

The Enduring Quest for Equity in Education: Comparing Norway and Australia

Nina Volckmar

Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, Norway

Dragvoll, 7491 Trondheim, Norway

Mobile: +47 97613180

e-mail: nina.volckmar@ntnu.no

Nina Volckmar – biographical note

Nina Volckmar is Professor at the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway. Her research interests include education reforms in Norway since the Second World War. She has contributed to *The Nordic Education Model. 'A School for All' Encounters Neo-Liberal Policy*, which is a result of the NordNet research network. Volckmar is also the editor of *Utdanningshistorie. Grunnskolen som samfunnsintegrerende institusjon* [History of Education. Compulsory school as a social integrating institution] (2016) covering the development of the Norwegian education system from the early eighteenth century until present.

The Enduring Quest for Equity in Education: Comparing Norway and Australia

It has been a key goal to achieve equity in education in Australia and Norway over the last fifty years. This article offers a historical case-oriented comparative analysis of the promotion of equity in education in these two countries. While equity in education is primarily understood as students' learning outcomes in national and international tests, such as the OECD's PISA studies, the analysis in this article is based on Espinoza's distinguish between equality and equity, which allows for a more complex understanding. The article investigates striking differences in how the governments in Australia and Norway have attempted to enhance equity through education, and discusses factors that may have impeded this process.

Keywords: equity in education; student performance/learning outcome; public and private education; school funding; governance

Introduction

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, Education Policy Outlook 2015, is the first systematic study of education policy at the international level. The aim of the report is “to help countries and policy-makers to learn from each other with the aim of developing better education policies for better lives for all citizens » (OECD, 2015, p. 3). One of the prominent topics of the report is the relationship between quality and equity as high quality education systems combine high performance and high levels of equity. Thus, in the OECD context, quality seems to be equivalent to student performance and furthermore, a high level of average student performance is an indicator for the level of equity in education.

This article is about equity and focuses on Australia and Norway. These are two countries, which according to the OECD (2012, 2015) scored above average in student performance in both reading and science, and in which socio-economic factors have lower impact than the OECD average. However, the strength of the relationship between student performance and socio-economic background in both subjects is significantly lower in Norway than in Australia (OECD, 2012, Figure 1.1, p. 15; OECD, 2015, Figure 1.6.6, p. 218). In fact, Norway has the very lowest impact on socio-economic factors on students’ performance among OECD countries (OECD, 2012). On the other hand, Australia scored higher in both reading and science than Norway (OECD, 2012, 2015).

The aim of this article is to compare education policy on equity in Australia and Norway. They are strikingly different countries, but share relatively high scores in terms of equity in education. The aim is to paint a more complex picture of the two countries’ strive for equity and the obstacles they encountered, stemming from educational structures and competing political agendas. Equity has been a key issue in both Australian and Norwegian education policies over the course of the last fifty years and this remains the case. However, the point of departure for developing national education systems and designing policies to promote equity are different in the two countries. Furthermore, the obstacles in achieving equity also vary significantly across them. Hence, historical differences in the educational contexts and political structures are essential in the understanding of the two countries’ efforts in achieving equity in education. The article therefore goes beyond the present time and will offer a historical-comparative analysis.

The OECD reports and the PISA results have received varying degree of attention by member countries and have had different political impact. In the first PISA study from 2000, Norway scored around average in reading, science and mathematics. The perception that the Norwegian school system was one of the best in the world cracked. PISA 2000 was immediately referred to as “the PISA shock” and was used political as a lever for educational change. The major education reforms in Norway, namely the Knowledge Promotion and the National Tests, implemented during the first decennium after millennium are thus seen as a response to the PISA 2000 and the OECDs recommendations (Karlsen, 2014). In contrast, both PISA 2000 and PISA 2003 placed Australia among the top-performing nations. Hence, the PISA results hardly affected Australian education policy, at least in the immediate aftermath of the studies. However, the political attention to the ranking of Australian education increased sharply when the Australian students’ performance decreased in the PISA 2006 and again in the PISA 2009 (Waldow, Takayama and Sung, 2014). The PISA results now started to have greater influence on Australian education policy, although this differed depending on the political agenda of those in government (See Gonski et al., 2011; Australian Government, 2014; Senate, 2014). Nevertheless, international organisations, such as the OECD, are generally playing an increasingly powerful role in setting the agenda in national education policy debates - also in relation to equity (Savage, Sellar, and Gorur, 2013).

