide interpretation and create a potential for it.<sup>19</sup>

Space connects closely to human agency. Individual actors actualize potential affordances in *Thirdspace*. The environment has affordances, opportunities, and limitations, even without an observer. People interpret these affordances individually, depending on whether the interpreter is a child or an adult. Affordances refer to the opportunities that the environment offers to people and are linked to a human body scale and to what a person can do, or which possibilities and goals are present in terms of action.<sup>20</sup>

14 Doreen Massey, *Samanaikainen tila* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2008), 8, 13–15; Soja (1996); (2010).

15 Gutman (2013), 250.

16 Soja's *Thirdspace* has been used in research of children for example Hugh Matthews, Melanie Limb and Mark Taylor, "The 'Street as Thirdspace,'" in *Children's Geographies, Playing, Living, Learning*, ed. Sarah L. Holloway and Gill Valentine (London: Routledge, 2000) and Raija Raittila, "With Children in Their Lived Place: Children's Action as Research Data," *International Journal of Early Years Education* 20, no. 3 (2012), 270–79; Edward W. Soja, "Thirdspace: Expanding the Scope of the Geographical Imagination," in *Human Geography Today*, ed. Doreen Massey, John Allen and Philip Sarre (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 260–78; Raittila (2012).

17 Niina Rutanen, "Alle kolmivuotiaat paikkansa tuottajina päiväkodissa," *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research* 1, no. 1 (2012), 44–56.

18 Raija Raittila, *Retkellä: Lasten ja kaupunkiympäristön kohtaaminen*. Jyväskylä studies in Education, Psychology and Social research. (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä University Printing House, Doctoral Thesis, 2008); Raittila, (2012).

19 Vuorisalo, Rutanen and Raittila (2015); Sillanpää (2021); Karen Olwig and Eva Gulløv, "Towards an Anthropology of Children and Place," in *Children's Places: Cross-cultural perspectives*, ed. Karen Olwig and Eva Gulløv (London: Routledge, 2003), 1–19.

20 Christopher M. Raymond, Marketta Kytä and Richard Stedman, "Sense of Place, Fast and Slow: The Potential Contributions of Affordance Theory to Sense of Place," *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017), art. 1674, 1–14; Harry Heft, "Affordances and the Body: An Intentional Analysis of Gibson's

Affordances can also be analyzed using horizontal and vertical levels.<sup>21</sup> According to sociologist Elina Paju, the horizontal level indicates the extent of children's territories in the kindergarten context at different times. The vertical level in kindergartens separates children and adults. Children's world is beyond the reach of adult's commands and speeches. Correspondingly, adults communicate with each other over children's heads. In some kindergartens, tables and chairs for children and adults are of different sizes and placed in separate areas of a room. The space is divided both vertically and horizontally into adult and children's areas, separating them from each other. In this article, I analyze the kindergarten space at the vertical level. I am curious about why child-size furniture has been so popular in kindergarten surroundings and what are the goals behind it? I am also interested in exploring the experiences of users in their lived space. Children can effortlessly get up from their child-sized chairs to retrieve necessary supplies for activities, such as more coloring pens, and return to their seats without difficulty.<sup>22</sup>

Marketta Kytä cites James Gibson's view that children perceive objects as functionally significant units rather than as individual objects. Therefore, the functional meaning of an object, for example, a piece of furniture, takes precedence. Objects offer chances for grasping or raising, while surfaces allow for running, climbing, or sliding. Gibson also cites individual body proportions, such as a hand size or shoulder width, which affect the range of affordances, detection, and actualization. For example, choosing the right chair depends on individual characteristics, such as body proportions, skills, preferences, intentions, and the context of use.<sup>23</sup>

### Method and source material

According to historian Jorma Kalela, the usefulness of any source as evidence is relative, not absolute. Instead of definite knowledge, we can discuss about fruitful knowledge. The sources do not speak for themselves, researchers' task is to interpret them according to their goals and starting points. The conclusion's sustainability should be the focus of researchers' efforts in convincing readers, not the source.<sup>24</sup>

Collecting and reading source material from multiple perspectives characterizes historical research. Memory data relates to the meanings given to the past, while contemporary materials, on the other hand, are about conversations that took place at the studied time.<sup>25</sup> This article analyzes the source material from three different perspectives based on Soja's concept *Thirdspace*. The source material consists of

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Ecological Approach to Visual Perception," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 19, no. 1 (1989), 1–30.

21 Elina Paju, *Lasten arjen ainekset – Etnografinen tutkimus materiaalisuudesta, ruumiillisuudesta ja toimijuudesta päiväkodissa*. (Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto, 2013); Sillanpää (2021).

22 Alan Costall, "Canonical Affordances and Creative Agency," in *Rethinking Creativity: Contributions from Social and Cultural Psychology*, ed. Alex Gillespie, Vlad Petre Glăveanu, and Jaan Valsiner (Hove; New York: Routledge, 2015), 70–82.

23 Marketta Kytä, *Children in Outdoor Contexts: Affordances and Independent Mobility in the Assessment of Environmental Child Friendliness* (Espoo: Teknillinen korkeakoulu, 2003), 44–48.

24 Jorma Kalela, "Teoriattomuus historiantutkimuksen yhteiskuntasuhteessa," in *Menneisyyden rakentajat: Teoriat historiantutkimuksessa*, ed. Matti O. Hannikainen, Mirikka Danielsbacka and Tuomas Tepora (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2018), 33–34.

25 Heidi Kurvinen, "Naisjournalismikeskustelu 1980-luvun lopun Suomessa," in *Muistitietotutkimuksen paikka*, ed. Ulla Savolainen and Riikka Taavetti (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2022), 355–65.

material through which one can view the lived space, the conceived space, and the perceived space, but also public or hidden community rules and principles. Spatial design represents the conceived space and memory data about the interpreted and lived space. Contemporary resources describe the various values, rules, and principles that revolve around matters related to spatiality. I rely on comparing, contextualizing, and using parallel datasets as a key analysis tool for my research

This article focuses on oral history research, which involves analyzing stories in oral or written form and descriptions of past events. The interpretation of narratives from my research requires a multifaceted close reading<sup>26</sup>, involving repeated reviews and even reading between the lines. For example, before the appearance of full-time groups, the narratives concerning chores made around tables were common and resembled each other. However, after the emergence of full-time groups, descriptions of such activities disappeared. This phenomenon sparked my interest as a researcher, and I wanted to investigate its causes.

The written memory data consists of the nationwide *Memories of Kindergartens and Daycare Centres* collected by the Finnish Literature Society (SKS) and the Ebeneser Foundation in 2011–2012, geographically located all over Finland as well as the material *Tell us what it was like to be a child in a kindergarten* -memory data from Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa, collected by the Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* in 2018. The material in the SKS collection of 106 respondents, a total of 1042 pages, contains memories about the activities in kindergartens from the 1930s to the 2010s, their surroundings and people. In this article, I have analyzed memories from a childhood perspective written by 64 respondents, 89% of whom are women. The collection of the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* became a crucial reference material for my research. Together 31 respondents recalled their childhood, of which 85 % are women. Additionally, 102 people responded to an electronic questionnaire about childhood memories, reinforcing the memory data.

When using two different materials, a researcher must consider factors such as the design of instructions, collecting institution, and timing of content narration. The instructions partially influence the survey responses, as some of the respondents are aware of the expectations of the collecting institutions and strive to comply. In the instructions of the HS collection, the respondents were specifically asked to write, “*What forbidden things have you come up with?*”, “*Have you ever run away from kindergarten?*” or “*What did you do with your friends secretly from the adults?*”<sup>27</sup> This set of questions brought back more memories of childhood rebellion and doing things secretly than the more formal formulation of the Finnish Literature Society’s collection guidelines. The respondents thus fulfil the narrative “contract” when answering the instructed questions and selecting appealing themes related to the collection.<sup>28</sup> For example, the narratives in the SKS collection are more traditional, common, and positive.

26 According to Jyrki Pöysä multifaceted close reading (lähiluku) means reading the data many times during the research process in different aspects and returning back to the first readings with more depth when analysing. Jyrki Pöysä, *Lähiluvun tieto, Näkökulmia kirjoitetun muistelukerronnan tutkimukseen* (Helsinki: Tiedekirja 2015).

27 Published in newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* by journalist Maija Aalto 19.11.2018.

28 Pia Olsson, “Kyselyaineistojen dialogisuus,” in *Kirjoittamalla Kerrotut: Kansatieteelliset Kyselyt Tiedon Lähteenä*, ed. Pirjo Korhokangas et al. (Helsinki: Suomen kansatieteilijöiden yhdistys Ethnos ry, 2016), 155–84.

This article discusses concept of spatiality and photographs in early childhood education utilizing official materials. With the help of journal articles, I examine the debate on kindergarten values and its spatial practices at different times. I have not systematically reviewed all the volumes of Finnish trade union journal for kindergarten teachers *Lastentarha* but looked for articles that fit the framework of this study. I contextualize the memory data with legislative material representing official information in design guidelines and regulations related to space and safety. The purpose of the documentation is to explore the significant changes that have taken place in kindergarten and daycare facilities, as well as the factors that contributed to them. The photographs used in this article are from Kindergarten Museum's photography collection. I use photographic material in parallel with the memory data to deepen the contents of written narratives. My priority is to relate the narratives and the images to the cultural environment, space, and historical moment in which it occurs.

### The cozy atmosphere of Finnish kindergartens

Hanna Rothman and Elisabeth Alander read the writings of the Swedish writer and social debater Ellen Key (1849–1926), in which she emphasized the importance of home as the closest living environment to a person and as a place for creating a new human ideal.<sup>29</sup> According to Key, home represented a natural place for a child to grow and develop, and the presence of a mother in particular was important. She criticized group-based institutions, where a child receives too little space and attention.<sup>30</sup> Key distanced herself from collective educational ideas, but nevertheless, or precisely because of it, Rothman and Alander, partly inspired by Key, seized the idea of a “good home” as an ideological model of kindergarten and the requirement of homely atmosphere, which is still to some extent reflected in the spatial solutions of Finnish early childhood education. According to Key, home shaped the future character of a child, so beauty and harmony were prerequisites for beneficial future citizens. Artist Carl Larsson's paintings of the bright, cheerful, and domestic interiors reinforced Key's message.<sup>31</sup> Elisabeth Alander combined Key's views on a homely atmosphere, Henrietta Schrader-Breyman's ideas of household work and Froebel's glorification of the natural countryside life, and in 1921, in the Finnish journal *Alkuopetus* elevated the idea of cozy, homelike kindergartens to the ideal of a country home, with its household chores, animal care and gardening.<sup>32</sup> Rural life, partly as an idealization of a past way of life, formed a city's counterpart, and a kind of refined agrarianism formed a new modern human ideal.<sup>33</sup> Even in kindergartens, this served as the starting point for planning of the growing environment and the guiding principle of upbringing.<sup>34</sup>

29 Maija Meretniemi, *Hyvä koti ja henkinen äitiys lastentarhatyön esikuvina: Aate- ja käsitehistoriallinen tutkielma Suomen varhaiskasvatuksen taustasta* (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, Doctoral Thesis, 2015), 90–94. Kirsi Saarikangas, *Asunnon muodonmuutoksia: Puhtauden estetiikka ja sukupuoli modernissa arkkitehtuurissa* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2002), 43.

30 Meretniemi (2015), 92.

31 Denise Hagströmer, “Child's Century' at Last?,” in *Kid Size: The Material World of Childhood*, ed. Alexander von Vegesack (Milan: The Vitra Design Museum, 1997), 183–96.

32 Elisabeth Alander, “Lastentarhoista,” *Alkuopetus* 3 (1921).

33 Saarikangas (2002), 77–78.

34 Elisabeth Alander, *Ebeneserkoti: Katsaus Hanna Rothmanin ja Elisabeth Alanderin laitosten 32-vuotiseen toimintaan 1890–1922* (Helsinki: Weiling & Göös, 1923), 79.

In 1919, the School Board commissioned Elsa Borenius (1881–1958), secretary of the Association of Kindergarten Teachers, to inspect Finnish kindergartens. During her inspection visits, Elsa Borenius found deficiencies in indoor and outdoor kindergarten facilities. The facilities did not allow adequate consideration of the children’s needs and operating methods.<sup>35</sup> Borenius emphasized the need to build permanent premises for kindergartens with a cozy atmosphere. Kindergartens needed blueprints and appropriate instructions for decoration to design suitable premises. In 1927, the annual meeting of the Finnish Association of Kindergarten Teachers set up a committee to plan the sizing of furniture and to design floor plans for kindergartens. Kindergarten teacher Bärbi Luther (1888–1979) designed tables of various shapes and chairs for 3-4-year-olds and 5- and 6-year-olds, storage drawers, and sandpits for indoor and outdoor use. The starting point for the design was the interior design model of sophisticated home, which followed the kindergarten teachers’ home background. The teachers in charge of designs considered children of different ages and sizes. The material used in the furniture was wood and painted with colors picked by the teachers. Kindergartens made similar furniture according to the sketches all over Finland.<sup>36</sup>

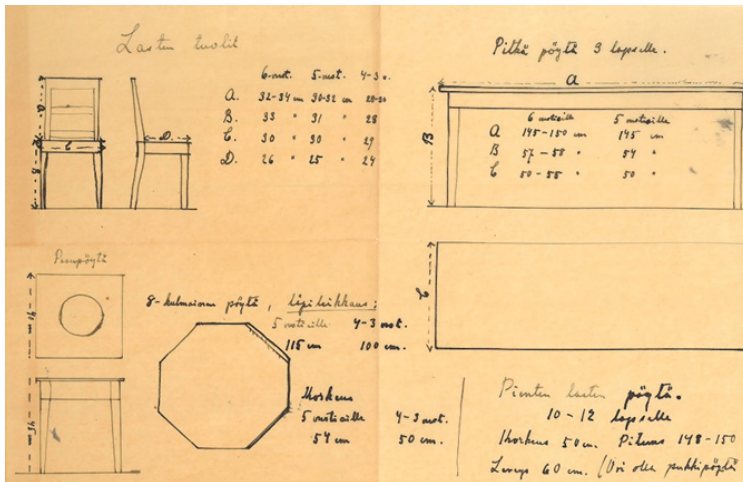


Figure 1. Kindergarten teachers’ sketches of tables and chairs in three different sizes. Photo: The Archives of Salaried Employees.

At the initial stage of kindergarten activities, kindergarten teachers were responsible for decorating group rooms. In the 1930s, the trade union journal *Lastentarha* considered issues related to furnishing of kindergartens. Kindergarten managers selected furniture in accordance with the age and size of children, but their choices also reflected a homelike atmosphere, simplicity, and diversity. Despite the increase in costs, managers held on to the individual character of group rooms, as was the case in homes. Furniture could be of different colors and slightly different shapes in different rooms.<sup>37</sup>

35 Supervision reports from Elsa Borenius collection, EB 16 ja 17, (Tyark).

36 Annual report of Finnish Kindergarten teacher union (1927–1928) The Archives of Salaried Employees, (THA), Helsinki; Meretniemi (2015), 198.

37 *Lastentarha* (1/1938), 16.



Gradually, furniture was manufactured industrially. One of the pioneers, architect Aino Marsio-Aalto (1894–1949), who also considered the profession of a kindergarten teacher, drew the first furniture for children in 1929. The pursuit of practicality and expediency did replace the emphasis on turn-of-the-century beauty.<sup>38</sup> Aino Marsio-Aalto combined pedagogy with architecture and furniture design in her work. Her interests were in Montessori pedagogy<sup>39</sup>, which resulted in designs based on modularity, stack ability, foldability, and multiplicity of use. Marsio-Aalto designed a modular table of lightweight bentwood construction and durable linoleum surfaces for kindergartens.<sup>40</sup> She also designed a tent bed for naps for kindergarten use in 1939. After a nap, kindergartens could roll up the bed bases and assemble benches from the headboards, giving children more play area. Aalto chairs were also made suitable for children's proportions, which became one of the flagships of Finnish modernist designs for children.<sup>41</sup>

After the end of the Second World War, urbanization increased, resulting in an increase in the need for daycare places. Several new kindergartens opened their doors and old buildings got new furnishings.<sup>42</sup> In Helsinki, for example, the City Board decided in 1949 to authorize private furniture architects and interior design shops to make sketches that included tables and chairs of various shapes and sizes, benches and cabinets for accessories, utensils and other equipment.<sup>43</sup> It was self-evident that children had furniture of different sizes available according to their age. Adults had their own chairs and tables, for example, for eating, or adults dined with children at small tables.

### The size and furniture of group rooms centered the activities around tables

At the Nordic kindergarten meeting in 1928, kindergarten director Elin Waris (1875–1958) described a good kindergarten environment as containing several sunny rooms and one larger room where all children could gather. Rooms had to be of a suitable size for one group of children, and premises had to have home-like décor. According to Waris, too much space can create an institution or school stamp for kindergarten:

The kindergarten teacher decorates group rooms as much as possible in the manner of a home. There should be tables and chairs. Chairs should preferably be benches that can be stacked as needed. There should also be cabinets with comfortably placed children's utensils. There should also be cabinets with comfortably placed children's utensils. Each child should preferably have his or her own place at the table. Curtains, flowers on windows and paintings on the walls create coziness [...]<sup>44</sup>

38 Saarikangas (2002), 287.

39 Montessori pedagogy is a child-centered educational method founded by the Italian pedagogue Maria Montessori (1870–1952). One of its key educational goals is to support the child's independence and freedom, which includes guidance based on an equal attitude of an adult towards the child. The learning environment has been designed taking into account the child's periods of development and sensitivity. Children have the freedom to experiment for themselves based on their own interests.

40 Michelle Laboy, "Kindergarten Typology: Furniture and Architecture for Children," in *Artek and the Aaltos: Creating a Modern World*, ed. Nina Stritzler-Levine, Revised and Expanded Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 342–55.

41 Kaarina Mikonranta, "Sisustus- ja huonekalusuunnittelija Aino Marsio-Aalto," in *Aino Aalto*, ed. Ulla Kinnunen (Jyväskylä: Alvar Aalto-museo, 2004), 110–47; Saarikangas (2002), 293.

42 Hänninen and Valli (1986).

43 Annual activity report of the Board of kindergartens (1949), Ekf, 4. (Tyark).

44 Elin Waris, "Lastentarhain sisäinen järjestely: Presentation in the Nordic Kindergarten meeting," *Lastensuojelulehti* 8–9 (1928), 151.; see also Meretniemi (2015), 201–3.

Since kindergarten interiors did not allow extensive play environments, activities happened around the tables. According to Børve and Børve, some rooms in kindergartens may have cultural codes, which define normative meanings of the expected function of a room.<sup>45</sup> Because of the deep influence of the Froebelian tradition in Finland, especially the emphasis on handicrafts, group rooms were planned for activities associated with tables. These values behind spatiality refer to Soja's *Thirdspace* and appear in narratives of lived space, especially in the recalled narratives of the 1940s–60s. The descriptions are quite mechanical, but diverse lists of various forms of work, such as crafting, sewing, weaving, and drawing, for example, in a narrative from a female writer in the 1950s in Helsinki:

Everyone was sitting at the table, and we had a variety of things to do, the same for everyone. I remember the small wooden cups and patches of fabric from which we unwound threads, which we then put in the cup. We often used Froebel's brick boxes, and one day, each of us got a potato to peel. We shaped, drew, cut, and painted all at the same time, nicely in our own place.<sup>46</sup>

These activities, typically associated with kindergartens, serve as examples of commonly shared remembrance. According to Pirjo Korhonen, when remembering, generally acceptable and interactive versions of supposed events are created and negotiated.<sup>47</sup> The individual memory combines with the historical, collective, and social memory. Details heard from others and facts related to events tie with a memoirist's own personal recollections and form an understandable, logical ensemble. People share social memories with an important group, such as family, friends, work community, living environment or, in this case, a social institution of early childhood education. The community we have lived in and operated in defines its own conditions for what is worth remembering.<sup>48</sup>



Figure 2. All children from one group working at the tables in one room under adult supervision in 1954. Photo: Kindergarten Museum's photography collection, Helsinki.

45 Hege Eggen Børve and Elin Børve, "Rooms with Gender: Physical Environment and Play Culture in Kindergarten," *Early Child Development and Care* 187 (2017), 1070.

46 SKS, KRA, Kindergarten memories (2012), 453.

47 Korhonen (1996), 17.

48 *Ibid.*, 164.

There is also a lot of pictorial material about working and playing around tables that support the memory data. Both girls' and boys' activities focused on tables. Also, the whole group followed the same or table-by-table instructions when making handicrafts. Children were required to behave calmly and persistently while performing their tasks. One narrator, who was in kindergarten in the 1950s as a child, talks about a visit to her former kindergarten in the early 2000s. She missed the cheerfully colored low furniture that attracted the child's eye:

The furniture was a traditional kindergarten model that has remained almost the same to this day. The upper surfaces of the tables, chairs and benches were cheerfully blue and red. They charmed the child's eye. [...] In the early 2000s, I was able to visit my former daycare center. Of course, the kindergarten had redesigned furniture, and it was modern, higher, and more ergonomic than the old colorful tables and chairs, but it didn't exude the same childlike atmosphere.<sup>49</sup>

It is important to emphasize that memory data is information about a past produced at the time of the narration, and it can describe more about the diversity of meanings and experiences, often reaching out and comparing to the situation of the present than the event itself.<sup>50</sup> Often, recalling one's past also contains nostalgic, sentimental emotions, longing for the lost, enchanted world, where things might seem better than they actually were and better than at the present.<sup>51</sup> Some of the narrators had visited their childhood kindergartens again as adults. Familiar places look different in the eyes of adults. This change of space remembered and experienced in adulthood from large to small, or from special to ordinary, is familiar to all adults recalling their childhood.<sup>52</sup>

When, after decades of living elsewhere, we visited the yard of our childhood with childhood friends, the big hill was just a knuckle, and everything felt small, made to fit the children's dimensions.<sup>53</sup>

Cultural researcher Bo Lönnqvist notes that play equipment at the turn of the 1800s and 1900s was designed and made according to the views dominated by adults' perceptions of children.<sup>54</sup> This phenomenon was also evident in kindergarten equipment later and recalled in the narratives. "Maintaining traditions was devotion, play equipment was the perfect copy of real work equipment: a horse and cart, iron stove and frying pans."<sup>55</sup>

The descriptions of functional play of "little mothers" and realistic play equipment that fit the children's hands often have a nostalgic touch. My results are in line with Swedish researcher Sara Backman Prytz's and researcher Josefin Forsberg Koel's study about the home corner and doll house in the middle of the 20th century. Their study

49 SKS, KRA, Kindergarten memories (2012), 444.

50 Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different?" in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2016), 48–58.

51 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Vehkalahti and Jouhki (2022).

52 Korhokangas (1996), 288.

53 HS Memory Collection (2018), 2–3.

54 Bo Lönnqvist, *Ting, rum och barn: Historisk-antropologiska studier i kulturella gränser och gränsöverskridande*. (Helsingfors: Suomen muinaismuistoyhdistys, 1992) 368–69.

55 HS Memory Collection (2018), 37.

revealed that children's play is often gender-based and reflects the varying expectations of future life tasks based on gender. This research is a clear example of an adult-oriented concept of gender based personal growth.<sup>56</sup>

### Daycare centers increased children's space indoors in the 1970s

With the Day Care Act in Finland in 1973, the number of square meters intended for an individual child increased and brought versatility and independence to indoor space usage. Kindergartens for children over three years old and nurseries for children under three years old were combined under the same concept as daycare centers. With the facilities for full-time care and full-time children's groups, the interior space expanded, and it became more versatile and enabled children to use it more independently. The space allocation was also a gender issue, assuming boys required more physical play areas than girls.<sup>57</sup> The increased space allowed children to move away from tables and search for new places to play. Children had more opportunities for independent play indoors as they could do activities in several rooms. Daycare centers got a resting or sleeping room for full-time groups in addition to a single group space typical of part-time groups. In addition, designs considered various small rooms, such as a sand and water playroom and a carpentry room.

Still, in 1973, two kindergarten teachers criticized the small size of units in an article in the trade union journal *Lastentarha*:

There is barely enough floor space to meet the minimum requirements, preferably a little below rather than over. When we have chairs and tables for 25 children in a 33 m<sup>2</sup> compartment, there is hardly any room for activity outside them, and yet it is probably not intended that the children will be seated all the time.<sup>58</sup>

The rapid growth of kindergarten and daycare center buildings and construction costs in the early 1970s accelerated projects that dealt with spatial solutions. The planning was based primarily on a daycare center's educational goals and the organization of activities, considering the diversity of a child's development. Additionally, spatial projects had to consider appropriate group sizes, activity duration, and repetition.<sup>59</sup>

Still viewed on the vertical level, children's scale prevailed. The design was aided by presenting proportions and dimensions for children of various ages.<sup>60</sup> In 1980, the guidelines for designing daycare centers emphasized that premises should provide a diverse and interesting environment for children to satisfy their curiosity and thirst for knowledge. A child should be able to carry out various activities more independently and without the help of an adult, thereby avoiding dependence on adults and increasing passivity. Therefore, children's workspaces and equipment storage should support children's agency. Children should be able to take out equipment and put it back themselves.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Backman Prytz and Forsberg Koel (2023), 60–61.

<sup>57</sup> Sillanpää (2021), 239.

<sup>58</sup> *Lastentarha* (7/1973), 143.

<sup>59</sup> The development project of the spatial design of the children's kindergarten Little Prince (Pikkuprinssi) (1978/4) Helsinki City Archives (HKA, Helsinki).

<sup>60</sup> Pikkuprinssi, (1977/2); (1978/5) (HKA, Helsinki).

<sup>61</sup> Päiväkodin toimitilojen suunnittelu (1980).

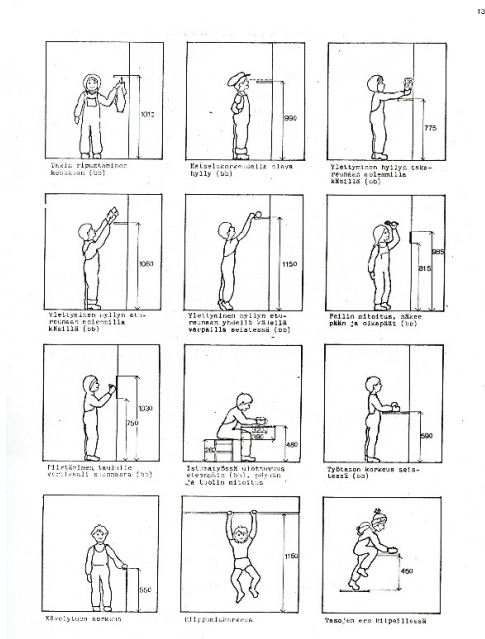


Figure 3. Measurements and dimensions of a five-year-old child. Children's proportions and dimensions No. 5/1978. Helsinki City Archives.

However, children's scale gradually began to raise questions as the discussion about work ergonomics intensified. In 1979, the trade union journal *Lastentarha* examined the ergonomics of employees' working conditions and methods. However, despite the new requirements for work ergonomics for adults, the daycare center equipment sizing did not change:

There has been lots of discussion about children having to live in the big world of adults. In daycare centers, the situation is the opposite. Staff must bend over to a level of children. Chairs and tables that are child-sized cause awkward, often back-straining working positions. At work, there are situations when children need guidance or help, and in this case, adults must bend over, go to their knees, or lift a child. For this reason, back problems and diseases of the musculoskeletal system are common among staff who have worked at daycare centers for a long time. The nature of the work limits the possibilities to alter the size of the daycare center's equipment. However, each compartment should have some furniture designed to the dimensions of an adult.<sup>62</sup>

Gradually, criticism of children's scale increased, and in the early 1980s, flexibility was a starting point for designing: child-friendliness does not have to mean making the environment suitable only for children in such a way that it is uncomfortable for adults.<sup>63</sup> Tables and chairs of different heights make a mixed impression.<sup>64</sup>

62 *Lastentarha* (5/1979), 5–6.

63 Charlie Råbergh, "Suunnittelu päiväkodin perustoimintojen tukena, joustavuus ja laatutekijät sisustusratkaisuissa," in *Lasten päiväkotit – tilat, kalusteet, välineet*, ed. Marja Turkk (Helsinki: Taideteollinen korkeakoulu, 1980), 22–24.

64 Marianne Andersson, "Suunnittelu päiväkodin perustoimintojen tukena – joustavuus- ja laatutekijät sisustusratkaisuissa," in *Lasten päiväkotit – tilat, kalusteet, välineet*, ed. Marja Turkk (Helsinki:

In the late 1980s, descriptions of daycare center indoor play areas depict them as a natural part of the environment, not as a separate miniature world. Furniture and utensils were small, and the goal was to increase children's independent initiatives. For example, by providing low toilet fixtures, tables, and chairs of a suitable height. However, daycare centers also require adult-sized furniture for use by both children and adults, including sofas and chairs. Group rooms had open shelves and cabinets for children to access equipment and materials for activities.<sup>65</sup>

### The child's horizon allows children to enter secret places

In 1984, architects Raili and Reima Pietilä discussed about the starting points of the *Taikurinhattu* daycare center design in the Finnish journal *Arkkitehti*. They emphasized the importance of artistic thinking instead of abstract spatial composition. The daycare center design had to be "childlike":

Modifying the standard floor plan is the way to create child-friendly architecture. For example, an architect imagines a space, looking at it from the usual eye level. Adult's eyes are approximately 1.6 m from the floor level. Thus, they experience all objects and shapes within this habitual and precise framework. This parameter is a result of a long career. When one lowers their gaze to a 70–80 cm level, they see from the child's perspective. This is the "child's horizon."<sup>66</sup>

Another Finnish architect, Pentti Myllymäki<sup>67</sup>, noticed children's need to invent their activities. Spaces designed for children included, for example, porches and their fronts, corners, window seats, lofts, stairs, and platforms, where it was comfortable to be, and plays developed according to children's needs.<sup>68</sup>

In the 1980s, children's activities expanded with the release of additional spaces and new educational perspectives. The importance of liberal education was a topic of discussion in Finland already during the 1970s. The focus was, for example, on Summerhill's pedagogy and children's freedom to be themselves. Furniture was not used only for its practical function but also as a tool for imaginative play. For example, Artek's versatile tables, featuring various shapes, were adaptable to various activities. Artek's furniture advertisements in the *Lastentarha* journal encouraged more flexible use of furniture. Teachers still had an important role in building and changing the environment according to children and their activities. Lisa Rosen Rasmussen highlighted that in Danish new school architecture materiality and pedagogy, teaching strategies and practices interact (or intra-act) throughout different processes of occupying and establishing everyday practice in new school buildings in the early 1970s.<sup>69</sup> Children could do inspiring activities such as climbing on a table, unlike in

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Taideteollinen korkeakoulu, 1980), 18–20.

65 *Suunnitellaan päiväkotia: Tavoitteita päiväkodin tilasuunnittelun kehittämiseksi* (Helsinki: Helsingin kaupungin sosiaaliviraston kiinteistötoimisto, 1991).

66 Raili and Pietilä Reima, "Päiväkotia Taikurinhattu," *Arkkitehti* (8/1984), 22–31.

67 Pentti Myllymäki designed the premises of the Little Prince (*Pikkuprinssi*) daycare centre in the 1980s.

68 Pentti Myllymäki, "Miten ympäristön ominaisuudet voivat vaikuttaa lapsen kehitykseen?," *Muoto* (3/1983), 25.

69 Lisa Rosén Rasmussen "Building Pedagogies: A Historical Study of Teachers' Spatial Work in New School Architecture *Education Inquiry* 12, no. 3 (2021), 225–48.

the 1950s when activities focused on chairs around a table. Children could move more freely from one room to another in a daycare center, and play extended to various secret places, such as a mattress cabinet, a coat rack, or under a table.



Figure 4. Versatile use of tables in an Artek advertisement in the Lastentarha journal (15/1981)

Figure 5. Children are working on their project at a low table. Children have a lot of tools at their disposal and their commitment to the activity is strong. 1994. Photo: Seppo Sarras, Kindergarten Museum's photography collection, Helsinki.

Narratives describe small, closed spaces, rooms, closets, or hiding places, often found and conquered by children, to which adults could not access.<sup>70</sup> Daycare center facilities and activities inside gave more opportunities to children, yet activities were largely adult-led. The memory data describes children's secret places as outdoor locations in the kindergarten era with halftime care, while indoor narratives appear in memories when interiors expand. It was meaningful for children to act without adult supervision, and children's peer culture and mutual humor strengthened. The narrators describe secret places as exciting and atmospheric, and acting in them brings a feeling of wildness and freedom. Children's secret places appeared on the vertical level, separated into "layers" of adults and children. For example, underlays of tables, bushes, and other places, which are difficult for an adult to reach, served as hiding places, shelters, or playgrounds in the narratives.<sup>71</sup> Children and adults can interpret the potential of a daycare center hallway differently, even though the space is physically the same for both. For children, the space provides an intriguing opportunity for peer activities, while adults see the space as a cramped and noisy place to dress.<sup>72</sup>

70 See for example William A. Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, Fifth edition (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. 2018), 18.

71 Sillanpää (2021), 270–73.

72 Vuorisalo, Rutanen and Raittila (2015), 68.

I was a nice kid, but at one point, I remember that my two best friends and I hid in the depths of a coat rack to eat candies that were forbidden in the daycare center. We had to be quiet so that no passerby noticed us from behind the barrier made of rain pants.<sup>73</sup>

We played hairdresser under the table in secret from the adults and used craft scissors to cut each other's hair (about 5-years-old). The aftermath wasn't pretty, at least not for adults.<sup>74</sup>

Tomas Ellegaard's research on Danish kindergartens supports the findings of my source material. He notes that children live in two different social realities: the children's peer culture and the adult-dominated adult-to-child culture.<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion

This article discusses kindergartens' and daycare centers' spatial arrangements and equipment on the vertical level at children's scale. New educational thinking is always rooted in a specific cultural and social situation and is in dialogue with spatial decisions. We can view physical spaces and material culture as a tool for adults to carry out their objectives for children and for children to engage in play.<sup>76</sup>

At the turn of the 20th century, there was a growing emphasis on creating furniture and equipment tailored to the needs of children. This movement was heavily influenced by the educational philosophy of Friedrich Froebel, which served as the foundation for the kindergarten tradition. Children were in an important position and at the center of activity, but kindergarten teachers mainly organized and planned the pedagogical activities and surroundings.<sup>77</sup> Child-centered pedagogy places the child at the center and considers their qualities and developmental stage. The aim was to introduce some aspects of the adult world into the children's world, for example, by scaling down furniture and kitchen utensils to fit children's measurements and designing play equipment and playgrounds that resembled the adult world to some extent.<sup>78</sup>

Gradually, child-oriented pedagogy, where children influence teaching with their initiatives and interests, came alongside traditional child-centeredness in the 1980s. The distinction between child-centeredness and child-orientation is evident in the approach toward the child's self-governance and subjectivity.<sup>79</sup> Child-oriented pedagogy considers children's active agency, spontaneous play, interests, creativity, and

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73 HS Memory Collection, (2018), 126.

74 Ibid., 95.

75 Tomas Ellegaard, "Self-Governance and Incompetence: Teachers' Construction of 'The Competent Child,'" in *Beyond the Competent Child: Exploring Contemporary Childhoods in the Nordic Welfare Societies*, ed. Helene Brembeck, Barbro Johansson and Jan Kampmann (Frederiksberg: Roskilde University Press, 2004), 177–97.

76 Gutman (2013), 249.

77 Jarmo Kinos et al., "Suomalaisen varhaiskasvatuksen työ- ja toimintatavat opetussuunnitelmissa," *Kasvatus & Aika* 15, no. 2 (2021), 22–42.

78 Lucy Bullivant, "The Currencies of Childhood," in *Kid Size: The Material World of Childhood*, ed. Alexander von Vegesack (Milan: The Vitra Design Museum, 1997), 16.

79 Leif Rosqvist, Milla Kokko, Jarmo Kinos, Leena Robertson, Maarika Pukk, and Nancy Barbour, "Lapsilähtöinen pedagogiikka varhaiskasvattajien kanssa konstruoituna," *Varhaiskasvatuksen Tiedelehti — JECER* 8, no. 1 (2019), 192–214.



the need to define themselves.<sup>80</sup> Design attitudes also incorporate this idea by taking a wider look into the proportions and dimensions of children. They consider individual body proportions, such as hand size or shoulder width, which can influence the range of affordances, detection, and actualization. In Sweden, the government mandated diverse and stimulating preschool environments to support children's independence and freedom of choice, following a similar trend even earlier.<sup>81</sup> Beauty as design's starting point was replaced by the pursuit of practicality and children's agency.

When examining Soja's lived and conceived space, narratives written about children's scale exhibit a nostalgic tone. However, the writing style shifts when moving from kindergarten narratives to the daycare center era. The stories of the kindergarten era reflect the romantic idea of the child's century, the idealized descriptions of small-sized equipment of home play that reflected the life of adults. In stories from the 1940s and 1960s, when reminiscing about working at a table, activities are described as versatile lists of various forms of work, such as crafting and sewing, often in the we-form approaching general, the collective scale of recalling.<sup>82</sup>

In the 1970s, due to the emerge of the Day Care Act, children's scale in narratives extended more broadly to the environment and children's dimensions compared to the kindergarten era. Written narratives from the 1980s about the activities related to children's scale indoors also include other children and peers. Experiences reflect a more active, personal level. Children could also retreat collectively to some shared secret place and, at the same time, create friendships and bonds with their playmates.<sup>83</sup> In these narratives, nostalgia connects strongly to childhood itself, peer groups, and children's mutual activities. On the contrary, before the 1970s, children's experiences within their peer groups related to outdoor activities and kindergarten excursions.<sup>84</sup> According to Bourke (1994) recalling the sense of community can be strongly inclined to nostalgia, and activities in a peer group are often described in a positive and idealistic tone.<sup>85</sup> Recalling one's childhood can be influenced by the author's attachment and may affect the way they remember their experiences. Most of the respondents are women. Gender may have influenced the way women write about their childhood experiences, particularly those related to being a girl, given the societal differences between the 1940s-50s and the 1980s. This matter needs to be analyzed further.

Spatiality thinking can enrich the history of childhood, but also help us to imagine different futures for children.<sup>86</sup> How child-oriented is the Finnish kindergarten environment today? Today, employee ergonomics is considered one of the key elements for design, and the necessity of children's scale and dimensions are no longer emphasized in the same way as before, though guidelines mention the term child-size.

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80 Kinos et al. (2021), 30–31; Rosqvist et al. (2019).

81 Westberg (2019), 5.

82 Sillanpää (2021), 138, 184.

83 Lovisa Skånfors, Annica Löfdahl and Solveig Hägglund, "Hidden Spaces and Places in the Preschool, Withdrawal Strategies in Preschool Children's Peer Cultures," *Journal of Early Childhood Research* 7, no. 1 (2009), 94–109.

84 Sillanpää (2021), 272.

85 Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890–1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 136–37.

86 Gutman (2013), 261.

It is further stated furniture should fit children's size to encourage independence and activity in all areas of a daycare center. However, a large part of furniture follows adult-size, which guarantees a functional and ergonomic work environment for daycare employees. In this case, daycare centers facilitate children's activities by using raised chairs, stools, and step boards; children must reach into the adult world.

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## Skolan som försöksverkstad: Spridning av kunskap och erfarenhet av försökundervisning i svenska pedagogiska tidskrifter 1920–1960

Johan Samuelsson

*Abstract* • The purpose of the article is to look at how knowledge about experimental teaching was disseminated through educational journals 1920–1960. Throughout the period, there was an interest from teachers and schools to experiment with new ways of teaching. Educational journals had an important role here to spread knowledge from these experiences. During the interwar period, it was mainly teachers who acted as brokers and shared knowledge of their experiences from experimental teaching. The knowledge shared was often a mix of teachers' experiences and pedagogical perspectives. During the 1950s, other brokers took up more space, such as researchers and school managers. Although the journals shared pedagogical perspectives from different countries, rarely individual countries came into focus. Often here too it was a combination of perspectives that are presented via the articles on experimental teaching.

*Keywords* • experimental activity [försöksverksamhet], Norden, journals [tidskrifter], knowledge sharing [kunskapsdelning], experience [erfarenhet]

### Inledning

Perioden 1920–1960 var ett intensivt skede i svensk och nordisk skola då ett omfattande reformarbete initierades efter en rad stora skolutredningar. Under hela perioden fanns ett intresse från lärare, skolor, kommuner och staten att experimentera och pröva nya sätt att undervisa. Det var också en period då en tydlig spänning mellan hur undervisningen skulle utvecklas artikuleras – var det den erfarenhetsbaserade kunskapen eller en mer vetenskapligt grundad kunskap som var nyckeln till utveckling? Undervisningsförsök var ett sätt att åstadkomma ny kunskap om hur skolan kunde utvecklas och försöken befann sig ofta i spänningsfältet mellan lärares erfarenhet och vetenskapliga perspektiv. Försöken kunde handla om enskilda skolor som prövade nya sätt att undervisa på med utgångspunkt i lärarnas erfarenhet eller pedagogisk teoribildning. Försöken kunde även innefatta hela kommuner och stora regioner som gjorde systematiska experiment med undervisning.<sup>1</sup> Nu var detta inte något unikt svenskt utan något som också utmärkte andra länder.<sup>2</sup> Vidare fanns det också ett betydande intresse av att sprida kunskap från dessa experiment och försök via olika arenor, så som tidskrifter och konferenser. Men det var även en period då utredningar, politiker och pedagogiska tidskrifter intresserade sig för modern kunskap från

1 För exempel på försöksverksamhet i Norden se *Individuell undervisning*, red. Anna Sethne, Arvid Gierow och Marie Nørvig (Oslo: J. W. Cappelén, 1937); *Arbetskola – arbetsglädje: Uppsatser i metodiskt-pedagogiska frågor*. D. 1. red. Arvid Gierow (Lund: Gleerup; 1936).