In Australia, the equity question is particularly apparent in the debates and controversies around school funding. In April 2010, the Labour Government (2007-2013) initiated a review on school funding. The mandate was to develop a funding system that was more fair and effective in promoting excellent educational outcomes for all Australian students. The *Review on Funding for Schooling – Final Report* (known as the Gonski review) (Gonski et al., 2011), addressed inequality and disadvantages in Australian education and proposed changes to the education system, particularly a new national needs-based, sector-blind (regardless of government and non-government sector) funding model. However, the subsequent Liberal Coalition government rejected the funding model, stating that in the Australian federal system the states and territories are primarily responsible for their schools, not the Commonwealth (Australian Government, 2014). The government rejected giving more power to the Commonwealth in order to ‘return power to where it should be: school principals,

school communities, parents and the education authorities' (Australian Government, 2014, p. 5). The Gonski Review and the following debate on school funding, equity and governance have resulted in a substantial output of journal articles and other publications addressing these questions (Keating and Klatt, 2013; Kenway, 2013; Savage et al., 2013; Windle and Stratton, 2013; Campell and Proctor, 2014; Windle, 2014; Hanrahan, 2015; Loughland and Sriprakash, 2016).

Having almost neglected the issue of equity in education in the 1980s and the 1990s (it was generally believed that a high level of equity had already been achieved), the Norwegian government put equity back on the agenda. Children were not performing in PISA 2000 as well as expected and the increased dropout rates, related to socio-economic background, in the upper secondary schools, largely explain the renewed concern about equity in Norway (See Lamb, Markussen, Teese, Sandberg, and Polesel, 2011). In addition, the American 'No Child Left Behind' policy had ramifications for Norwegian policy. In 2006, the Norwegian government submitted a report to the Parliament with the telling title "... No One Left Behind. Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning" (St. meld.nr. 16 [2006-2007]). The main recommendation of the report was early intervention (from kindergarten and grade 1) to prevent inequality later on.

Even if Norway, according to the OECD (2012, 2015), is the country with the lowest impact on socio-economic factors on students' performance, a political consensus has been reached that there are still demonstrable social and geographical differences in Norwegian education. However, there are political disagreements as how to deal with these inequalities. Moreover, equity has received renewed attention by education scholars who study school politics and education reforms in Norway (Aasen, 2007; Imsen and Volckmar, 2014; Telhaug, 2005; Telhaug and Mediås, 2003; Thuen, 2017; Volckmar, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2016; Volckmar and Wiborg, 2014).

There is no earlier comparative analysis on equity in Australia and Norway. Thus, the analysis in this article have to build on earlier country specific analysis, and at the same time build its own analytical and methodological framework. As such, the article is groundbreaking and expected to generate new knowledge on equity in both countries and form the basis for further research.

Methodology

The comparative historical case-oriented method (Ragin, 1994; Landman, 2008; Mahoney and Rueshemeyer, 2006) will be employed to the analysis of Norway and Australia. The countries share an attempt to achieve equity and excellent student performance in education. However, differences in education histories and governance structures, such as Australia being a complex federal system with eight states and territory governments and Norway a unitary national system, makes it a contextualized comparison of two contrasting cases (see Bagnall, 2000, for a comparative analysis on France and Australia). The level of analysis will be at the macro, or system level. According to Landman and Carvalho (2017), comparative macro-history allows for “contrast of contexts”, that helps identify unique features of countries bringing out the richness of the individual country. The strength of few-countries studies lies in their lower level of abstraction and their inclusion of historical and cultural factors. More specified the article seeks to identify and analyze different political structures and policy initiatives to promote excellence and equity in education in Norway and Australia. Further, the article focuses on historical processes to assess how historical decisions influence current decisions.

However, the selection of equal historical sources might be a challenge in few-country comparisons (Landman and Carvalho, 2017). The fact that Australia is a complex federal system in which education constitutionally is the responsibility of the states and the territory governments and Norway a unitary national system, entails different political decision-making processes and sources available. While amending legislation in education is easily traceable in Norway, this is far more complex in Australia, where each state and territory have its own history. To reduce the selection bias the article seek to use multiple and equal sources at the federal/national level as far as possible. Thus, the analysis in this article make use of official policy documents, a variety of historical accounts, and recent research on education policy in Australia and Norway respectively. Consequently, secondary sources make a major portion of the total amount of sources, and thereby one has to take into consider the theoretical position and background of the historian/researcher.

To capture cross-national variation regards to equity in education in Australia and Norway, three key institutional contexts of schooling will structure the comparative analysis, namely public and private education, school funding and governance, and

diversity and parental school choice. The chosen themes have grown up analyzing the empirical material and are also in accordance with Hofman, Hofman and Gray's key dimensions in a topology of European school systems (2008). The themes constitute separate research fields themselves and cannot be fully illuminated in this article. However, in a comparative macro-history these broad themes will help to focus and reduce the complexity in the analysis, and at the same time capture national variations (Landman and Carvalho, 2017). The overall aim of the analysis is to achieve a better understanding of the policies, which the two countries have implemented to promote both educational equity and academic achievement.