2 Se exempelvis Larry Cuban, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms, 1890–1980* (New York: Longman, 1993); Harald Jarning, “Reform Pedagogy as a National Innovation System: Early Twentieth-century Educational Entrepreneurs in Norway,” *Paedagogica Historica* 45, no. 4–5 (2009), 469–84.

undervisningsförsök utanför landet gränser. Denna rörelse kan sägas vara en tidig del av vad som i modern utbildningsvetenskaplig och samhällsvetenskaplig forskning brukar kallas transnationell policytransfer.<sup>3</sup> Återkommande har man i tidigare forskning som behandlar cirkulationen av kunskap intresserat sig för namnkunniga personers resor mellan olika länder, pedagogiska idéers allmänna cirkulation eller hur organisationer som New Education Fellowship eller OECD verkat transnationellt.<sup>4</sup> Men samtidigt skedde en betydande kunscirkulation där lärare och andra skribenter adresserade en mer lokal och verksamhetsnära praktik.

Genom att erbjuda kunskap om experiment, skolhistoria, internationella utbildningssystem och vetenskapliga rön blev pedagogiska tidskrifter under första hälften av 1900-talet en plattform för lärarfortbildning. Tidskrifterna kom också att användas i svenska skolutredningar. I exempelvis delbetänkandet från 1940 års skolutredning refererades pedagogiska tidskrifter. Även i arbetet med 1946 års skolkommision användes pedagogiska tidskrifter som ett sätt att skaffa kunskap om hur progressiv undervisning bedrevs i svenska skolor. Notera att kommissionen också hade ett pedagogiskt bibliotek. I biblioteket ingick bland annat den nordiska sammanställningen om försöksundervisning som Anna Sethne (Norge), Anne Marie Nørvig (Danmark) och Arvid Gierow (Sverige) var redaktörer för.<sup>5</sup>

I artikeln analyseras två centrala tidskrifter och deras texter om internationella och nationella pedagogiska undervisningsförsök. Det klassiska exemplet gällande försöksverksamhet är den amerikanska Lincoln School som drevs i nära samverkan med Teachers College, Columbia University. Men försöksverksamhet bedrevs i en rad former i Sverige och Norden. Städer och stadsdelar som Helsingborg, Lidingö, Vanlöse och Lidingö är platser som huserade experimenterande skolor. Grundidén med en praktisk orienterad försöksverksamhet var att den skulle bidra till att skapa användbar kunskap, kunskap som sedan kunde bidra till undervisningsutveckling.

Det går att se tidskriftsartiklar om försöksverksamhet som en ingång till pedagogiska trender, perspektiv på kunskap och erfarenhet samt idéer om reformutveckling. Det finns vidare en samtidsrelevans gällande försöksverksamhet då det alltjämt är en del av en modern reformstrategi när skolan och andra samhällssektorer ska utvecklas.

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- 3 Se t.ex. Geoff Whitty, "The (mis)use of Evidence in Policy Borrowing a Transatlantic Case study," i *Research and Policy in Education: Evidence, Ideology and Impact*, red. Geoff Whitty, Jake Anders, Annette Hayton, Sarah Tang och Emma Wisby (London: Bedford Way Papers, UCL IOE Press, London, 2016), 38–54; Kirsten Sivesind och Berit Karseth, "Introduction: A Comparative Network Analysis of Knowledge Use in Nordic Education Policies. Evidence and Expertise," i *Nordic Education Policy*, red. Berit Karseth, Kirsten Sivesind och Gita Steiner-Khamsi (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 1–31.
- 4 Eckhardt Fuchs, "Educational Sciences, Morality and Politics: International Educational Congresses in the Early Twentieth century," *Paedagogica Historica* 40, no. 5–6 (2004), 757–84; Kevin J. Brehony, "A New Education for a New Era: The Contribution of the Conferences of the New Education Fellowship to the Disciplinary Field of Education 1921–1938," *Paedagogica Historica* 40, no. 5–6 (2004), 33–55; Marc Depaepe, Frank Simon och Angelo Van Gorp, "The Canonization of Ovide Decroly as a 'Saint' of the New Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2003), 224–49; Sotiria Grek, "OECD as a Site of Co-production: European Education Governance and the New Politics of 'Policy Mobilization,'" *Critical Policy Studies* 8, no. 3 (2014), 266–81.
- 5 SOU 1946:31. *1940 års skolutrednings betänkanden och utredningar* 6. *Skolans inre arbete: synpunkter på fostran och undervisning* (Stockholm: Esselte AB, 1946), 154, 165. Bilagor till protokoll nr 14, speciellt dokumenten "PM angående fru de Laval's begäran om utredning, i vilken mån pedagogiska experiment utförs eller pågår i Sverige" (odaterat och osignerat) Alab v2. Skolkommisionens arkiv, Riksarkivet (SKRA). Den nordiska boken som ingick i biblioteket var *Individuell undervisning*.



Studier av försöksverksamhet kan alltså bidra till perspektiv på samtida fenomen och företeelser med hög relevans.<sup>6</sup>

Begreppen försök, försöksverksamhet och experiment kommer att användas synonymt och kunde ske i en rad olika former. Grunden för urval av artiklar är texter där författarna själva talar om försöksverksamhet eller experiment. Vanligtvis avses med försök en medveten undervisning som bryter av med den vanliga undervisningen genom att pröva en metod eller ett förhållningssätt. Försöken kunde utgå från såväl beprövad erfarenhet som mer vetenskapliga perspektiv och modeller. Det bör också i försöken ingå en ansats till analys, – vad blev utfallet av den prövade metoden? Omfattningen på försöksverksamheten kan variera, i svensk modern utbildningshistoria är efterkrigstidens storskaliga försöksverksamhet, initierad av staten, ofta idealmodellen.<sup>7</sup> Men en omfattande försöksverksamhet i mindre skala bedrevs i Sverige (och övriga Norden) även före 1950-talet av lärare och skolor.<sup>8</sup>

Utgångspunkten, i artikeln, är att tidskrifterna var en central medieringsarena för kunskap om hur skolan kunde reformeras och att kunskap genererad från försöksverksamhet var en av de viktiga källorna till kunskap om hur skolan och undervisningen borde reformeras.<sup>9</sup> Tidskrifterna var också en arena för kunskapsspridning som inte var statligt sanktionerad eller driven av väletablerad nätverk, snarare var det en plattform där professionen kunde komma till tals. Det skedde dels genom att kunskap delades från deras erfarenheter, dels genom att de inte sällan också skrev allmänna artiklar i tidskrifterna. Härigenom kunde lärarna och annan pedagogisk personal bidra med att sprida kunskap om undervisning. De tidskrifter som har undersökts är *Pedagogisk tidskrift*, (PT) som vände sig främst till läroverk, samt den mer progressivt inriktade *Skola och Samhälle* (SoS).

Det övergripande syftet med artikeln är att se på hur kunskap som genererats från framförallt lärares erfarenhet av försöksverksamhet spreds via pedagogiska tidskrifter 1920–1960. Artikelns frågeställningar är: Från vilka länder spreds kunskap om undervisning? Vad för slags försök omskrevs i tidskrifterna? Vilka var mäklarna av kunskap? Vad för slags kunskap spreds via tidskrifterna?

## Reformkontext och spridning av kunskap

Sverige var i hög grad en del av det västerländska moderniseringsprojektet som tog sin start kring förra sekelskiftet. I synnerhet kom tiden efter 1930-talet präglas av radikala moderniseringsidéer som bland annat utmärktes av progressiva förslag inom områden som bostads- och socialpolitik. Ofta var det samma personer som förordade en progressiv socialpolitik och en progressiv skolpolitik.<sup>10</sup> I Sverige pågick också under mellankrigstiden en diskussion om att reformera det, enligt många, förlegade

6 Jamie Peck och Nikolas Theodore, *Fast Policy: Experimental Statecraft at the Thresholds of Neoliberalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 3–15.

7 Se exempelvis Sixten Marklund, *Skolsverige 1950–1975: Försöksverksamheten* (Stockholm: Liber, 1982).

8 *Forsøk i skolen skrift tilegnet Herman Ruge på 70-årsdagen* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag, 1953).

9 Se exempelvis Harald Jarning, ”Det pedagogiske kunnskapsområdet og Norsk pedagogisk tidsskrift,” *Norsk pedagogisk tidsskrift* 100, no. 4 (2017), 247–60.

10 Thomas Etzemüller, *Alva and Gunnar Myrdal: Social Engineering in the Modern World* (London: Lexington, 2014); Yvonne Hirdman, *Att lägga livet till rätta* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2010).

skolsystemet med vanligtvis en 6-, eller 7-årig folkskola för arbetare och bönder och en läroverksskola för borgerligheten (något förenklat), folkskolan var den överlägset dominerande skolformen.<sup>11</sup>

Moderniseringsidéerna som diskuterades i skolpolitiken förordade ett enhetligt skolsystem där medborgare oavsett bakgrund gick i samma skola, detta är välutrett i tidigare forskning.<sup>12</sup> Tanken med reformeringen av skolans struktur var att skolan skulle vara i takt med tiden och parallellskolesystemet ansågs förstärka klassamhället, vilket inte var förenligt med ett modernt och jämlikt samhälle. I Sverige genomfördes sedan, under 1960-talet, grundskolereformen som innebar att parallellskolesystemet avskaffades.

Den period som behandlas kan ses som etablerandet av progressivismens som pedagogisk idé. Progressivism som fenomen och praktik kan kopplas både till en övergripande samhällelig förändring och till en mer skolnära verksamhet där elevens intresse i högre grad än tidigare beaktades. Vidare var ständig skolutveckling via experiment och försöksverksamhet som tog spjörn mot vetenskap (psykologi och pedagogik främst) och praktisk erfarenhet ett ideal.<sup>13</sup> För Sveriges del innebar det att man inför reformeringen initierade en omfattande nationell försöksverksamhet, men i centrala utredningar var man också intresserad av vad för slags försök som bedrivits tidigare i Sverige.<sup>14</sup> Ytterligare en aspekt måste lyftas fram i detta sammanhang är progressivismens transnationella karaktär. Det internationella flödet av erfarenheter och kunskap är något som var centralt när progressivismen som pedagogisk idé initierades, spreds och befästes som undervisningsperspektiv.<sup>15</sup> I artikeln används begreppet progressivism som ett paraplybegrepp för den syn på skola, utveckling och undervisning som beskrevs ovan, men som också manifesteras i konkreta metoder som exempelvis Daltonmetoden, arbetsskolepedagogik och elevaktiv metodik.

Under hela undersökningsperioden producerades och spreds kunskap om hur en progressiv skola kunde utvecklas. Framförallt har perioden efter 1950-talet behandlats tidigare och kort kan man säga att i hög grad kom stora statliga satsningar på försöksverksamhet att genomföras. Enskilda lärare, skolor och kommuner blev då en del av en omfattande statligt styrd försöksverksamhet.<sup>16</sup> Perioden före det är

11 *Statistisk årsbok för Sverige 1950* (Stockholm: Norstedt & Söner, 1950), tabell 257, 265 och 266.

12 Se exempelvis Gunnar Richardson, *Svensk skolpolitik 1940–1945: Idéer och realiteter i pedagogisk debatt och politiskt handlande* (Stockholm: Liber, 1978); Gunnar Richardson, *Drömmen om en ny skola* (Stockholm: Liber, 1983).

13 Thomas Popkewitz, "Inventing the Modern Self and John Dewey: Modernities and the Traveling of Pragmatism in Education: An Introduction," i *Inventing the Modern Self and John Dewey: Modernities and the Traveling of Pragmatism in Education*, red. Thomas Popkewitz (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 3–36.

14 Se exempelvis material från 1946 års skolkommision där detta diskuterades, se här t.ex. Bilagor till protokoll nr 14, speciellt dokumenten "PM angående fru de Laval's begäran om utredning, i vilken mån pedagogiska experiment utförs eller pågår i Sverige" (odaterat och osignerat) AIab v2. (SKRA).

15 Se exempelvis Herman Röhrs, "Internationalism in Progressive Education and Initial Steps towards a World Education Movement," i *Progressive Education Across the Continents*, red. Herman Röhrs och Volker Lenhart (Wien: Peter Lang, 1995), 179–91; Popkewitz (2005).

16 För aktuell forskning där försöksverksamhet studeras se Åsa Melin, *Olika vägar till enhetlig skola* (Karlstad: Karlstads universitet, 2022); Johan Prytz, "When Research met Policy: a History of Innovation and a Complicated Relationship in Three Swedish Development Projects in Mathematics Education, 1960–2018," *ZDM Mathematics Education* 53, (2021), 1035–46. För en aktuell översikt, se Daniel Sundberg, *Svenska läroplaner: Läroplansteori för de pedagogiska professionerna* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2021), 120–26.

styvmoderligt behandlad i tidigare studier men ett utmärkande drag är frånvaron av större statliga satsningar, även om staten gjorde vissa insatser. Exempelvis gavs statsstöd till enskilda fristående läroverk som skulle pröva olika sätt att bedriva undervisning och organisera skola.<sup>17</sup> Det tycks inte ha funnits någon medveten strategi från statens sida att sprida den kunskap som genererades vid dessa läroverk. Sedan fanns också en betydande försöksverksamhet som genomfördes av enskilda lärare och skolor mer eller mindre på eget initiativ. Dessa erfarenheter kunde ibland resultera i tidningsartiklar av de involverade lärarna som publicerades i nationella utredningar.<sup>18</sup>

Kunskap och erfarenhet som genererades av de större statliga satsningarna från försöksverksamhet spreds via nya kanaler från och med 1950-talet. *Aktuellt från skolöverstyrelsen* var en offentlig skriftserie som distribuerades till landets samtliga skolor och huvudmän. I skriftserien fanns återkommande rapporter om erfarenheter från den försöksverksamhet som staten finansierade.<sup>19</sup> Skolöverstyrelsen kom också använda sig av sin egen ”försökstidskrift”, *På försök* (1952–1962). Tidskriften var en populärt hållen skrift med stor upplaga. Enligt ansvarig minister, Ragnar Edenman, var upplagan 17 000 exemplar och hade som målgrupp skolledare och klassföreståndare i försökskommuner. Tidningen skickades ut till samtliga skolexpeditioner, lärarutbildningsanstalter, högre skolor, inspektörer, dagstidningar, bibliotek och ungdomsförmedlingar. Exemplar av *På försök* distribuerades också till de nordiska grannländerna.<sup>20</sup> Staten hade knappast monopol gällande spridning av pedagogisk kunskap genererad från försöksverksamhet. Redan presenterade antologier, *Individuell undervisning* och *Arbetsskola – arbetsglädje: Uppsatser i metodiskt-pedagogiska spörsmål* är exempel på icke-statliga plattformar. I Sverige fanns också metodböcker där erfarenhet från lärares undervisning spreds. Böckerna hade tagits fram av verksamma lärare och inspektörer.<sup>21</sup> Dessa refererade antologier kan ses som pionjärverk från mellankrigstiden, men tidigt 1950-tal återkom nordiska sammanställningar av försöksverksamhet. I *Forsøk i skolen* fanns sammanställningar av enskilda försök av lärare, men det fanns också redogörelser för mer storskaliga försök från olika nordiska länder.<sup>22</sup>

### Tidigare forskning om spridning av pedagogisk kunskap och försöksverksamhet

Det finns flera områden som behandlat hur kunskap om reformer, försöksverksamhet och pedagogik sprids och cirkulerar. Jag ska först beröra några mer övergripande samhällsvetenskapliga perspektiv och sedan fokusera på skola och pedagogiska idéer.

Tidigare samhällsvetenskapliga studier har identifierat ett antal aktörer av olika slag

17 Johan Samuelsson och Madeleine Michaëlsson, “Funding of Progressive Education, 1891–1954: A Swedish Case,” *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 8, no. 2 (2021), 155–85.

18 Beskrivningar av sådan verksamhet finns i SOU 1946:31; se också Johan Samuelsson, *Läroverken och progressivismen 1920–1950: Perspektiv på undervisning och policy, exemplet historieundervisning* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2021).

19 Se exempelvis *Aktuellt från Skolöverstyrelsen* 1953:6.

20 Kungl. Maj:ts skrivelse nr 38 år 1961, till riksdagen med redogörelse för försöksverksamheten med nioårig enhetsskola m. m.; given Stockholms slott den 27 januari 1961.

21 *Individuell undervisning* (1937); *Arbetsskola – arbetsglädje: Uppsatser i metodiskt-pedagogiska spörsmål*. (1936); *Arbetsättet i folkskolan: metodiska uppsatser. 6 Kristendoms-kunskap. Historia*, red. Karl Nordlund, Anna Sörensen och Sven Wikberg (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1928).

22 *Forsøk i skolen skrift tilegnet Herman Ruge på 70-årsdagen*.

i samband med kunskaps-cirkulation. Daniel Rodgers lyfter exempelvis fram några centrala ”brokers” eller mäklare som förmedlade kunskap mellan Europa och USA under första delen av 1900-talet, dessa brokers utgjorde grunden för en slags handel av nya moderna idéer. Han visar att det fanns en betydande överföring av kunskap och idéer via mäklare som var ”resenärer” eller inspektörer, där exempelvis representanter för fackföreningar besökte USA, eller tjänstemän från USAs finansdepartement besökte nordiska länder för att ta del av hur en interventionistisk progressiv ekonomisk politik kunde föras. Vidare pekar Rodgers på att tidskrifter och litteratur av olika slag också var ett sätt att sprida progressiv socialpolitik. Representanter för myndigheter och föreningar medverkade i dessa sammanhang, men också mer fria associationer och nätverk som intresserade sig för sociala frågor.<sup>23</sup>

Vi kan se att spridningen av kunskap i hög grad var horisontell i mening att den spreds mellan olika geografiska platser och inte bara vertikalt mellan myndighet och brukare till exempel, vilket svensk forskning om skolreformer noterat.<sup>24</sup> Denna tendens fångas upp i annan samhällsvetenskaplig forskning, exempelvis pekar Jamie Peck och Nik Theodore på att fenomenet ”fast policy” som innebär att erfarenheter från försök och experiment sprids transnationellt mellan regioner och städer. Platser med försöksverksamhet blir en form av laboratorier som producerar spridningsbar kunskap, som nödvändigtvis inte måste ta vägen via statliga organ.<sup>25</sup>

Forskning om spridning av kunskap med koppling till skola och lärande har i linje med Rodgers lyft hur idéer och kunskap spreds transnationellt. Thomas Popkewitz har i flera sammanhang diskuterat kunskapsflöden över nationsgränser. Han visar bland annat hur kunskap om progressiv pedagogik färdades transnationellt och hur den anpassades till lokala förhållanden.<sup>26</sup> I antologin *Inventing the Modern Self and John Dewey: Modernities and the Traveling of Pragmatism in Education* påtalas hur kunskap spreds mellan kontinenter via exempelvis resor och litteratur. I ett av bidragen behandlas Sverige och namnkunniga personer som Alva Myrdal ges rollen som betydelsefulla kunskapsmäklare.<sup>27</sup> Även den omfattande antologi med Herman Röhrs och Volker Lenharts som redaktörer, *Progressive Education Across the Continent*, pekar på att progressivism som pedagogisk idé växt fram via internationella kunskapsutbyten, här ligger fokus på den roll föreningar som New Education Fellowship och utbildningsinstitutioner som Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau hade för kunskaps-spridning.<sup>28</sup>

Spridning av progressiv kunskap har också studerats i andra kulturella kontexter. I exempelvis *Educational Progressivism, Cultural Encounters and Reform in Japan* framträder ett mönster vi känner igen från annan forskning när det transatlantiska

23 Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), 62–69.

24 Jmfr Melin (2022).

25 Peck och Theodore (2015), 3–15.

26 Popkewitz (2005); Thomas Popkewitz, “Transnational as Comparative History: (Un)Thinking Difference in the Self and Others,” i *The Transnational in the History of Education*, red. Eckhardt Fuchs och Eugine Roldán Vera (Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2020), 261–91.

27 Ulf Olsson och Kenneth Petersson, “Dewey as an Epistemic Figure in the Swedish Discourse on Governing the Self,” i *Inventing the Modern Self and John Dewey: Modernities and the Traveling of Pragmatism in Education*, red. Thomas Popkewitz (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 39–60.

28 Röhrs (1995), 179–91.

kunskapsutbytet analyseras. Reformintresserade pedagoger och politiker från Japan reste under mellankrigstiden till USA och fick där ta del av kunskap från progressiva pedagoger. När de sedan återvände till Japan kunde den kunskapen omsättas i praktisk undervisning anpassad till lokala förhållanden.<sup>29</sup> Även utveckling i Australien kom att likna den japanska då resor, konferenser och tidskrifter kom att bidra till att progressiva ideal fick genomslag i skolorna.<sup>30</sup> Studier av norsk reformhistoria visar också på ett inflöde av internationell pedagogik, vilket fick inflytande på skolutvecklingen.<sup>31</sup> Ytterligare en aspekt är värd att notera, även om USA var en nod avseende progressiv pedagogik kom också influenser att gå från Europa till USA kring förra sekelskiftet.<sup>32</sup>

Popkewitz med flera behandlar i huvudsak spridning av progressivismen före 1950-talet, men det finns också studier som fokuserat andra pedagogiska perspektiv och tidsperioder. Exempelvis har spridningen av Jermone Bruners perspektiv på kognitiv psykologi under efterkrigstiden studerats. Rohstock visar hur konferenser, litteratur och inte minst resor av Bruner själv bidrog till det globala genomslaget av hans idéer.<sup>33</sup> Efterkrigstidens studier av internationella policytransfer är också exempel på studier om hur kunskap om utbildning cirkulerar globalt. Geoff Whitty tar utgångspunkt i samtiden när han diskuterar hur politiker och internationella organisationer bidrar till att gör kunskap om utbildning tillgänglig, men han visar också på det transatlantiska utbytets långa historiska rötter. Whitty diskuterar vidare vilken roll kunskap om internationell utbildning har för nationella politiker, han pekar på att det ofta handlar om att legitimera den egna politiken.<sup>34</sup> Referenser till internationell utbildningspolicy för att legitimera den egna politiken är också något nordiska forskare lyft fram i studier av internationell policytransfer i en nordisk kontext.<sup>35</sup>

Stort intresse har riktats mot det globala utbytet av kunskap och policy, medan betydelsen av nationella och regionala utbyten bara har behandlats till viss del. Men exempelvis visar en studie av danska försöksskolor på att myndigheterna insåg betydelsen av att producera kunskap om danska skolan som kunde spridas till lärare och politiker i Danmark via försöksskolor. Men detta kombinerades också med en förmedling av internationell kunskap. Snarlika resultat finns från norsk mellankrigstid.<sup>36</sup> Christian Lundahl har också kommit fram till liknande resultat gällande verksamheten

29 Yoko Yamasaki och Hiroyuki Kuno, "Appendix C Chronology of Progressive education in Japan," i *Educational Progressivism, Cultural Encounters and Reform in Japan*, red. Yoko Yamasaki och Hiroyuki Kuno (London: Routledge, 2018). Popkewitz (2005).

30 Dorothy Kass, *Educational Reform and Environmental Concern* (London: Routledge, 2018), 4–18; Dorothy Kass, "New Education at Stanmore Public School, Sydney 1919: The Progressive Image," *Paedagogica Historica*, epub ahead of print (2021).

31 Jarning (2009).

32 William Reese, "The Origins of Progressive Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2001), 1–24.

33 Anne Rohstock, "Mapping Scientised Education in German-American Transnational Networks after 1945," *History of Education* 50, no. 3 (2021), 395–412.

34 Whitty (2016), 38–54.

35 Sivesind och Karseth (2022), 1–31.

36 Karen Egedal Andreassen och Christian Ydesen, "Vejen til obligatorisk 8. og 9. skoleår: Ideerne og konteksten bag oprettelsen af Statens Pædagogiske Forsøgscenter," *Uddannelseshistorie* 53 (2019); Jarning (2009).

vid svenska Statens psykologisk-pedagogiska institut, institutet var kopplat till en skola där det bedrevs försöksverksamhet och forskning om undervisning. Kring institutet fanns ett nätverk som hade en viktig roll för att sprida internationell kunskap om utbildning i Sverige. Han talar vidare om ”progressiva koalitioner” då det fanns representanter för teoretiskt orienterad pedagogik och erfarenhetsbaserad kunskap i nätverket kring institutet.<sup>37</sup> Nu skedde också en spridning av kunskap på lokal nivå, som gör att man kan tala om en transkommunal kunskapsspridning om skola när kunskap om skolreformer spreds i Sverige under efterkrigstiden.<sup>38</sup>

Etableringen av progressiva perspektiv på undervisning skedde via flera arenor, inte minst fanns det en viktig nordisk plattform, de nordiska lärarmötena. Joakim Landahl och Annika Ullman ser dessa som en central mötesplats där kunskap om skolan förmedlades. Mötena var välbesökta och kunde under tidigt 1900-tal ha drygt 5000 nordiska besökare. Då det skrevs om mötena i dagspress spreds också kunskap till lärare som inte var på plats.<sup>39</sup> Även Ruth Hemstad visar hur Norden som konferensarena etablerades sent 1800-tal, exempelvis träffades jurister och nationalekonomer men även progressiva lärare mötes för att ta del av kollegors erfarenheter.<sup>40</sup> För spridning av undervisningskunskap var New Education Fellowships konferens i Helsingör 1929 också betydelsefull. Under några sensommardagar kom framträdande progressiva personer som Harold Rugg, Helene Parkhurst och Maria Montessori till Helsingör. Via konferensrapporten spreds senare kunskap från progressiva undervisningsförsök i vidare kretsar.<sup>41</sup> Även institutioner direkt kopplade till folkskolan och deras lärare var arenor där progressiva idéer spreds om undervisning, tidningen *Svensk läraretidning* rapporterade exempelvis från internationella konferenser som New Education Fellowship ansvarat för.<sup>42</sup>

Det finns vidare studier som mer avgränsat sett på tidskrifternas betydelse för etablering kunskapsområden. Exempelvis visar studier av nordiska historievetenskapliga tidskrifter att de bidrog till att stärka den disciplinära identiteten då de blev en offentlig arena för kritik och diskussioner om vad som utmärkte vetenskapsområdet. Tidskrifterna bidrog också till att skapa ”kognitiva identiteter” där frågor om vad som är relevanta metoder och teorier för ämnesområden lyftes.<sup>43</sup> I linje med detta finns studier som visar att pedagogiska tidskrifter och andra publikationer blev en form av medierande aktörer som spred och tillgängliggjorde vad som var relevant kunskap

37 Christian Lundahl, ”Progressiva koalitioner, (inter)nationella influenser och kunskapsmätningar i reformarbetet med svensk läroplan, ca 1930–1950,” *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 1, no. 1 (2014), 59–79.

38 Se Melin (2022). Notera att begreppet transkommunal är mitt begrepp och används ej av Melin.

39 Joakim Landahl, ”Det nordiska skolmötet som utbildningspolitisk arena (1870–1970),” *Utbildning & Demokrati* 24, no. 3 (2015), 7–23; Annika Ullman, ”Anna Sandström och den pedagogiska skandinavismen,” i *Moderna pedagogiska utopier*, red. Anders Burman, Joakim Landahl och Daniel Lövhelm (Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, Södertörn University), 29–51.

40 Ruth Hemstad, *Fra Indian Summer til nordisk vinter* (Oslo: Akademisk publicering, 2008), 149–54; 204–9.

41 *The New Education Fellowship: Conference, Towards a New Education* (London: Alfred, 1930).

42 Agneta Linné, *Moralen, barnet eller vetenskapen* (Stockholm: HLS förlag, 1996).

43 Cecilia Trenter, *Granskningens retorik och historisk vetenskap kognitiv identitet i recensioner i Dansk historisk tidskrift, Norsk historisk tidskrift och Svensk historisk tidskrift 1965–1990* (Uppsala: Studia Historica Upsaliensia 192, 1999), 47–50.

om progressivism. Men de bidrog härigenom också till att stärka yrkesgruppers identitet. Det går att se tillgängliggörandet av hur undervisning kunde ske som ett sätt att faktiskt föreskriva specifika metoder, även om en tidskrift inte formellt hade den rollen.<sup>44</sup> Systematiska studier av pedagogiska tidskrifter gällande spridning av kunskap saknas i Sverige, men Landahl har analyserat hur bokserien Pedagogiska skrifter blev en resurs för att sprida framförallt internationella progressiv kunskap om undervisning.<sup>45</sup> I den redan återopade studien av Statens psykologisk-pedagogiska institut framkommer också att de spred kunskap via böcker. Men det nätverk som var engagerade i etablerandet av institutet var också verksamma i pedagogiska tidskrifter, som exempelvis *SoS*.<sup>46</sup> I Norge kom *Norsk pedagogik* få en snarlik roll, det blev en arena för lärare, policyprofessionella och forskare att dela och konsumera kunskap om skolan.<sup>47</sup>

När det gäller de idémässiga influenserna på svensk pedagogik kan man säga att grundnarrativet utgår från att den tyska kultursfären var den stora inspiratören fram till cirka 1945. Som en följd av kriget och de negativa erfarenheterna från tyska kultursfären kom USA att ersätta Tyskland som en viktig källa till kunskap om undervisning och skola. Spridning från USA skedde som noterats ovan via namnkunniga personer som Alva Myrdal, men också via resereportage och studiebesök.<sup>48</sup>

Sammantaget ser vi att kunskapen om transnationell, eller snarare transkontinental, kunskapsspridning avseende progressiv kunskap är god. En studie av den regionala kontexten kan bidra till att vidga förståelsen av betydelsen av geografisk och kulturella närhet för etablering och spridning av progressiv kunskap.

### Analytiska och teoretiska utgångspunkter

I artikeln finns det några grundantaganden gällande spridning och cirkulation av kunskap. Den övergripande utgångspunkten är att skapandet av kunskap ska förstås som en förhandling och process mellan olika aktörer i ett samhälleligt sammanhang, inte som en enkel transfer från centrum till periferi.<sup>49</sup> Kunskapscirkulationen innebär att kunskapen inte enkelt sprids från ”laboratoriet” till användarna, snarare konstrueras kunskapen i själva cirkulationen av de som förmedlar och använder kunskapen.<sup>50</sup> Kunskapscirkulation ska också förstås i relation till tanken att det sällan finns homogena uppfattningar om kunskap. Snarare finns en rad konkurrerande uppfattningar om

44 Marc Depaepe, *Order in Progress: Everyday Education in Primary Schools – Belgium 1880 – 1970* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 39–40; Peter Cunningham, *Curriculum Change in the Primary School since 1945: Dissemination of the Progressive Ideal* (London: Falmer Press, 1988), 91–127; Sivesind och Karseth (2022), 1–31.

45 Joakim Landahl, ”Den läsande läraren,” *Forskning om undervisning och lärande* no. 1 (2009), 1–68.

46 Lundahl (2014).

47 Jarning (2017).

48 Johan Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2008), 202–3, 290–2; Richardson (1983), 165–8; Tomas Englund, *Samhällsorientering och medborgarfostran i svensk skola under 1900-talet* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 1986), 309–10; Bo Lindesjö och Ulf P. Lundgren, *Utbildningsreformer och politisk styrning* (Stockholm: Liber, 2014), 45–47.

49 Peter Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016); Ivor Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum* (London: Routledge, 2004); Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

50 Johan Östling och David Larsson Heidenblad, ”Cirkulation – Ett kunskapshistoriskt nyckelbegrepp,” *Historisk tidskrift* 137, no. 2 (2017), 283–4.

vad som är rätt kunskap, vilket kan leda till tolkningsstrider om vad som är just rätt kunskap.<sup>51</sup> Det innebär att i studier av kunskaps-cirkulation är det fruktbart att se på olika kunskapsproducenter, såväl formella institutioner som skolmyndigheter och informella institutioner som till exempel ämnesföreningar och enskilda lärare är lämpliga att analysera. Kunskaps-cirkulation bör också förstås i relation till regionala och nationella kontexter. Kunskapen, i detta fall kunskap om progressiv undervisning, kommer att tas emot, tolkas och omställas i relation till den samhälleliga kontexten. Kunskap ses alltså inte som ett statiskt fenomen som förs över från ett land till ett annat, eller från statliga skolmyndigheter till lärare.

Av intresse är vidare att se på vilka institutioner och aktörer som så att säga blir bärare av kunskapen. Tidigare studier har identifierat ett antal aktörer av olika slag i samband med kunskaps-cirkulation. Rodgers och andra lyfter fram några centrala ”brokers” eller mäklare som förmedlade kunskap om USA, som vi såg tidigare. Mäklarna kan använda sig av flera plattformar som bidrar till mediering av kunskap.<sup>52</sup> Intresset i denna artikel är riktat mot tidskrifterna som en mäklande plattform för spridning av kunskap och erfarenhet från försöksverksamhet och utgångspunkten är att tidskrifterna kom att fylla en viktig funktion för att sprida kunskap och de blev därmed en nod för att cirkulera kunskap. Jag har dock inte undersökt hur kunskapen förändras när den cirkulerar, det hade krävt en annan studiedesign.

Med stöd i tidigare forskning som betonat betydelsen av försöksverksamhet som reformstrategi avgränsas studien till att analysera artiklar som rör försöksverksamheten. Efter en genomläsning av tidskrifternas innehållsförteckningar gjordes ett urval av artiklar där försöksverksamhet behandlades. Analysen och kategoriseringen av materialet gjordes sedan i en iterativ process i förhållande till tidigare forskning, teori och frågeställningar.<sup>53</sup>

## Material

I val av tidningar har avgränsningar gjorts till tidskrifter som vände sig till lärare och andra verksamma inom skola och utbildning, vilket har styrts av intresset att inte undersöka den statliga nivån som i hög grad varit i fokus i tidigare studier. Ambitionen har också varit att se på en längre tidsperiod där tiden före och efter de stora reformer som påbörjas under framförallt 1950-talet kan täckas in. Även detta har påverkats av tidigare forskning, som vi såg har efterkrigstiden betraktats som en brytpunkt på flera sätt. En aspekt handlar om det påstått ökat inflytande från USA, en annan rör den mer intervenerande staten gällande under efterkrigstiden. Fokus har legat på texter som behandlar Sverige, Norden, Amerika/England och den tyska kultursfären.

Några sedan tidigare identifierade centrala tidskrifter har alltså undersökts.<sup>54</sup> De kan i huvudsak karaktäriseras som allmändidaktiska i meningen att de behandlade

51 Burke (2016); Björn Lundberg, “Introduction: Exploring Histories of Knowledge and Education: An Introduction,” *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 9, no. 2 (2022), 1–11.

52 Rodgers (1998); Johan Östling, Anton Jansson och Ragni Svensson Stringberg, *Humanister i offentligheten: Kunskapens aktörer och arenor under efterkrigstiden* (Göteborg: Makadam förlag, 2022), 21–23; Lundberg (2022).

53 Mats Alvesson och Kaj Sköldberg, *Reflexive Methodology* (London: Sage; 2009).

54 För exempel på hur pedagogiska tidskrifter använts i tidigare forskning se Richardson (1978), 42–44; Göran Andolf, *Historien på gymnasiet: Undervisning och läroböcker 1820–1965* (Stockholm: Esselte Studium, 1972), 16–20.



samtliga skolämnen. *PT* (1865–1971) torde vara den tidskrift som under längst tid bevakade frågor om skola och undervisning. Den var också länge en central arena för just läroverkslärarna. Tidskriftens syfte var att behandla pedagogiska frågor samt att vara ”ett organ för ömsesidigt utbyte af tankar, erfarenheter och studier rörande lärarkallets uppgifter och utöfvande samt för noggranna redogörelser öfver skolans verksamhet”.<sup>55</sup> Återkommande innehåll var allmänna artiklar om skola och undervisning, en omfattande recensionsavdelning samt information från Skolöverstyrelsen. Den progressiva allmändidaktiska tidskriften *SoS* (1920–1967) var en central arena för den progressiva pedagogiken. Tidskriftens namn anspelar på John Deweys *The School and Society* även om det inte skrevs ut i tidskriftens första nummer och inledande programförklaring 1920.<sup>56</sup> *SoS* tog tydligt ställning för en reformerad progressiv skola. I huvudsak handlade tidskriftens texter om den debatt och de reformer som påbörjades under tidigt 1900-tal med fokus på en gemensam bottenskola och hur en progressivt inriktad metod kunde användas i undervisningen. Detta skedde via publicering av debattartiklar och andra texter där kunskap om skolhistoria, internationella utbildningssystem och vetenskapliga rön publicerades, men det fanns också ett betydande inslag av bidrag där lärare beskrev sina praktiska erfarenheter av undervisning. Tidskriften såg sig också som en arena där ”undervisningsförsök” uppmärksammades.<sup>57</sup> Det finns en antal andra centrala pedagogiska tidskrifter som är intressanta, som exempelvis *Verdandi* som kom ut perioden 1883–1927 men *Verdandi* och andra tidskrifter som *Pedagogiska spörsmål* täcker inte in hela den studerade perioden och har därför valts bort. Det finns som redan nämnts en rad antologier och sammanställningar där erfarenheter förmedlades från nordisk försöksverksamhet. Dessa har inte inkluderats i det empiriska materialet då det är tidskrifter som är i fokus. *Individuell undervisning Arbetskola – arbetsglädje: Uppsatser i metodiskt-pedagogiska spörsmål* och *Forsök i skolen skrift tilegnet Herman Ruge på 70-årsdagen* är exempel på antologier med nordisk representation.

## Resultatredovisning

Presentationen av resultaten har utgått från fyra teman som också har berörts i tidigare forskning och teori om försöksverksamhet, spridning av kunskap och tidskrifter. Det första temat som kommer att behandlas rör frågan om geografiskt ursprung avseende pedagogiska idéer, metoder och perspektiv. Det andra temat handlar om vem som skrev artiklarna. Därefter redogörs för karaktären på den försöksverksamhet som artiklarna tar upp. Slutligen analyseras vad för slags kunskap som delades via texterna.

Sammanlagt har 54 artiklar och texter identifierats där försöksverksamhet behandlas under perioden. I en mening är det en stor mängd artiklar som förmedlar kunskap och erfarenhet i tidskrifterna. Nu har ingen närmare studie gjorts av antalet artiklar som berör andra teman men detta torde vara ett av de teman som ändå är relativt vanligt förekommande i tidskrifterna. Dock är det ju få artiklar i relation till det totala antalet artiklar över hela perioden, vilket tabellen nedan illustrerar.

55 Nordisk familjebok (andra upplagan, 1915), uppslagsord Pedagogisk tidskrift.

56 John Dewey, *The School and Society*, andra rev. upplagan (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1915).

57 Se eftertext i *SoS* (1946), 262.

Tabell 1. Totalt antal artiklar

	SoS	PT
1920–1939	631	405
1940–1960	663	297
Totalt antal	1294	702

Källa: SoS och PT.<sup>58</sup>

Som framkommer i tabellen hade SoS flest artiklar. I de försök som återgavs fanns flera ämnesinriktningar representerade, varav flera handlade om modersmål och språk.<sup>59</sup> Även ämnen inom det samhällsorienterande blocket hade god representation.<sup>60</sup>

### Representerade länder och regioner

I analysen har utgångspunkten tagits i vilka länder som finns representerade i artiklarna om försöksverksamheten. Med representation avses här explicita idéer, metoder, erfarenheter och vetenskapliga resultat med koppling till ett specifikt land. Som tabellen tydligt illustrerar är artiklar där erfarenheter och kunskaper från svensk kontext dominerande. Även texter med referenser till flera länder har en framträdande plats.

Tabell 2. Representerade länder och regioner

	Sverige	Norden	Amerika/England	Tyskland	Mix
SoS 1920–1939	13	3	3	3	11
SoS 1940–1960	8	1	1	0	2
PT 1920–1939	4	1	1	0	1
PT 1940–1960	2	0	0	0	0
Totalt	27	5	5	3	14

Källa: SoS och PT.

Exempel på texter som har klassificerats ”svenska” är helt enkelt enskilda lärare, skolor eller kommuner som inte explicit refererar till internationella pedagogiska idéer. Det vi inte vet är om det finns bakomliggande inspirationskällor som inte uttrycks. Exempel på en text som tar utgångspunkt i en svensk tradition är BJ Beckman redogörelse om undervisning i statskunskap. Han redogör för ett försök med ett slags grupparbete i statskunskap på ett läroverk. Metodisk inspiration hade hämtats från en kurs i studiecirkelmetod han tagit del av.<sup>61</sup> Kunskapen som delades i dessa texter var alltså knappast explicit transnationell.

När det gäller övriga länder rör det ofta beskrivningar av försöksverksamhet och

58 Notera att årgångarna 1942, 1944 och 1945 av PT inte varit tillgängliga.

59 Se exempelvis Harald Lidholm, ”Ett försök med arbetsuppgifter i modersmålet på gymnasiet,” SoS (1932), 244–46; Olav Schulstad, ”Experimentelle undersøkelser om rettskrivningsundervisning,” SoS (1934), 21–27.

60 Se exempelvis Karl Larsson, ”Undervisning i historia med samhällslära i treårig realskola. Några iakttagelser från försöksundervisning,” SoS (1958), 160–64; Wendela Engström, ”Ett försök med historieundervisning på nya vägar,” SoS (1931), 36–46.

61 BJ Beckman, ”Ett experiment vid undervisning i statskunskap,” SoS (1932), 64–70.

undervisningsexperiment från andra länder. I exempelvis Fritz Olausson artikel ”Från tyska försöksskolor” var det enbart tyska pedagogiska idéer som lyftes fram.<sup>62</sup> Ett annat exempel är O. DE Hemmer Egebergs försöksarbete i danska Vanløse. Här är det huvudsakligen erfarenheter från kommunen och skolan som lyfts fram och artikeln har då klassificerats som nordisk, det räcker alltså med att det är ett nordiskt land som representeras i denna kategori.<sup>63</sup> Ett annat exempel på nordisk representation är överläraren Hakon Kirkegaards redogörelse från Fredriksberg i Köpenhamnsregionen. I artikeln redogörs i allmänna ordalag för ”den nya skolan” och det exemplifieras med frånvaron av läxor, elevaktiva arbetssätt och mindre stoff i undervisningen. Det är svårt att spåra en enskild pedagogisk skolbildning kopplad till ett specifikt land eller en konkret enskild metod. Snarare handlar det, som i många andra exempel, om en generell syn på skolan i linje med en progressiv strömning.<sup>64</sup>

Men ofta återkommande var det en mångfald av perspektiv och metoder från flera länder som lyftes fram i artiklarna. I exempelvis Helge Gullbergs artikel om försök med friare arbetsformer vid läroverken refereras till svenska progressiva skribenter, men också till tysk och amerikansk reformpedagogik.<sup>65</sup> I artikeln är det en skribents tolkning av olika pedagogiska idéer från flera länder som omställs till undervisning. Vi ska titta lite närmare på Gullbergs exempel gällande pedagogisk inspiration. Initialt betonas att den nya (1928) läroverksstadgan påverkat upplägget av försöket då den betonade ”friare arbetssätt”. Vidare påtalas att tankar om elevens frihet också dryftats i tidskriftsartiklar av framträdande svenska progressiva pedagoger som den progressiva läroverksläraren, skolbyråkraten och författaren Nils Hänningar, liksom folkskoleinspektören Arvid Gierow. Men snarare än att peka ut särskilda pedagogiska idéer hos Hänningar och Gierow var det de mer allmänna föreställningarna om hur friare arbetsformer kunde ”omsättas i det dagliga arbetet vid ett läroverk” som betonades. Gullberg hade också till viss del inspirerats av amerikansk progressiv pedagogik då han i England studerat skolor som tillämpat den s.k Daltonmetoden, en metod där eleverna i hög grad fick jobba individuellt på beting under längre perioder. Men Gullberg påtalade att dessa idéer i sin helhet inte kunde tillämpas i Sverige, det egna arbetet kunde användas, men man kunde inte släppa eleverna helt fritt tycks Gullberg ha tänkt. Dock var ”andan” i Daltonplanen lovvärd. Exempel på hur elevernas självständiga och/eller individuella arbete kunde (eller borde) bedrivas var egen läsning på skolbiblioteket, rättning av klasskamraters ”straffläxor” och ansvar för genomförande av lektioner. Gullberg erkände utan omsvep att många nog inte skulle betrakta detta som en renlärig tillämpning av exempelvis Daltonmetoden, men det var en anpassning till svenska förhållanden. En annan aspekt som var viktig i skolan var social fostran och elevsamverkan, vilket enligt Gullberg var något av ett adelsmärke för tyska Lichtwarkschule men också för amerikanska skolor. I hans klassrum omsattes dessa tankar i praktisk pedagogik via bland annat teater, skapandet av en tidning och diskussionsövningar.

Det finns alltså få exempel på en ensidig representation av transnationell kunskap i artiklarna om försöksverksamhet. Det är heller knappast en statisk syn på pedagogiska

62 Fritz Olausson, ”Från tyska försöksskolor,” *SoS* (1931), 123–33.

63 O. DE Hemmer Egeberg, ”Försögsarbejdet i Vanløse,” *SoS* (1932), 47–53.

64 Hakon Kirkegaard, ”Den Nye Skole,” *SoS* (1926), 225–32.

65 Helge Gullberg, ”Försök med friare arbetsformer vid läroverken,” *SoS* (1931), 301–18.

perspektiv som framträder, det finns få exempel på texter som argumenterar mot exempelvis den amerikanska Daltonmetoden och lyfter fram tysk arbetsskolemetodik. Det är inte heller, när försöksverksamhet behandlas, någon klar trend att Amerika ersätter i Tyskland efterhand, något som betonats i tidigare forskning. Man kan också notera den nordiska närvaron i materialet. Nu var det knappast frågan om en specifik nordisk progressiv modell, som enkelt går att särskilja från andra perspektiv, och som ”färdades” mellan de nordiska länderna. Snarare var det en form av organiskt utvecklad situerad erfarenhet från de olika länderna som förmedlades i tidskrifterna.

### Kunskapsmäklarna

I tidigare forskning är ett återkommande begrepp brokers eller kunskapsmäklare.<sup>66</sup> Med det avses de personer, aktörer eller institutioner som förmedlar kunskap. Tidskriften kan ju i sig ses som en självklar mäklande institution, men vilka var det som använde tidskriften för att förmedla kunskap om undervisning via beskrivningar om försöksverksamhet? I materialet framträder framförallt läraren som den centrala mäklaren, det var frågan om så väl lärare från folkskolan som från läroverken.

Tabell 3. Kunskapsmäklarna

	Lärare	Inspektörer/läroverksutbildare	Forskare/högre chefer	Oidentifierade
SoS 1920–1939	22	4	1	1
SoS 1940–1960	4	1	6	0
PT 1920–1939	4	1	0	1
PT 1940–1960	1	0	0	0
Totalt	31	6	7	2

Källa: SoS och PT. Notera att några lärare skrev flera artiklar (liksom inspektörer/läroverksutbildare), totalen blir därför inte 54.

Flera av de svenska lärare som skrev artiklar har inte lämnat några mer omfattande offentliga avtryck i andra sammanhang (som exempelvis medverkan i statliga utredningar). Ett sådant exempel är Matilda Holmgren som var kopplad till folkskolan via sin roll som överlärare i Malmö. Hon skrev om ett försök med Daltonmetoden i SoS sent 1920-tal.<sup>67</sup> Ett annat exempel är Gösta Johannesson, läroverkslärare vid Göteborgs högre samskola, som berättade om nya undervisningsmetoder i PT 1949.<sup>68</sup> Men det finns också lärare som Helge Gullberg som återkommande skrev i pedagogisk press och var aktiv i Lärarnas riksförbund och Modersmålslärares förening.<sup>69</sup> Ett annat exempel är Elsa Skäringer, folkskolläroverkslärare från Göteborg. Hon skrev böcker om undervisning och deltog aktivt i den lokala skoldebatten.<sup>70</sup> Vissa lärare rörde sig också mellan flera offentliga arenor. Exempelvis kom Ernst Söderlund under 1940-talet att medverka i 1946 års skolkommision och han

<sup>66</sup> Rodgers (1998); Lundberg (2022).

<sup>67</sup> Matilda Holmgren, ”Ett försök med Daltonmetoden,” SoS (1928), 12–19.

<sup>68</sup> Gösta Johannesson, ”Nya undervisningsmetoder – nya problemställningar,” PT (1949), 5–23.

<sup>69</sup> Helge Gullberg, ”Självverksamhet och läsläsning,” SoS (1935), 71–85.

<sup>70</sup> Se Johan Samuelsson, ”Elsa Kristina Skäringer-Larson,” i *Svenskt kvinnobiografiskt lexikon* [www.skbl.se/sv/artikel/ElsaKristinaSkaringerLarson](http://www.skbl.se/sv/artikel/ElsaKristinaSkaringerLarson).

var också ordförande för Läroverkslärarnas riksförbund under 1940-talet.

Flera av lärarna var disputerade, Ernst Söderlund var historiker och Helge Gullberg var litteraturvetare exempelvis. Men det fanns också lärare med doktorsexamen i pedagogik, som läroverksläraren Sigurd Åstrand.<sup>71</sup> Det är svårare att få kunskap om de nordiska lärarna som medverkade i tidskrifterna. Exempelvis saknas lättillgänglig information om Adalstein Sigmundsson från Island och Hakon Kirkegaard som var överlärare från Danmark.<sup>72</sup>

I gruppen inspektörer och lärarutbildare på framförallt folkskolans lärarutbildning ryms en form av personer som via sin anställning befann sig mellan skola och myndigheter. I denna grupp skrev vissa skribenter flera artiklar. Exempelvis publicerade lektorn vid folkskolläraryrkesseminariet i Skara, Jenny Wellander, två artiklar i *SoS*.<sup>73</sup> Även lektorn vid folkskoleseminariet i Uppsala, Georg Brandell, skrev återkommande i pedagogiska tidskrifter om försöksverksamhet under hela perioden.<sup>74</sup> Ett exempel på en inspektör som medverkade i *SoS* är Karl Nordlund, verksam i Stockholm.<sup>75</sup> De enskilda lärarna som skrev kunde naturligtvis dela med sig av sin kunskap till kollegor, men inspektörer och lärarutbildare hade större möjlighet att nå betydligt fler personer, dessutom kunde de sprida kunskap till olika professionella kategorier. Denna grupp (och gruppen högre chefer och forskare) kan ses som en slags policyintellektuella som rörde sig mellan flera olika fält och därmed hade betydande möjlighet att sprida kunskap om undervisning.<sup>76</sup>

Ytterligare en grupp som identifierades var högre chefer och forskare. När det gäller forskare var det relativt få som berörde försöksverksamhet, men exempel finns. Olov Dahlgren skrev om ett försöksarbete i engelska.<sup>77</sup> En namnkunnig forskare som Torsten Husén skrev om modern pedagogik och uppmärksammas då skolreformer och utveckling. Även nordiska forskare medverkade i tidskrifterna.<sup>78</sup> Det finns vissa överlapp mellan lärarutbildare och forskare då exempelvis Husén först var verksam vid Stockholms högskola, men efter 1956 var lärarhögskolan i Stockholm arbetsplatsen. Han undervisade säkerligen lärarstudenter, men han sysslade framförallt med kvalificerad pedagogisk forskning. En lärare vid utbildningen för blivande folkskollärare bedrev knappast pedagogisk forskning i tjänsten. Det är alltså en betydande skillnad mellan de som klassificerats som forskare och de som klassificerats som lärarutbildare.

71 Sigurd Åstrand, "Försök med nyspråklig linje vid Sofi Almquists Samskola i Stockholm," *PT* (1930), 75–86.

72 Se Hakon Kirkegaard, "Den Nye Skole," *SoS* (1926), 225–32; Adalstein Sigmundsson, "Ett isländskt försök i riktning mot arbetsskolan," *SoS* (1935), 225–30.

73 Jenny Wellander, "Amerikanska försöksbyrån," *SoS* (1921), 175–79; Jenny Wellander, "Social education i Förenta staterna," *SoS* (1923), 129–33.

74 Se exempelvis Georg Brandell, "Skiptikonbildens och filmens värde ur undervisningssynpunkt," *SoS* (1926), 238–43; Georg Brandell, "Elsa Köhler och Ingeborg Hamberg: Ur den moderna pedagogikens verkstad," *PT* (1926), 308–9; Georg Brandell, "Skolöverstyrelsens försöksverksamhet," *PT* (1953), 61–72.

75 Karl Nordlund, "Från försöksarbetet vid Stockholms folkskolor," *SoS* (1932), 13.

76 Jämför med Jarning (2009).

77 Olov Dahlgren, "Engelskan i folkskolan," *SoS* (1946), 123–32.

78 Torsten Husén, "Forskningsarbete vid Stockholms högskolas psykologiska institut 1945–1960," *SoS* (1950), 211–17; Helge Eng, "De siste års forskning ved Universitetets pedagogiske forskningsinstitut," *SoS* (1950), 263–67.

Exempel på höga chefer är kommunala skoldirektörer och generaldirektören för Skolöverstyrelsen.<sup>79</sup> En rimlig förklaring till att andelen forskare och högre chefer har högre representation efter andra världskriget är att försöksverksamheten ändrar karaktär och blir en självklar del av statens reformpolitik. Kommuner och universitet får därför en viktigare roll i genomförande och analys av försöksverksamheten. Men samtidigt måste angivna siffror tolkas försiktigt då underlaget är begränsat. Det kan också bero på redaktionella val. Personer som har oklar yrkesstatus har klassificerats som oidentifierade.

Över tid sker en förändring avseende vilka som är kunskapsmäklarna, lärarna som under mellankrigstiden var den dominerande skribentgruppen ersätts efter 1945 alltmer av forskare och högre chefer. Denna förändring speglar också en allmän utveckling gällande försöksverksamheten som efter kriget i allt högre grad kom att organiseras via Skolöverstyrelsen. Förändringen hänger inte samman med det totala antalet artiklar i tidskrifterna, det är till exempel fler artiklar i *SoS* perioden efter 1939 än perioden före.

### Karaktären på försöksverksamheten

I artiklarna behandlas framförallt försök och undervisningsexperiment som bedrevs av en enskild lärare eller ett kollegium som var lärariniterat, som tabell fyra illustrerar. Men också texter där erfarenheter på nationell eller regional nivå behandlades förekom också i relativ stor omfattning. Kommuner och städer som bedrev ett mer eller systematiskt försöksarbete beskrevs också.

Tabell 4. Karaktären på försöksverksamheten

	Enskild lärare och skola	Kommun	Stat/region	Övrigt (kongress, resonemang om försöksskolor)
<i>SoS</i> 1920–1939	20	5	4	4
<i>SoS</i> 1940–1960	5	2	5	0
<i>PT</i> 1920–1939	4	0	2	1
<i>PT</i> 1939–1960	1	0	1	0
Totalt	30	7	12	5

Källa: *SoS* och *PT*.

De enskilda försöken kunde handla om enskilda lärare som blivit intresserade av en metod eller pedagogisk idé. Exempelvis genomförde Matilda Holmgren, överlärare i Malmö, ett försök med Daltonmetoden i folkskolan.<sup>80</sup> Men det kunde också handla om icke namngivna metoder och då rörde försöken i allmänhet det skribenten exempelvis kunde kalla den nya skolans pedagogik, vilket Hakon Kirkegaard, överlärare i Fredriksberg, gjorde i en redogörelse för ett danskt lokalt utvecklingsarbete.<sup>81</sup> Men enskilda försök kunde också vara kopplat till organisatoriska frågor som diskuterades i samtiden. Sigurd Åstrand, läroverkslektor, beskrev ett försök med nyspråklig linje

79 Nils Gustav Rosén, "Återblick på 1955," *SoS* (1954), 1–8; Robert E. Wenngren, "Vad skall undervisas hur?" *SoS* (1958), 190–98.

80 Holmgren (1928).

81 Hakon Kirkegaard, "Den Nye Skole," *SoS* (1926), 225–32.

vid det privata läroverket Sofi Almquists Samskola i Stockholm tidigt 1930-tal.<sup>82</sup> De enskilda försöken var vanligtvis mindre interventioner, men det fanns också exempel på hur enskilda lärare kontaktade forskare för att genomföra mer systematiska försök i mindre skala, vilket Ester Hermansson folkskolläraren och skolutredare gjorde på 1950-talet. Hon kontaktade bland annat en forskare för att genomföra en studie om lärande i engelska.<sup>83</sup>

Även om försöken bedrevs vid en enskild skola kunde fördjupade och kvalificerade analyser göras, som i Sigurd Åstrand's redovisning av ett läroverksförsök.<sup>84</sup> Åstrand bedrev ett försök med självständigt arbete kombinerat med prov och föreläsningar i matematik. Han konstaterade att det som fungerade i Chicago inte självklart fungerade Örebro eller Luleå. Det krävdes en anpassning helt enkelt till lokala förhållande och lärarnas intresse och erfarenhet. Vidare skulle man inte alltför hastigt förändra pedagogiken, enligt Åstrand skulle man "lugnt och försiktigt" justera undervisningen. Det fanns alltså en tydlig konflikt mellan att införa nya undervisningsmodeller och att ta hänsyn till lärares erfarenheter. Åstrand var dock i grunden positiv till att pröva nya metoder och analysera utfallet av dem. Han lät eleverna svara på ett antal frågor som rörde försöket. Exempelvis fick de svara på om försöket krävde mer arbete och det fanns några särskilda nackdelar med metoden som testades. Undervisningen länkades också till elevernas kunskapsresultat, vilket möjliggjorde analys av försökets effekter. Åstrand kopplade också resultaten till faktorer som klassens storlek. Även om det handlade om ett försök på en skola kom ändå den genererade kunskapen många till del via tidningen. De kommunala försöken med en progressivt inriktad undervisning genomfördes i flera svenska kommuner. Från exempelvis Helsingborg rapporterade folkskoleinspektör Arvid Gierow om ett större försök som involverade ett stort antal skolor i kommunen. I redogörelsen presenteras en rad inhemska och internationella influenser, jämte kända reformpedagoger från kontinenten och Amerika nämns också influenser från den danska skolinspektören, H Kyrre.<sup>85</sup>

Redogörelser från nationella försök rör beskrivningar där verksamhet visserligen kunde vara lokala men beskrevs som amerikansk eller för den del svensk. Återkommande är det Amerika som på en mer nationell nivå beskrivs. I exempelvis den norska inspektörens Olav Schulstads beskrivning av Winnetkaplanen under sent 1920-tal behandlas reformförsök i Amerika.<sup>86</sup> Även nordiska exempel fanns i tidskrifterna. Erik Thomsen beskrev i en artikel om Danmarks pedagogiska institut också dansk försöksverksamhet under efterkrigstiden.<sup>87</sup> Men också den svenska statliga försöksverksamheten behandlades under efterkrigstiden i flera artiklar.<sup>88</sup>

Övertid blev det betydligt färre artiklar om enskilda mindre försök, samtidigt som försöken på nationell nivå är någorlunda konstant. Att enskilda försök minskar kan spegla att försöksverksamheten under efterkrigstiden ändrade karaktär. Allt mer fokus kom att hamna på storskaliga försök. Men även om de storskaliga försöken

82 Sigurd Åstrand, "Försök med nyspråklig linje vid Sofi Almquists Samskola i Stockholm," *PT* (1930), 75–86.

83 Ester Hermansson, "Ett av de ett tusen och ett sätten att lära engelska," *SoS* (1958), 210–16.

84 Sigurd Åstrand, "Ett självstudieförsök," *PT* (1929), 1–15.

85 Arvid Gierow, "Försöksanordningar i Hälsingborgs folkskolor," *SoS* (1931), 209–15.

86 Olav Schulstad, "Winnetkaplanen," *SoS* (1929), 272–79.

87 Erik Thomsen, "Danmarks pedagogiska institut," *SoS* (1960), 237–42.

88 Se exempelvis Rosén (1955).

relativt enskilda försök ökar, så ökar de knappt totalt. Rimligen kan det förklaras av att kunskaper om storskalig försöksverksamhet också spreds via plattformar som SÖ:s tidning *På försök* och *Aktuellt från skolöverstyrelsen*.

### Kunskapens karaktär

Artiklar där den huvudsakliga redogörelsen utgår från lärarnas erfarenhet har betraktats som erfarenhetsbaserad. De texter där lärarna i hög grad utgår från pedagogiska namngivna modeller eller kunskap som genererats via mer systematiska analyser av undervisningen har klassificerats inom kategorin vetenskapliga och pedagogiska perspektiv. De artiklar som i huvudsak består av beskrivningar av försöksverksamhet har inkluderats i denna kategori. Innehållet i artiklarna har självfallet påverkat karaktären på den delade kunskapen, att det dominerande temat är den erfarenhetsbaserade kunskapen är rätt självklart med tanke på val av artiklar, vilket tabell fyra indikerar.

Tabell 5. Kunskapens karaktär

	Erfarenhetsbaserad	Vetenskapliga och pedagogiska perspektiv i kombination med erfarenhet	Redogörelser från försök
SoS 1920–1939	14	11	8
SoS 1940–1960	4	3	5
PT 1920–1939	3	3	1
PT 1940–1960	1	0	1
Totalt	22	17	15

Källa. SoS och PT.

Merparten av de artiklar som innehåller erfarenhetsbaserad kunskap redogör för mindre undervisningsförsök. I exempelvis O. DE Hemmer Egebergs artikel om försöksarbetet i Vanlöse i Köpenhamn under 1920-talet argumenteras för de goda resultaten utifrån Hemmer Egebergs egen erfarenhet av försöket, samt att de som besökt skolan också sett positiva resultat. Den kunskap som delades var alltså i hög grad kopplad till författarens direkta erfarenhet, inte en fördjupad systematisk analys. Men även om det var den egna erfarenheten som presenterades innebar det inte att det var en kontextlös kunskap. Hemmer Egeberg redogjorde för de grundläggande pedagogiska tankarna hos den arbetsskoleinriktade pedagogiken, dock utan referenser till pedagogiska profiler eller forskare.<sup>89</sup>

Ett annat exempel är Karl Larssons försök med att utveckla undervisningen i allmän historia via jämförelser mellan internationell och svensk historia. Larsson hade förankrat försöket med sina kollegor vid läroverket för flickor i Göteborg. De ”resultat” som presenterades ställdes upp i punktform och byggde på Larssons erfarenheter, några ambitioner att mer utförligt analysera resultaten via tabeller med resultat, enkätutvärderingar eller kopplingar till teorier och perspektiv fanns inte. Exempel på ett resultat från Larsson var att ”sambandet med svensk historia bör så vitt som möjligt uppehållas” i undervisningen.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Hemmer (1932).

<sup>90</sup> Karl Larsson, ”Undervisning i historia med samhällslära i treårig realskola: Några iakttagelser från försöksundervisning.” SoS (1958), 160–64.



I flera artiklar kom lärarna att explicit ta avstamp i pedagogiska modeller eller vetenskapliga perspektiv och förhållningssätt. Vi kan nu återvända till Matilda Holmgren från Malmö. Hon genomförde, vilket redan nämnts, ett försök med Daltonmetoden i folkskolan som beskrevs relativt ingående i SoS. Efter att tillstånd givits av stadens skolinspektör påbörjades arbetet i ämnet geografi. Inspiration till försöket hämtades dock inte i tidigare lokala projekt, i redogörelsen framskymtar möjligheten att samla ny kunskap från Malmö som ett motiv till att pröva metoden. Eleverna fick som brukligt i Daltonmetoden jobba med beting självständigt. Dock innebar resursbrister på skolan utmaningar när metoden skulle omsättas i praktisk undervisning. Daltonmetoden förutsätter i dess amerikanska ursprungsvariant tillgång till ämnesrum med litteratur och annat pedagogiskt material som möjliggör elevernas eget arbete.<sup>91</sup> I Holmgrens skola fanns visserligen skolmaterial, men det var inte samlat i ett klassrum, exempelvis fick eleverna och Holmgren forsla en stor jordglob mellan olika klassrum. Det var vidare svårt för eleverna att sitta tysta och arbeta i samma klassrum. I artikeln lyfte Holmgren sedan utifrån sina erfarenheter fram styrkor och svagheter med den pedagogiska modellen. En svaghet med modellen var att den förutsatte god tillgång till arbetsmaterial och specialklassrum. Vidare var elevernas självförtroende gällande deras egen arbetsförmåga ett problem. Planering och kringarbete var också något som upplevdes krävande av lärare och elever. Avslutningsvis konstaterade Holmberg att eleverna uppskattade när läraren hade en berättande metodik, undantaget de högpresterande eleverna. Hon påtalade också att hon var "livligt övertygad" om att Daltonmetoden hade framtiden för sig. I artikeln fanns således en brygga mellan egen erfarenheten och en pedagogisk modell, men de samlade erfarenheterna visade också på en utmaning med att använda modeller som överförts från andra nationella kontexter. Noterbart är vidare att via artikeln framkom erfarenheter från elever med olika förutsättningar för skolarbetet.<sup>92</sup>

Efterhand kom de enskilda lärartexterna närma sig mer vetenskapliga perspektiv. I exempelvis Ester Hermanssons beskrivning av en försöksverksamhet som gjordes under 1950-talet fick läsaren visserligen ta del av hennes yrkesbiografi, men hon kom också underbygga sina resultat med kopplingar till psykologen Elsa Köhlers forskning. I artikeln presenterades vidare den metod som använts för att systematisera kunskapen.<sup>93</sup> I Göteborg gjordes det även på det enskilda läroverket Göteborgs Högre samskola vetenskapligt grundade undervisningsförsök. Läraren Gösta Johannesson redogjorde för ett försök som hade genomförts i samverkan med 1946 års skolkommision och länkade resultaten till forskning om begåvningsreserven.<sup>94</sup>

Artiklarna ovan torde ha haft relevans för enskilda lärare då den kunskap som delades i tidskrifterna hade en tydlig yrkeskoppling. Men en del av artiklarna som rörde försöksverksamhet kom att redogöra för storskaliga försök på nationell nivå. Som tabell fem indikerar kom andelen redogörande artiklar relativt sett att öka efter 1940 och det var framförallt under 1950-talet som artiklar av denna karaktär publicerades. Generaldirektören för Skolöverstyrelsen, Nils Gustav Rosén, sammanfattande

91 Se framförallt Helene Parkhurst, *Education on The Dalton Plan* (London: G Bell and Sons Ltd, 1922).

92 Holmgren (1928).

93 Hermansson (1958).

94 Johannesson (1949).

exempelvis den statliga försöksverksamheten 1955.<sup>95</sup> Ett annat exempel på redogörelser av statlig försöksverksamhet var Eve Malmqvists artikel om statens försöksskola i Linköping 1960.<sup>96</sup>

Sammantaget förändras karaktären på de artiklar som rörde försöksverksamheten efter hand. Erfarenhetsbaserad kunskap hade en stark ställning under mellankrigstiden, efterkrigstiden innebar att de artiklar som behandlade statliga och systematiska försök tog större plats. Dock kom det under hela perioden finnas texter där olika slags kunskap delades.

### **Transkommunal och eklektisk; sammanfattande slutsatser om kunskaps-spridning från försöksverksamhet**

Lärare, skolor, kommuner och nationer som i olika form bedrev försöksverksamhet var tidigt en strategi för att generera kunskap för utveckling och förändring av skolan i Sverige och andra delar av världen. De pedagogiska tidskrifterna kom att bli en plattform där lärargenererad kunskap om denna verksamhet delades.<sup>97</sup>

Att se på texter där försöksverksamhet behandlas ger inblickar i gränsöverskridande cirkulation av kunskap och policy.<sup>98</sup> Men via artiklar om försöksverksamhet framträder också några alternativa mönster som måste lyftas i relation föreställningar om kunskapens transnationella karaktär under skolans reformperiod. De inomnationella flödena av kunskap eller snarare transkommunala var markanta hela perioden, via lärare och andra nyckelaktörer som inspektörer fick läsarna ta del av kunskap och erfarenhet från svenska kollegor (och nordiska) verksamma i andra skolor och kommuner. Visst ser vi betydande inslag av transnationella flöden, men det är sällan från enskilda länder som inspirationen hämtades, snarare var det en mix av perspektiv från olika länder som refererades i texterna. I den traditionella historiografin över utveckling i Sverige gällande internationell inspiration heter det sammanfattningsvis att Amerika ersätter Tyskland efter 1945.<sup>99</sup> Denna slutsats står nödvändigtvis inte i direkt motsättning till tendensen i artiklarna, den empiri som tidigare studier utgått från är i huvudsak utredningar och annat nationellt material. Men när lärarna och andra mer verksamhetsnära aktörer skriver om undervisning och vad som inspirerat dem blir bilden alltså mer mångfacetterad.

Lärarna hade ett eklektiskt förhållande till kunskap om undervisning, det avgörande var inte varifrån kunskapen kom, snarare dess relevans för yrkesvardagen. Just relationen mellan modeller, pedagogiska perspektiv samt lärares erfarenheter, resurser och intressen var något som tycks ha varit spänningsfyllt. Det är också en spegling av huruvida erfarenhetsbaserad kunskap eller mer vetenskapligt grundad kunskap uppfattas som primärt utvecklingsdrivande. Det rådde knappast konfliktfria relationer mellan kunskapsperspektiven, snarare var det påtagligt hos flera av de refererade lärarna att förhållandet mellan erfarenhetsgenererad kunskap och pedagogiska modeller eller teorier upplevdes som problematiskt.

95 Rosén (1955).

96 Eve Malmqvist, "Pedagogiska forskningsobjekt vid Statens försöksskola i Linköping," *SoS* (1960), 234–36.

97 Jmfr Jarning (2009).

98 Se t.ex. Whitty (2016), 38–54; Sivesind och Karseth (2022), 1–31.

99 Se exempelvis Östling (2008), 202–3; 29–32; Lindesjö och Lundgren (2014), 45–47.

En viss förändring över tid sker gällande artiklarnas innehåll, från småskaliga försök till mer storskaliga försök och från erfarenhet och vetenskap/modeller med utgångspunkt i undervisningen till högre grad av storskaliga försök. Även mäklarnas (skribenternas) yrkestillhörighet ändrade karaktär. Inledningsvis var lärarna välrepresenterade, men under efterkrigstiden försvinner de nästan helt som skribenter. Samtidigt är utvecklingen för gruppen höga chefer och forskare den motsatta. Detta resultat är i en mening väntat, försöksverksamhetens allt mer storskaliga karaktär påverkade uppenbarligen också vilka som delade kunskap i pedagogiska tidskrifter. Samtidigt bör det noteras att under hela perioden fanns en representation av olika slags kunskapsmäklare, det fanns också utrymme hela perioden för olika slags försöksverksamheter. I tidskrifterna speglas alltså en utveckling från det småskaliga och spontana till det mer systematiska och storskaliga, vilket vi sett också i annan nordisk forskning.<sup>100</sup>

Att tidskriften var en plattform där olika slags kunskap om undervisning blev tillgänglig är uppenbart och vilka som deltog spridningen av kunskap ändras efter hand. Lärarnas minskade aktivitet bör förstås i förhållande till en allmän utveckling gällande delning av kunskap om undervisning. I Sverige kom staten exempelvis via skriftserien *Aktuellt från skolöverstyrelsen* och tidskriften *På försök* att sprida kunskap om försöksverksamhet, båda publikationerna hade mycket stora upplagor som gick ut till yrkesverksamma, som påtalades ovan. Det var inte bara försöksverksamheten som skalades upp och i hög grad kom att drivas via statliga initiativ, även delning av kunskap utvecklades på samma sätt.

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100 Se exempelvis Jarning (2009); (2017).

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## Education, Nation-State Formation and Religion: Comparing Ireland and Norway

Nina Volckmar

**Abstract** • This article compares the development of primary education in Ireland and Norway, from its establishment in the nineteenth century until present time. The aim of the article is to discuss how and to what degree nation-state formation after independence in Ireland (1922) and Norway (1905) created fundamental and persistent structures for the development of primary schooling, as well as the role that religion and nation-building played in this. Previous research on the development of Irish and Norwegian schooling and official documents and reports makes up the research material. The article demonstrates that, despite institutional secularisation around the world from the nineteenth century onwards, religious and national peculiarities in the establishment of primary education in Ireland and Norway continue to characterise, and to some extent explain, the differences in Irish and Norwegian education today.

**Keywords** • primary education, nation, religion, secularisation, comparative history

### Introduction

Ireland and Norway share a common past as union countries. Ireland was subordinate to Britain, and Norway was first in union with Denmark and Sweden within the Kalmar Union and thereafter with Sweden. This article will discuss how and to what degree nation-state formation following the independence of Ireland (1922) and Norway (1905) has created fundamental and persistent structures for the development of primary schooling, as well as the role that religion and nation-building have played in this. Ireland offers an interesting case study of the importance of religion in education, given the extent to which religion has been structurally embedded in the governance and development of education at all levels.<sup>1</sup> Over ninety per cent of Ireland's primary schools are still classified as Catholic. Although the symbolic domination of the Catholic Church is declining in most spheres of Irish society, the power of the Catholic Church is still unquestionable and Catholic religiosity and sentiment remain pervasive.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church lost its hegemonic status in the governance of primary education during the nineteenth century when greater democracy and the involvement of teachers gained favour.<sup>3</sup> However, Lutheran Protestantism still remains a hegemonic position in the Norwegian

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1 Richard Byrne and Dympna Devine, “Catholic Schooling with a Twist?: A Study of Faith Schooling in the Republic of Ireland During a Period of Detraditionalisation,” *Cambridge Journal of Education* 48, no. 4 (2018); Denis O’Sullivan, *Cultural Politics and Irish Education Since the 1950s: Policy Paradigms and Power* (Dublin, Ireland: Institute of Public Administration (IPA), 2005); Karin Fischer, *Schools and the Politics of Religion and Diversity in the Republic of Ireland: Separate but Equal?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

2 Byrne and Devine (2018).

3 Alfred Oftedal Telhaug and Odd Asbjørn Mediås, *Grunnskolen som nasjonsbygger: fra statspietisme til nyliberalisme* (Oslo: Abstrakt forl., 2003).

society, and state and church did not separate until 2017.<sup>4</sup> A comparison of Ireland and Norway can illuminate the complex relationship between education, nation-state formation, religion and nation-building – and the effects these have had on education over the course of time.

Religion was a decisive factor in the early establishment of primary education in both Ireland and Norway. Since then, both countries have undergone a secularisation process (varying in pace and extent) that has tended to affect, first and foremost, the formal and organisational aspects of education, but not cultural elements such as faith, religious feeling and attitudes to the same extent. At the same time, in today's competitive knowledge society, both countries have undertaken to maintain an OECD-informed education policy with roots in American-Presbyterian sciento-social epistemology<sup>5</sup> and promising to qualify students for the labour market. Denis O'Sullivan refers to this development in Ireland as a transition from a theocentric to a mercantile paradigm.<sup>6</sup> The same may be true of Norway, as primary education in its earliest stage was referred to as “the daughter of the Church,” whereas the main goal of education in recent decades has been economic growth and qualification for work.<sup>7</sup>

The guiding thesis of this article is that, despite the institutional secularisation of Ireland and Norway that has endured since their establishment as constitutional nation-states and the establishment of their national education systems until the prevailing globalised educational thinking of today, deeply ingrained cultural traditions and ideas continue to affect educational reasoning, planning and organisation in ways that are specific to each country. The overall aim of this article is to show how this has developed differently in the two countries, and how persistent religious and national peculiarities still are in Irish and Norwegian education.

### *Method and guiding concepts*

This makes it a historical comparative project. Comparative education dates to the establishment of national education systems and the desire to learn from the experiences of others.<sup>8</sup> Since multiple approaches and sophisticatedly scientific methods have developed, however still the historical dimension and the potential of understanding the present through the past maintain. This article covers a long period of time, from the establishment of national education systems in the respective countries to the present, in which contextualised descriptions of historical antecedents are included. To do this I lean on David Phillips and Michele Schweisfurth, that claim that “A comparative study which neglects an analysis of the historical antecedents to any present-day phenomena in education is not covering the whole story and will lack

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4 Norway has had a state church based on the Evangelical Lutheran faith for more than a thousand years. According to the Constitution, the Norwegian church is still a national church and is subsidised as such.

5 Daniel Tröhler and Veronika Marici, “Data, Trust and Faith: The Unheeded Religious Roots of Modern Education Policy,” *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 19, no. 2 (2021).

6 O'Sullivan (2005).

7 Nina Volckmar, ed., *Utdanningshistorie: Grunnskolen som samfunnsintegrerende institusjon*, first edition (Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk, 2016).

8 David Phillips and Michele Schweisfurth, *Comparative and International Education: An Introduction to Theory, Method, and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

an important dimension to any explanatory power it might otherwise have.”<sup>9</sup>

The narratives of the development of primary education in the two countries are concentrated around central aspects such as nation-state formation, nation building, religion and secularisation, and their interconnection with education. Thus, the article can draw on previous research on comparative education, as these concepts have been central in comparative education from its emergence in the early years of the nineteenth century. I have not found any relevant specific comparative analyses on Ireland and Norway, but there are several comparative analyses that address and investigate the central concepts in this article. For this article I have found articles by Mette Buchardt and Daniel Tröhler especially useful.

In a Nordic perspective, Mette Buchardt is central in comparative research on religious education, state formation and secularisation. She has been most concerned with the distinction between *institutional secularisation*, the division of the church-state relation, and *cultural secularisation*, the sacralisation of the state.<sup>10</sup> To explain this distinction, Buchardt contrasts France and the Nordic countries. While France in its process of secularisation in the early twentieth century chose a radical division model in dividing religion and state, the Nordic countries chose an integration model, “where the state church of the monarch was changed into state-controlled so-called people’s churches – *Folkekirker*.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, the Nordic countries integrated and transformed religion into a national and cultural matter that supported social cohesion, a social glue for the state.<sup>12</sup> According to Buchardt, this manifested itself especially in the social democratic era in the aftermath of WWII.

Daniel Tröhler has been a great inspiration in the design of this article as he claims that the roles played by nation-state formation and religion are, in general, fundamental to understanding the development of educational thought, institutions and practices in different territories.<sup>13</sup> On the whole, Tröhler’s elaboration of concepts such as nation, nation-state, nation-building, nationalism and religion and their historical interconnections with education<sup>14</sup> has been useful in the analysis.

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9 Ibid.

10 Mette Buchardt, “Cultural Protestantism and Nordic Religious Education: An Incision in the Historic Layers Behind the Nordic Welfare State Model,” *Nordidactica – Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education* 5, no. 2 (2015), 131–65; Mette Buchardt, “The Political Project of Secularization and Modern Education Reform in ‘Provincialized Europe’: Historical Research in Religion and Education Beyond Secularization, R.I.P.,” *International Journal for the History of Education* 11, no. 2 (2021). Discussion, 164–70; Mette Buchardt, “Educating Migrant Children and Women in the Political Projects of the Welfare Nation-state and Secularisation. The Danish ‘Extreme Case’ in Light of the French,” in *World Yearbook of Education 2022*, ed. Daniel Tröhler, Nelli Piattoeva, and William F. Pinar (London and New York: Routledge, 2022); Mette Buchardt, “The Nordic Model and the Educational Welfare State in a European Light: Social Problem Solving and Secular-Religious Ambitions When Modernizing Sweden and France,” in *The Nordic Education Model in Context: Historic Developments and the Current Renegotiations*, ed. Daniel Tröhler, Bernadette Hörmann, Sverre Tveit, and Inga Bostad (New York: Routledge, 2023), 107–24.

11 Buchardt (2021), 167.

12 Buchardt (2023), 118.

13 Daniel Tröhler, “National Literacies, or Modern Education and the Art of Fabricating National Minds,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 52, no. 5 (2020); Daniel Tröhler, “Giving Language to Taboos: Nation and Religion in Modern Educational Reasoning,” *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 10, no. 2 (2023).

14 Tröhler (2020); Daniel Tröhler, “Education, Nationalism and the Ordering Construction of the

According to Tröhler, prerequisite to the establishment of modern constitutional nation-states in the nineteenth century was the idea of a nation claiming a cultural communality “politicised” to the extent that it could enter alliance with the modern state for mutual advantage.<sup>15</sup> The establishment of a national education system was crucial to the development of the idea of the nation as a cultural communality. Developing the idea of the nation in the minds of children (e.g., knowledge about the history of the nation, the national culture and, not least, the national language) became an important task for the school. Tröhler refers to this as “banal nationalism,” a concept outlined by Billig,<sup>16</sup> who distinguishes aggressive nationalism from “banal nationalism” as “everyday representations of the nation-(state) that build a common sense of national belonging among people.”<sup>17</sup> In the Norwegian research on educational history, the most prevalent concept in this process is nation-building.<sup>18</sup> However, while “a historic development of nationalism that started from an almost defiant national self-determination in the eighteenth century,” Tröhler claims, this led “to learning from strangers in the long nineteenth century, and result[ed] in the imperial minded instruction from others in the course of the twentieth century.”<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the article does not solely have a narrative character. According to the historian Paul Knudsen<sup>20</sup>, an analysis’s strength can be graded. If you have a research question that guides you, you are already analytical, although to a lesser degree. If you supplement this with concepts that further give direction to your research, you are more analytical.

The interconnected concepts accounted for above serve as a comparative lens to understand and explain the differences in Ireland and Norway’s nation-state formation and the further development of their education systems.

As mentioned, there is no specific *comparative* research on Irish and Norwegian school development, and consequently no comparative research on the relationship between education, religion, nation-state formation, and nation building. However, these topics are central elements in both general national-historical accounts and more specific national research literature on Irish and Norwegian education. Thus, this article relies heavily on earlier research on Irish<sup>21</sup> and Norwegian<sup>22</sup> school development and

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World,” in *World Yearbook 2022: Education, Schooling and the Global Universalism of Nationalism*, ed. Daniel Tröhler, Nelli Piattoeva, and William F. Pinar (London and New York: Routledge, 2022).

15 Tröhler (2023), 2.

16 Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

17 Tröhler (2020), 624.

18 Telhaug and Mediås (2003).

19 Daniel Tröhler, “From National Exceptionalism to National Imperialism: Changing Motives of Comparative Education,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 43, no. 3 (2022).

20 Paul Knudsen, *Analytisk narrasjon. En innføring i historiefagets vitenskapsfilosofi* (Oslo: Fagbokforlaget, 2002).

21 See Donald Harman Akenson, *A Mirror to Kathleen’s Face: Education in Independent Ireland 1922–1960* (New York: Routledge, 2012, original 1975); John Coolahan, *Irish Education: Its History and Structure* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1981); Fischer (2016); Brian Fleming and Judith Harford, “Irish Education and the Legacy of O’Connell,” *History of Education* 45, no. 2 (2016); O’Sullivan (2005); Martina Relihan, “The Church of Ireland, the State and Education in Irish Language and Irish History, 1920–1950s,” in *Educating Ireland: Schooling and Social Change, 1700–2000*, ed. Deirdre Raftery and Karin Fischer (Kildare, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 2014).

22 See Telhaug and Mediås (2003); Volckmar (2016); Nina Volckmar, “The Transformation of an Invented Tradition: The School Banner as a Symbol of Education,” *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 61, no. 4 (2017); Harald Thuen, *Den norske skolen: Utdanningsystemets*

the recurring, complex and entangled relationship between nation-state formation, nation-building and religion. This extensive research literature, together with official documents and reports, constitutes valuable source material for this article. However, while this research is mostly national or nationally motivated, a comparison of Irish and Norwegian development needs to go further and offer comparative perspectives and analysis as accounted for above.

### *The structure of the article*

The article limits itself to the development of primary education. The main part of the article is the historical account of Irish and Norwegian school development through three phases, education before independence (education in union), education after independence (post-union education) and OECD informed education policy. Throughout, the development is concentrated around key historical antecedents that have had an impact on the relationship between nation-state formation, nation-building and religion, and the meaning of concepts themselves. While the first two phases were mostly national driven, the third was increasingly led by imperial instructions from others, like the OECD.<sup>23</sup> All three phases will end with a comparative summary related to research questions raised in this article. Finally, I will address some cases where the majority religion in both countries was challenged in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. I end with some concluding remarks.

Before further exploring the development of Irish and Norwegian education, a brief historical backdrop of the two countries as union countries and their struggle for independence is necessary.

## **Historical backdrop**

### *Ireland*

Ireland during the eighteenth century was marked by the dominance of the Protestant Ascendancy and most of the land was owned by Anglican English landlords. However, the great majority of the Irish population was Roman Catholic and was excluded from power and land ownership under the Penal Laws.<sup>24</sup> Nominally, Ireland was an autonomous kingdom with its own parliament. In reality, it was a client state controlled by the king of Great Britain.<sup>25</sup> In 1801, the Acts of Union of 1800 were put into force and united the Kingdom of Ireland and Great Britain into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the Irish constituencies were transferred to Westminster.<sup>26</sup> During the second half of nineteenth century, Irish political life was dominated by nationalists who demanded a limited form of self-government within the UK union, known as Home Rule, and unionists on the other side who insisted on maintaining the union with the UK. Unionists feared the prospect of Home Rule being implemented in

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*historie* (Oslo: Abstrakt forlag, 2017); Harald Thuen and Nina Volckmar, "Postwar School Reforms in Norway," *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Education* (2020).

23 See Tröhler (2022).

24 The Penal Laws were a series of laws to uphold the establishment of the Church of England against Protestant nonconformists and Catholicism. They were introduced in Ireland with the Education Act of 1695.

25 Wikipedia, "History of Ireland (1691-1800)" (2022).

26 Fleming and Harford (2016).

1912, and civil war nearly erupted the year before the outbreak of the First World War. Home Rule was postponed until the war ended. However, in April 1916, republican separatists staged a rebellion in Dublin, known as the Easter Rising, in which they demanded Irish independence and an autonomous republic.<sup>27</sup> The Easter Rising was crushed by English soldiers, and many Irish rebels were killed or imprisoned in Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin.

Exhausted after the First World War, the British government could no longer resist Irish opposition and entered into negotiations in July 1921. The Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed on 6 December 1921, and from 1922 onwards twenty-six of Ireland's thirty-two counties proclaimed themselves as belonging to the Irish Free State. The northern counties opted out, instead accepting terms according to Home Rule and upholding their close relationship with England.

The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty and the proclamation of the Irish Free State (for the twenty-six counties concerned) were succeeded by a bitter, devastating civil war from June 1922 to April 1923. People were deeply divided over whether to accept the treaty. The defenders of the republic would not accept it because it made Ireland a dominion of the British Commonwealth, more independent than under Home Rule but still with limited sovereignty. Critics of the Republicans, however, claimed not to accept the treaty's adoption because it was profoundly anti-democratic.<sup>28</sup> Eventually, the defenders of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the Irish Free State (Free State soldiers) curbed the Republicans (IRA). However, the violence and executions continued for years.

The Irish Free State was a constitutional monarchy over which the British monarch reigned until the Constitution of Ireland came into effect in 1937. Thereafter the Irish Free State was called Éire in Irish (and Ireland in English), with its own president, a more powerful prime minister (Taoiseach) and a government. However, the constitution did not declare Ireland a republic, and the British monarch continued to reign in theory and in international and diplomatic relations.<sup>29</sup>

### *Norway*

In 1397, the Kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark and Norway were unified in the Kalmar Union, in which Denmark was the dominant partner. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Sweden permanently left the union, leaving Norway as a dependent subject of Denmark. The Danish-Norwegian king abolished the Catholic Church in Denmark and Norway and introduced the Reformation in both countries in 1537. In 1660, the Danish-Norwegian king, Fredrik III, imposed absolute monarchy and concentrated all authority over the territory in Copenhagen. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars (1802–1815), in which Denmark-Norway had been on the losing side, Denmark, according to the 1814 Treaty of Kiel, had to surrender Norway to Sweden. In Norwegian history, this union with Denmark that endured until 1814 is referred to as “400 years of night.”<sup>30</sup>

However, Norway avoided direct rule by Sweden, because Prince Christian Frederik

27 National Archives, *The Treaty 1921: Records from the Archives* (Dublin National Archives, 2021).

28 Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900–2000* (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2005), 237–53.

29 Ferriter (2005), 369–70.

30 Volckmar (2017).

of Denmark summoned a constitutional assembly that settled on the constitutional administration of the country. The Constitution of Norway was signed at Eidsvoll on 17 May 1814. The Constitution was founded on the principle of sovereignty of the people and gave Norway the political status of a *constitutional state* in relation to Sweden. Thus, Norway had a large degree of home rule (self-government), although it was in union with Sweden and thus subject to the Swedish king. According to Bjarne Hodne, in 1814 Norway was not yet a *nation-state*.<sup>31</sup> To be a nation-state, Norway needed shared consciousness of a specific national culture and identity. The development and growth in awareness of a specific Norwegian national culture was thus a prerequisite to its final liberation from Sweden and complete independence in 1905.<sup>32</sup> The years prior to 1905 were marked by conflict between the two countries, but war was avoided in favour of negotiations and the peaceful dissolution of the union in 1905. In retrospect, the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian union can be characterised as a political and diplomatic masterpiece.<sup>33</sup>

## Education in union *Ireland*

Primary schooling in Ireland was initially ad hoc and unsystematic.<sup>34</sup> As a consequence of the Penal Laws (especially the Acts of 1695, 1704 and 1709), which sought to ensure the hegemony of the Anglican Church of Ireland and to diminish the status of the Catholics, Catholic education was proscribed. Catholic teachers then began to teach surreptitiously or, as the folklore puts it, under the sunny side of a hedge.<sup>35</sup> Thus, these schools were called “hedge schools.” Eventually they moved indoors, into private houses or barns, but were still referred to as hedge schools. They were fee-paying schools, run mainly but not exclusively by male teachers. Although proscribed by law, they immediately won the strong support of parents.<sup>36</sup> The majority of Irish children went to these unofficial hedge schools and did so well into the post-penal era.<sup>37</sup> Besides the hedge schools, there were also schools for the poor founded by Irish congregations such as the Presentation Order and various Protestant education societies.<sup>38</sup> In 1824, there were 9,352 hedge schools, 1,727 Protestant schools of various types and 46 schools attached to Irish congregations.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, primary schooling in Ireland prior to Ireland’s entry into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801 was highly fragmentary and unsystematic. Although

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31 Bjarne Hodne, *Norsk nasjonalkultur: En kulturpolitisk oversikt* (Oslo: Universitetsforl., 2002).

32 Hodne (2002).

33 Francis Sejersted, “Unionsoppløsningen i 1905,” in *Store norske leksikon* (2019).

34 Fleming and Harford (2016).

35 Antonia McManus, “The Irish Hedge School and Social Change,” in *Education Ireland. Schooling and Social Change, 1700–2000*, ed. Deirdre Raftery and Karin Fisher (Kildare, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 2014).

36 McManus (2014).

37 Fleming and Harford (2016).

38 Catherine Nowland-Roebuck, “The Presentation Order and National Education in Nineteenth Century Ireland,” in *Educating Ireland: Schooling and Social Change, 1700–2000*, ed. Deirdre Raftery and Karin Fisher (Kildare, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 2014).

39 Nowland-Roebuck (2014).

many other European countries promoted a system of national primary education in the nineteenth century, England was reluctant to involve the state in education,<sup>40</sup> quite in contrast to Scotland, for instance. Over the years, several attempts were made to unify and frame an Irish national education in an effort to bring Protestant and Catholic children together. Finally, a national system of primary education was established in 1831.<sup>41</sup> The decisive event leading to this was a letter from the then chief secretary of Ireland, Edward Stanley (the Stanley Letter).<sup>42</sup> According to Loughheed, Ireland was one of the first places in the British Empire to experience substantial centralised educational reform. The hope was to introduce a non-denominational centralised system of primary education to unite children of all creeds in the same classroom so as to reduce sectarian tension.<sup>43</sup> Crucial to the establishment of a national school system were the increasing power of the Catholic Church in the 1820s and political freedom for Catholics within the terms of the Emancipation Act of 1829.<sup>44</sup>

However, the non-denominational national education system of 1831 was introduced without any legislation being passed. The Stanley provision of 1831 relied solely on a letter requesting the Duke of Leinster to act as Chairman of the National Board, and after 1831 the national education system was creaking with sectarian divisions.<sup>45</sup> The Presbyterian Church was the first to oppose the system. By the middle of the century, although the education system remained nominally non-denominational, religious segregation was more and more widespread and the schools were controlled by the churches.<sup>46</sup> Eventually, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church had gained control over education, and the close alliance between education and religion (i.e. between education and the Catholic Church as the majority religion) was established.<sup>47</sup> This was the situation prior to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. Thus, the stage was set for what turned out to be a long-running clash between the state and the churches.<sup>48</sup>

### Norway

Public schooling in Norway dates all the way back to the Danish-Norwegian union and the autocratic Danish-Norwegian king Christian VI. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, he implemented State Pietism (pietistic Lutheranism) in both countries and introduced mandatory confirmation in 1736. Confirmation was required by law to become a fully-fledged member of society, get married and take over property.

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40 Fleming and Harford (2016).

41 Coolahan (1981); Fleming and Harford (2016); Kevin Loughheed, "After the Manner of the Irish Schools': The Influence of the Irish National Education in the British Empire," *Journal of Historical Geography* 60 (2018).

42 Loughheed (2018); Fleming and Harford (2016); Conor O'Mahony, "Ireland," in *Balancing Freedom, Autonomy and Accountability in Education*, ed. Charles Glenn, Jan De Groof, and Cara Stillings (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Wolf Legal Publishers (WLP), 2012).

43 Loughheed (2018).

44 Tony Lyons, "Thomas Wyse and Non-denominational Education in Ireland, 1830–1845," in *Educating Ireland: Schooling and Social Change, 1700–2000*, ed. Deirdre Raftery and Karin Fischer (Kildare, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 2014).

45 Lyons (2014).

46 Fischer (2016), 13.

47 Fischer (2016).

48 Coolahan (1981).



To be confirmed, one had to be able to read the Bible and demonstrate sufficient knowledge of Christianity. The Ten Commandments and Luther's Small Catechism were especially important. In support of this requirement, in 1739 Christian VI issued a decree on compulsory education for all children (*Forordning om skolerne på landet*). The main purpose of primary schooling was to raise the religious and moral level of the population. Reading and Christianity were the only compulsory school subjects.<sup>49</sup> The school was to be governed by the Church and administered by the clergy, but the peasantry had to pay for the schooling of their children. This triggered loud protests, and in 1741 Christian VI was compelled to issue an edict giving rural districts greater power.<sup>50</sup>

The decree of 1739 was intended to result in a common school for the children of both wealthy farmers and crofters, and for both girls and boys. There were no other school facilities in rural areas, not even for the children of wealthy parents. The rural schools were mostly ambulatory, meaning that teaching was concentrated and located on the largest farms, and led by ambulatory teachers with scant qualifications. The children often had a long and arduous journey to school.<sup>51</sup> In the cities, however, the situation was different. Here, the school was segmented according to sharp social divisions. The children of wealthy parents could attend either private fee-paying schools or so-called Latin schools, originally associated with cathedrals and exclusively for boys. Most children were unable to pay for schooling and were directed to the compulsory schools, referred to in the city as "poor schools."<sup>52</sup>

Given Norway's independent role in the union with Sweden, in the nineteenth century it was able to develop its own education system. The Constitution of 1814 confirmed the sovereignty of the people and created the basis for a different balance of power in society. Right from the beginning, a separate ministry was established for church, education and culture.<sup>53</sup> Democracy was further developed and realised through laws on municipal self-rule in 1837, the introduction of parliamentarism in 1884 and the decision on general suffrage for men in 1898 and for women in 1913.<sup>54</sup>

In the process, the church and its personnel gradually lost control over the schools, the tasks and purpose of which needed to go beyond providing children with a religious and moral education. A true democracy required an enlightened people who could participate in society's development and thus legitimatise the political willingness to improve schooling for the commonalty (*allmueskolen*). In this respect, the Rural School Act (*allmueskoleloven*) of 1860 was a turning point.<sup>55</sup> This act introduced the principle of state-owned, state-funded permanent schools and prescribed a minimum of twelve weeks of tuition per year. Section 1 of the Rural School Act, and every education act since, is an object clause governing all activities in school, including the role of religion. Even if Section 1 of the act of 1860 continued to confirm the prominent role of the

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49 Telhaug and Mediås (2003); Volckmar (2016); Thuen (2017).

50 Thuen and Volckmar (2020); Telhaug and Mediås (2003).

51 Volckmar (2016); Thuen (2017).

52 Thuen and Volckmar (2020).

53 Kim Helsvig, *Reform og rutine: Kunnskapsdepartementets historie 1945–2017* (Oslo: Pax Forlag A/S, 2017).

54 Thuen and Volckmar (2020).

55 Volckmar (2016), 31–32; Thuen (2017), 62–68; Thuen and Volckmar (2020).

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Norwegian primary schooling, developments in the nineteenth century implied secularisation.<sup>56</sup> The object clause has remained a subject of controversy and negotiation ever since.

The next milestone in the development of the public schools was the Primary School Act (*folkeskolelovene*) of 1889. For the first time, Norway had common legislation for primary schooling in rural areas and in the cities, and, in 1896, the first five years of primary schooling were made common to all. This expansive piece of legislation placed Norway in the lead internationally in the development of common schooling for all.<sup>57</sup> In addition to giving pupils a general education that would enable them to participate in society, the schools considered it their responsibility to teach Norwegian history, Norwegian culture and the Norwegian language. Despite the union with Sweden, Norway was a nation-state in constitutional terms, but it still had to create a national identity in order to become a nation-state in terms of culture.<sup>58</sup> The primary schools and the teachers played an important role in this regard. Among other things, the teachers took the initiative to organise the popular annual celebration of the Constitution on 17 May and to campaign for full liberation, with forbidden Norwegian flags and national-romantic Norwegian songs.<sup>59</sup>

### *Comparative summary*

Thus, the status of primary education following independence from the union was very different in Ireland and Norway. In the Irish case primary education was fully state-funded but not state-owned or state-managed. The national system of primary education was meant to be non-denominational; however, the different churches – Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian – gradually gained control over the schools, which led to an increasingly religious segregation. At the time of independence, the Catholic Church as majority religion was a powerful force in Irish education. In Norway primary education became state-owned and state-funded in 1860, however the Evangelical Lutheran Church maintained its strong position when it came to the school's content even though the school's content was expanded to include Norwegian history, -language and -culture developed in the ongoing nation-building and liberation process from Sweden.

Against this background, it is reasonably to say that the Norwegian development of primary school from a church-owned *allmueskole* to a state-owned *folkeskole* during the nineteenth century underwent an institutional secularisation process. At the same time, it is reasonably to say that the Norwegian primary school also started a cultural secularisation process as the curriculum of primary schooling was expanded to include the newly developed rich material of national-romantic culture. However, this did not prevent the Evangelical Lutheran Church from maintaining its strong cultural position. In Ireland, on the other hand, the Catholic Church in this phase, emerged as the dominating power in Irish primary schooling as both the owner and manager

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56 Karl-Arne Korseberg, "Skolens verdigrunnlag," in *Utdanningshistorie: Grunnskolen som samfunnsintegrerende institusjon*, ed. Nina Volckmar (Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk, 2016).

57 Andy Green, *Education and State Formation: Europe, East Asia and the USA*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013).

58 Hodne (2002).

59 Volckmar (2017).

of the schools. Even if Irish primary schooling was state-funded, it was a highly non-secular education system.

## Post union education

### *Ireland*

According to Karin Fisher,<sup>60</sup> neither the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty nor the Constitution (1937) brought about any change in the structure of the Irish education system, despite the establishment of the Ministry of Education in June 1924.<sup>61</sup> On the contrary, the alliance between education and religion and between the Irish population and the Catholic Church was solidified by the new Irish state.<sup>62</sup> The new Irish state did not challenge the power of the Catholic Church in education. According to Fleming and Harford, the Catholic Church maintained its dominant role in Irish education for the first four decades after Irish independence irrespective of the political party in power. At the primary level, the Church's power was ensured through the vesting of local-level management control in parish priests.<sup>63</sup>

Accordingly, the Irish Free State presented itself as both Catholic *and* Gaelic. Catholic identity and Gaelic traditions were seen as the roots of the popular vision of Irish history and identity, as the hallmark of nationhood and as the basis for independent statehood.<sup>64</sup> The schools were expected to help renew an Irish culture defined as Gaelic-Catholic, and, immediately after the proclamation of the Free Irish State in 1922, the Irish language was incorporated into the school curriculum.<sup>65</sup> However, at the time of the Irish Free State proclamation, the majority language was English; in 1911, only 17.6 per cent of the population spoke Irish.<sup>66</sup> The schools were now all obliged to introduce tuition in Irish for at least one hour per day.<sup>67</sup> Protestant schools opposed the dominance of the Irish language, and antipathy towards teaching of Irish was concentrated chiefly in counties close to the border with Northern Ireland.

What mattered after the establishment of the Irish Free State was what the schools taught rather than the changes in school management. Fischer simply states that; indeed, the 1921 Treaty was essentially a secular document.<sup>68</sup> Article 2 of the treaty states that the source of all political power and all legislative authority is to be found in the people of Ireland. Article 8, the only article devoted to religion, forbids the state from privileging any religion. According to Fisher, the state guaranteed both religious pluralism and the right to refuse all religious instruction. And, in accordance with article 10, all citizens of the Irish state had the right to free elementary education.<sup>69</sup>

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60 Fisher (2016).

61 Coolahan (1981).

62 Fischer (2016), 14.

63 Brian Fleming and Judith Harford, "Irish Educational Policy in the 1960s: A Decade of Transformation," *History of Education* 43, no. 5 (2014).

64 Coolahan (1981); Fischer (2016).

65 Relihan (2014); Coolahan (1981); Fischer (2016).

66 Akenson (1975, 2012).

67 Relihan (2014).

68 Fischer (2016).

69 *Ibid.*

The Constitution, however, incorporates Catholic principles throughout.<sup>70</sup> The main articles addressing education are Article 42 (Education) and Article 44 (Religion). Article 44 explicitly recognises the “special position” of the Catholic Church as the guardian of the faith professed by the great majority of the citizens.<sup>71</sup> However, the Constitution is reluctant to recognise the state’s role as educator in recognition of the family’s primacy in providing education for their children. Article 42 addresses parental rights and freedom of choice. It protects the right to establish private schools and to educate children at home. It expressly prohibits state monopoly over the provision of education. Article 44 provides that state funding for denominational schools must be non-discriminatory and protect the right of children to attend a school that receives public funds without attending religious instruction at that school.<sup>72</sup>

### Norway

Since its liberation from Sweden in 1905, Norway has been a unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy.<sup>73</sup> Norway’s next educational reform came in the years before World War Two. In the 1930s, the Labour Party surged ahead to become the leading political party, a position it maintained well into the 1960s. The Labour Party launched the idea of seven-year mandatory comprehensive schooling (*enhetsskolen*, or “unity school”) as the foundation for all upper-secondary education. This was accomplished through the Primary School Act of 1936 and a mandatory national curriculum, the Normal Plan of 1939.<sup>74</sup> On 9 April 1940, Norway was occupied by Germany, bringing the further development of Norwegian schools to a halt. The idea of comprehensive schooling and the reform pedagogy approach of the Normal Plan were both anathema to Nazi ideology. The German occupying forces, together with Vidkun Quisling, who is considered a traitor, attempted to Nazify schools. However, many teachers resisted and obstructed this attempt.<sup>75</sup> The school’s foundation on the values of freedom and democracy and on Lutheran and Christian-humanist heritage were at stake.<sup>76</sup> In the aftermath, the teachers were collectively highly praised for this.

The political climate in Norway immediately after WWII was marked by cooperation and cross-party political consensus, and a cross-party coalition government was formed. However, the Labour Party soon assumed power in government and launched a social democratic welfare state model, three cornerstones of which were free health care, a public security system and free education from primary school to university.<sup>77</sup>

Norway was, in the first decades after World War Two, characterised by strong state control and, not least, strong trust in state authorities. The same applies in the area of education policy.<sup>78</sup> Following World War II and the experience of Nazi ideology, it was agreed that aggressive nationalism had to be avoided in favour of the democratic

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70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 O’Mahony (2012).

73 Regjeringen, *Change of Government in Norway* (Regjeringen, 2013).

74 Telhaug and Mediås (2003); Volckmar (2016); Thuen (2017); Thuen and Volckmar (2020).

75 Thuen and Volckmar (2020).

76 Vegard Kvam, *Skolefronten: Einar Høigård og norske læreres kamp mot nazismen* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2013).

77 Thuen and Volckmar (2020).

78 Telhaug and Mediås (2003).

development of the Norwegian nation-state. It was acceptable to celebrate national freedom after five years of occupation, and Norwegian culture and language were still self-evident content in the schools, but democratic upbringing and solidarity had gained importance in the curriculum.<sup>79</sup> Although Norway retained the state church order, the process of institutional secularisation that begun in the nineteenth century continued throughout the twentieth century. The dispute centred on Section 1 (the object clause) of the education act and Christianity's ranking as a school subject. The institutional dispute was particularly fierce on the lead-up to the negotiations on the object clause in the Primary School Act of 1959, with a strong, loud Pietist Christian lay movement opposing the notion that a democratic upbringing should be equated to, and even put before, a Christian upbringing. In the final object clause, democratic upbringing was ranked before Christian upbringing.<sup>80</sup> In the Primary and Lower Secondary School Act of 1969, a Christian education at school was no longer part of the Church's baptismal instruction.<sup>81</sup>

### *Comparative summary*

Post union education in Norway cemented the institutionalised secularisation through cross-party political consensus, a strong state and the establishment of the social democratic welfare state model, in which state-funded, state-owned and state-managed education was an important cornerstone. Furthermore, democratic upbringing, despite resistance from the Pietist Christian lay movement, was by the end of the 1950s ranked before Christian upbringing and from 1969 Christian education at school was no longer part of the Church's baptismal instruction. However, it was not a sharp division between the state and the church. If we lend an ear to Buchardt<sup>82</sup>, the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church was rather changed into a state-controlled people's church – a *Folkekirke*, and religion was turned into a national and cultural matter that supported social cohesion, what Buchardt names sacralisation.

The Catholic Church's growing dominance during the nineteenth century was not challenged by the establishment of the Irish Free State. Primary education is still state funded, however, denominational and non-secular. However, the Irish Free State presented itself as both Catholic *and* Gaelic. That is, Catholicism and Gaelic culture and language were seen as the roots for Irish history and a national identity. Gaelic culture integrated into Catholicism to support social cohesion in the new Irish Free State can also be named as sacralization. According to O'Connor, the Irish education system in this period was essentially a static system for a static society,<sup>83</sup> with a constructed historical awareness that interwove Gaelicism and Catholicism, the cultural thesis about what it meant to be, nationally, an Irish person.

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79 Nina Volckmar, "Knowledge and Solidarity: The Norwegian Socialdemocratic Project in a Period of Change, 1945–2000," *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 52, no. 1 (2008); Volckmar (2017).

80 Volckmar, ed. (2016); Korseberg (2016).

81 Korseberg (2016).

82 Buchardt (2021); Buchardt (2023).

83 Muiris O'Connor, "Investment in Edification: Reflections on Irish Education Policy Since Independence," *Irish Educational Studies* 33, no. 2 (2014).

## OECD informed education policy and governance

Internationally, the American economist Theodor Schultz is considered to have originated human capital theory, which is the correlation between a population's level of education and economic growth. This way of thinking made an international breakthrough in Schultz's analysis of American conditions in 1959.<sup>84</sup> Acceptance of this correlation would prove to have major consequences, not least for the OECD's education policy in the decades to come and well into the millennium. Since the late 1980s, supranational organisations such as the EU, OECD and WTO have played an increasingly important role as premise providers and coordinating bodies in education, and, of special importance, in implementing the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000.<sup>85</sup> PISA is an international comparative survey that ranks education systems around the world, including the Irish and Norwegian systems.

This "imperial minded instruction from others" also affected the further development of primary education in Ireland and Norway from the 1960s on, where especially OECD is an important premise provider.

### Ireland

Ireland experienced an economic crisis in the late 1950s and subsequent unemployment and emigration. At the time, OECD worked on an analysis of education systems in several countries, in which one of the few willing to participate, according to Fleming and Harford, was the Irish government.<sup>86</sup> It resulted in the 1965 OECD report *Investment in Education*, which implied a turning point in Irish education, the breakthrough of human capital theory and a consensus that education was a key factor in national economic development. It also implied that the dominance of the Catholic Church in Irish education was finally challenged by the Ministry of Education.<sup>87</sup>

The Irish report documented, among other things, the lack of opportunity for poorer children to proceed to secondary and higher education and called for comprehensive schooling until age fifteen designed to offer a broad curriculum combining both academic and vocational streams.<sup>88</sup> On this basis, the education minister at the time, O'Malley, announced his commitment to provide all children with full educational opportunities from primary school to university. O'Malley has been praised for his political skill in getting the Catholic Church to enter the free tuition scheme at most of their secondary schools.<sup>89</sup> Fleming and Harford state that O'Malley's achievements during this period are such that he has been described as "the folk hero of Irish

84 Kjell Eide, *Økonomi og utdanningspolitikk: Økonomisk forskningsompremiss for utdanningspolitikken* (Oslo: Utredningsinstituttet for forskning og høyere utdanning, 1995).

85 Gustav Karlsen, "Internasjonale aktører som premissgivere for norsk utdanningspolitikk med særlig vekt på OECD," in *Reformideer i norsk skole: Spredning, oversettelse og implementering*, ed. Kjell Arne Røvik, Vidar Eilertsen and Eli Moksnes (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2014); Ulf Blossing, Gunn Imsen, and Leif Moos, *The Nordic Education Model: 'A School for All' Encounters Neo-Liberal Policy* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2014).

86 Fleming and Harford (2014).

87 John Walsh, "Ministers, Bishops and the Changing Balance of Power in Irish Education 1950–70," *Irish Historical Studies* 38, no. 149 (2012).

88 O'Connor (2014).

89 Walsh (2012).

education.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the power of the state, strongly backed by the OECD-report, was enhanced in the 1960s. This did not, however, amount to any fundamental undermining of denominational education, which remained a fundamental characteristic of Irish primary and post-primary education for the rest of the twentieth century. Nor did it lead to state control over the schools.<sup>91</sup>

There was no legal framework specifically for education in Ireland until the Education Act of 1998.<sup>92</sup> The Education Act of 1998<sup>93</sup> was enacted to provide a detailed framework for regulating the funding of the primary and secondary education systems. Furthermore, it requires schools to establish and maintain an admission policy that provides maximum accessibility to the school and respects the principle of equality.<sup>94</sup> The Education Act of 1998 was followed by the Education Welfare Act 2000, which addresses issues relating to school attendance up to the age of sixteen, and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

After decades of under-development and stagnation, Ireland at the end of the twentieth century had the fastest-growing economy in the world and had become known as the Celtic Tiger.<sup>95</sup> However, only the few benefited from the economic wealth and the gap between the rich and the poor widened. In a United Nations Development Program report published in 2002, Ireland had the highest level of poverty in the Western world outside of the United States, despite being ranked the fourth-richest country in the world.<sup>96</sup> In the first PISA results in 2000, fifteen-year-olds in Ireland came fifth in reading literacy (the second-highest ranking in EU) and close to average in mathematical and scientific literacy.<sup>97</sup> Ireland has continued to perform well above average on the PISA tests, and in this respect the Irish education system has been highly successful.<sup>98</sup> Thus, an OECD-informed education policy, based on neoliberal principle like parental choice and competition has strengthened state governance while also fitting well with the Catholic Church as the owner and manager of the schools.<sup>99</sup> Despite the strong position of the Catholic Church in Irish education, the state and teachers incidentally did gain control over the content of schooling after the *Investment in Education* report. In 1971, primary education was given a new curriculum (*Curaclam na Bunscoile*) that differed from the curriculum reforms following independence and their sole focus on Catholic religion, Gaelic culture and language. The 1971 curriculum<sup>100</sup> was child-centred and progressivist and it marked a new direction in

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90 Fleming and Harford (2014), 641.

91 Walsh (2012).

92 Relihan (2014).

93 Government of Ireland, Education Act (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1998).

94 O'Mahony (2012).

95 Ferriter (2005); EU funds contributed to the growing economy.

96 Ferriter (2005).

97 OECD, *Knowledge and Skills for Life: First Results from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000* (OECD, 2001).

98 OECD, *Education Policy Outlook: Ireland* (OECD, 2020).

99 See also Geraldine Mooney Simmie and Silva Edling, "Ideological Governing Forms in Education and Teacher Education: A Comparative Study Between Highly Secular Sweden and Highly Non-Secular Republic of Ireland," *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* 2, no. 1 (2016), 32041.

100 Department of Education, *Primary School Curriculum: Teacher's Handbook, Part 1* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1971).

educational thought and practice in Ireland.<sup>101</sup> In 1999, the primary school curriculum was revised,<sup>102</sup> and, as Fischer sees it, the new curriculum marked a further significant step towards wider acceptance of cultural pluralism in Irish society.<sup>103</sup> Thus, the progressive transformation of the curriculum stands in contradiction with the Catholic mono-denominational nature of most schools.

### Norway

As early as 1951, Parliamentary Secretary – and future minister of education – Helge Sivertsen argued in favour of seeing education as an economic investment.<sup>104</sup> Clearly, he saw this as an important argument in support of investing in and spending (more) money on education. This was an argument made for implementing the comprehensive school reforms in the 1950s and 1960s and expanding seven-year primary schooling to nine-year primary and lower-secondary schooling. It was first implemented as a pilot project in 1959 and as a country-wide structure through the Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act of 1969. This was the largest and most important educational project in the early post-war decades, and it mirrored the Nordic ideal of (the Lutheran Norwegian) *folk* as a form of national identity and unity. The reform was inspired by international trends, especially developments in the United States and Sweden. Sweden, a neutral country during WWII started transforming its primary schooling into nine-year primary and lower-secondary schooling several years before Norway.<sup>105</sup> At this point there is no evidence of direct influence of OECD or any other international organisations on Norwegian education.

In the late 1980s, the Norwegian government initiated an OECD expert evaluation of the Norwegian education system.<sup>106</sup> The report criticized previous developments of the Norwegian education system and thus legitimized a comprehensive reform of the entire education system during the 1990s. The correlation between level of education in the population and economic growth and competitiveness was kept at a particularly high level. First step was the introduction of management by objectives as the overarching governance principle in the education sector in 1991. The aim was to weaken the state's regulation of details and to transfer more authority and responsibility over to the local level.<sup>107</sup> School age was lowered to six and nine-year primary and secondary schooling was extended to ten years.<sup>108</sup> In addition, a statutory right to three years of upper-secondary education was implemented.

The educational reforms of the 1990s reintroduced the knowledge school but not in a

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101 Fischer (2016); Jim Gleeson, "Evolution of Irish Curriculum Culture: Understandings, Policy, Reform and Change," *Irish Educational Studies* 41, no. 4 (2022).

102 Department of Education and Science (DES), Primary School Curriculum (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1999).

103 Fischer (2016).

104 Volckmar (2008); Volckmar (2016), 80–81.

105 Thuen and Volckmar (2020).

106 OECD, *OECD-vurdering av norsk utdanningspolitikk. Norsk rapport til OECD. Ekspertvurdering fra OECD*. (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1989).

107 Gunn Imsen and Nina Volckmar. "The Norwegian School for All: Historical Emergence and Neoliberal Confrontation," in *The Nordic Education Model: "A School for All" Encounters Neo-liberal Policy*, ed. Ulf Blossing, Gunn Imsen, and Leif Moos (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2014).

108 Volckmar (2008); Thuen and Volckmar (2020).



way that was in line with prevailing international ideologies and the testing regime that was about to commence. Norway had not yet started using national tests, and when the first PISA test was published in 2001, Norway performed close to the OECD average, far worse than expected. The newly elected Conservative government made political use of the results to launch a far-reaching new reform of the Norwegian education system, symptomatically called the Knowledge Promotion (*Kunnskapsløftet*). The new minister of education, Kristin Clemet, announced a system change in the governance of education policy, in which governance would be based on clear national goals, a clear allocation of responsibility and increased local freedom of action.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the municipalities became the owners of primary and lower-secondary schools, and the county-municipalities the owners of secondary schools. In accordance with this shift in governance, the reform introduced a national quality assessment system and a new curriculum that emphasised competence, learning outcomes and skills, (while the previous curriculum was very detailed and content based, telling what was to be taught, when and how). Thus, Norway adapted to the new international ideology of evidence-based management through objectives and quality measurements.<sup>110</sup> The aim of schooling was no longer national integration but high performance in learning outcomes and skills.

The reform also emphasised a greater pressure on diversity and adapting education individually for each people.<sup>111</sup> However, all along, Norway upheld a strict privatisation policy in education. The Free School Act opened the way for the establishment of more private schools, but it was and still is prohibited to make money from private school operations in Norway. Only 3,3% of children attend private primary and lower-secondary schools.<sup>112</sup>

### *Comparative analysis*

Ireland experienced direct influence from the OECD on its education policy at an earlier time than Norway. The Investment in Education report from 1965 was a turning point in Irish school development. However, from the late 1980s, OECD has increasingly functioned as a premise provider for the national education policy in both Ireland and Norway. That is, education is brought in line with international neo-liberal education policy, implementing management by objectives, decentralisation, parental choice, competition and testing. For both countries this implies a move towards increased institutional secularisation. In the Norwegian case institutional secularisation started in the nineteenth century, however increased at the breakthrough of human capital theory and the involvement of international actors in education. Also, in Ireland the OECD involvement in education the last decades has brought about further steps towards increased institutional secularisation. However, it did not pose any threat to the denominational character of Irish education and the Catholic Church as the owner of most primary schools, despite a more child-centred, progressivist curriculum.

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109 Utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, St.meld.nr. 30 (2003–2004) Kultur for læring (2004).

110 Thuen and Volckmar (2020).

111 Imsen and Volckmar (2014).

112 OECD. *Education Policy Outlook: Norway*. (OECD, 2020).

### **Multi-cultural and multi-religious pluralism and the majority religion**

Both Ireland and Norway have the last decades accepted many immigrants with a different cultural and religious background than the majority population in the two countries. The aim of the OECD involvement in education is to enhance the level of knowledge in the population, and thereby find ways to include the immigrants in society and education especially. This is a large field of research, which there is no space to go into here. However, no doubt, in this scenario the majority culture and religion will be challenged, and in the following I will go into certain events in the two countries that challenge the majority religion.

#### ***Ireland***

Ireland, like many other countries in recent decades, has welcomed many immigrants and become a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. The demand for greater cultural and religious diversification suggests the decline of the Catholic Church in Irish society. Despite most people in Ireland identifying themselves as Roman Catholic (seventy-eight per cent), a significant number identify themselves as having other beliefs or not belonging to any religious denomination. In fact, the category “no religion” has expanded from six per cent of the population in 2011 to include ten per cent in 2016.<sup>113</sup> However, this has not caused any structural change in the Catholic hegemonic power over education and its ownership of the schools. More than ninety-six per cent of state-funded primary schools are still owned and controlled by religious institutions (ninety-one per cent Catholic, five per cent Church of Ireland). In 2015, there were also some Presbyterian schools, one Methodist school and two Muslim schools.<sup>114</sup> Since the early 1990s, more and more so-called Educate Together schools have been established. These are meant to be “integrated” or “multi-denominational” and are owned by the Educate Together association (in 2014/2015 it had 74 primary schools). More recently, a second type of integrated primary school has been created, the Community National Schools.<sup>115</sup> In 1999, the government decided to begin financing all new school grounds and buildings, which meant that new approved schools would be state-owned and not just state-funded. This, however, is true of only a few schools and has not threatened Catholic ownership of schools.

The Catholic Church was dealt a powerful blow, however, by the publication of the Ryan Report in May 2009 and the Murphy Report in November of the same year. The Ryan Report documented the abuse inflicted upon children in schools and homes run by some twenty religious’ congregations over the course of the twentieth century. The Murphy Report documented the sexual abuse of children perpetrated by priests, frequently priests in charge of primary schools in the Catholic archdiocese of Dublin, between 1975 and 2004.<sup>116</sup> This created shock nationwide, shock that did not diminish when it transpired that the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland had routinely concealed sexual abuse. However, neither of these events led to structural change, and the Catholic Church retained its power over Irish schools.<sup>117</sup>

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113 Merike Darmody and Emer Smyth, “Religion and Primary School Choice in Ireland: School Institutional Identities and Student Profile,” *Irish Educational Studies* 37, no. 1 (2018).

114 Fischer (2016).

115 Fischer (2016).

116 Fischer (2016), 114–15.

117 Fischer (2016).

## Norway

Prior to the school reforms of the 1990s, the minister of education at the time, Gudmund Hernes, drew a picture of a multicultural and multi-religious society in disintegration and sought national integration by way of common knowledge and cultural content in the schools. The instrument was a detailed national curriculum (*L97*) detailing what to teach, when and how. For Norwegian literature, for instance, there were lists of which national poets and writers to read.<sup>118</sup>

One of the main common subjects in this curriculum was Christian knowledge with a religious and philosophical orientation and values (*KRL*). The new subject was considered so broad and inclusive as not to require any exemptions or alternatives. Nevertheless, sixteen parent couples sued the state for the right to full exemption from *KRL*. They lost the case, in both the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court found the curriculum to be in compliance with Norway's obligation under international law. Three of the parent couples, however, brought the matter to the UN Human Rights Committee and won. At the same time, another four parent couples brought their case before the European Court of Human Rights. In 2007, a marginal majority condemned the Norwegian government for not sufficiently safeguarding parents' right to raise their children in line with their own convictions. The obligatory *KRL* subject, together with the Christian object clause (Section 1 of the Education Act of 1998), was considered very unfortunate.<sup>119</sup> The Norwegian state's defeat at both the UN Human Rights Committee and the European Court of Human Rights in 2007 with regard to the Christian object clause together with Christian knowledge as an obligatory subject led to the establishment of a broadly composed politically appointed committee and a new, more value-based, object clause in 2009, as well as a new religious subject with the name Christianity, Religion, Philosophy and Ethics (*KRLE*). In the schools, knowledge of Christianity is permitted, preaching is not. However, half of the content must relate to Christianity.<sup>120</sup> In 2017, the Norwegian Church separated from the state, although the monarchy still professes the religion of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Thus, in the Norwegian case, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has been challenged, both in the state-church separation and in schools but has nevertheless retained its hegemonic position.

## Conclusion

The long timeline in this article shows that primary education in Norway and Ireland continue to retain distinctive features that reflect the national cultural ideas behind each country's establishment as constitutional nation-state. All this time, Ireland has stuck to its state-funded denominational education system, where the Catholic Church owns most primary schools, while Norway has had a state-owned and state-funded primary education system since the mid-nineteenth century. This means that Norway started its process towards institutional secularisation at an earlier point in time than Ireland and has gone further in this process.

However, at their establishment as free nation-states both countries integrated their

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118 Volckmar (2016).

119 Korseberg (2016).

120 Ibid.

national history, national culture and national language into the dominating religious culture as a fundament for national integration and a common national identity. In this way both countries early started a process of cultural secularisation, or what Buchardt names sacralisation.

The breakthrough of the human capital theory in the late 1950s, the OECD-reports and especially the PISA-tests brought about great changes in the governance of education in both Ireland and Norway. Education reforms were driven by an OECD-informed education policy. A content-based curriculum has been replaced by a competence-based curriculum emphasising measurable learning outcomes adapted to the new test ideology. In this way, the goal of national integration has been replaced by the goal of qualification for work. This development mirrors the institutional secularisation process worldwide.

However, the OECD-informed education policy never posed a threat to the Catholic Church's power over education in Ireland. Still the Catholic Church owns more than ninety per cent of Ireland's primary schools. As school owner, the Catholic Church can promote its schools through a school ethos: its schools' cultural and moral values.<sup>121</sup> According to Fisher, the common understanding of "ethos" has a religious dimension. In contrast, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has lost its dominant power over Norwegian schools but is nevertheless integrated into the school's cultural content, and Christianity still dominates the subject of religion in school.

This article shows that, despite worldwide institutional secularisation from the nineteenth century onwards, deeply ingrained national cultural traditions and mindsets have affected educational reasoning and organisation in Ireland and Norway. The religious and national peculiarities in the establishment of primary education in Ireland and Norway still characterise, and to some extent explain, the differences in Irish and Norwegian education. Furthermore, the article documents the importance of viewing nation-state formation and religion as determining factors in the development of national education systems in general.

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121 Fischer (2016).

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**Nordic Journal  
of Educational History**

**Introduction**

- 1 Education in the History of State and Power: Transnational,  
National and Local Perspectives  
*Mette Buchardt & Maria Simonsen*

**Articles**

- 5 Education as Lived Welfare: A History of Experience Perspective  
on Children and the Welfare State  
*Pirjo Markkola*
- 21 Giving Language to Taboos: Nation and Religion in Modern  
Educational Reasoning  
*Daniel Tröhler*
- 37 Contemporary Nordic Histories of the Universities:  
The Renewal of An Old Field  
*Johan Östling*
- 45 Between Tradition and Experiment: The Idea of a New University  
*Maria Simonsen*
- 59 Does Curriculum Fail Indigenous Political Aspirations?  
Sovereignty and Australian History and Social Studies Curriculum  
*Mati Keynes, Beth Marsden & Archie Thomas*
- 85 The Children's Scale in Finnish Kindergarten Interiors from 1920s to 1980s  
*Taina Sillanpää*
- 107 Skolan som försöksverkstad: Spridning av kunskap och erfarenhet  
av försökundervisning i svenska pedagogiska tidskrifter 1920–1960  
*Johan Samuelsson*
- 133 Education, Nation-State Formation and Religion:  
Comparing Ireland and Norway  
*Nina Volckmar*