The article has the following structure. Firstly, I present a theoretical framework for analyzing equity in education in Australia and Norway. I then analyze and compare concepts of equity in relation to the three cross-cutting indicators of institutional contexts, public and private education, school funding and governance, and diversity and parental school choice. Finally, I summarize the findings and discuss obstacles to equity in education in Australia and Norway more specifically.

A theoretical equality-equity framework

The concept of equity reflects contemporary education policy in order to justify resource allocations to different levels of the educational system.

In order to analyze equity in education, which allows for a broader historical perspective, I will employ the "Equality-Equity Model" developed by Espinoza (2007) to analyze equality-equity in reference to the different stages or features of the educational process. In a survey of scholarly debates on 'equity' and 'equality', Espinoza revealed that there existed strong disagreement and confusion about what those concepts really mean and what they involve in terms of goals and results. He found that the two concepts were used as if they were interchangeable. In order to avoid that confusion, Espinoza developed an equality-equity model and suggested new directions for analysis and research. It provides some ideas about how "equality" (i.e. "equality of opportunity"; "equality for all"; and "equality on average across social groups") and "equity" (i.e. "equity for equal needs"; "equity for equal potential", and "equity for equal achievement") could be analyzed and measured in relation to different features of the educational process (availability of resources, access, survival, output and outcome)(Espinoza, 2007). While equality usually connotes sameness in the

treatment for all and is associated with the democratic ideal of social justice, equity considers individual circumstances and is commonly associated with human capital theory, based on utilitarian considerations. The model does not intend to restrict the investigator, but rather to suggest different directions for analysis and research to facilitate critical examination.

In this article, I will analyze relevant goals for achieving equality and equity in relation to the above-mentioned crosscutting indicators for institutional contexts: public and private education, school funding and governance, and diversity and school choice.

Equality as “equality of opportunity”, “equality for all” and “equality on average across social groups” relates to Coleman’s well known concept of “equality of educational opportunity” (1968). According to Coleman, the concept of “equality of opportunity” arose in the nineteenth century when public education emerged in Europe and Northern America. The concept included such principles as free education up to a given level, which constituted the entry point to the labor force, a common curriculum, children from diverse background attending the same school, and finally, equal funding to schools within a given locality (Coleman, 1968, p. 11). Thus, the concept of equality address the resources put into education, the education system itself, equal rights and universal education. In this analysis, this relates especially to two of the three crosscutting themes, namely public education in relation to private education, and school funding as well as governance.

The equity concept evolved later than the concept of equality, connects to fairness and justice in the provision of education, and takes individual circumstances into consideration (Coleman, 1968; Espinoza, 2007). In this article, I will emphasize equity as “equity for equal achievement” that justifies differences in input to achieve less difference in the effect of schooling (Coleman, 1968). As explained above, this also connects to the contemporary and hegemonic understanding of equity as student performance (OECD, 2012, 2015; Thomson, 2013). According to Thomson (2013), this shift in the understanding of equity emerged at the same time as the development of the global knowledge economy (GKE), from about the 1990s onwards. Thomson describes this shift as the *distributive* notion of equity and social justice (2013). This means that nation states are seeking to promote equity based on GKE policies, which for instance involves the development of national curricula, designed to have a small number of measures. This can be applied regularly and displayed as a signifier of progress in

student performance (Thomson, 2013). The overarching measure is thus student performance in national tests. According to Thomson (2013), the OECD reports and the PISA tests work in the same way, with similar performative equity framing. Thus, the apparent hegemonic understanding of the concept of equity is restricted to student performance in both national tests and international comparative assessments, epitomized by the PISA studies. The concept of equity connotes to the individual and individual performance. In this analysis, the equity concept connects most of all to the demand for diversity and school choice.

The equality-equity model has been adapted in order to analyse educational processes in Australian and Norwegian education policies specifically. This is executed by an investigation of the before mentioned three cross-cutting themes, namely the relationship between public and private education in the development of education systems, how education was funded and governed, and to which degree education opened up to diversity and parental choice. In addition, some of the obstacles in promoting equality-equity in education, embedded in the educational structures and competing partisan politics, will be addressed.

Public and private education

Free and universal comprehensive education is often associated with a well-developed national education system, which includes the organisation of private schools with fair access. In the following, I will present an account of the relationship between public and private education as it developed during the formation of education systems in Norway and Australia.

Norway

In Norway public schooling evolved in addition to the existing private and church schools in the eighteenth century, when Norway was in a union with Denmark. The first Peasantry Education Act (1739) established obligatory education for those who did not attend private schools. The foremost aim of the peasantry school was to give the peasants a moral and religious upbringing to prepare for Royal Confirmation (Telhaug and Mediås, 2003; Volckmar, 2016; Thuen, 2017). During the 18th century, public education cut loose from the church and developed along comprehensive lines. At the

same time public education expanded at the expense of private schooling. The 1889 Primary School Act stipulated the legal underpinning of a common school and introduced five years of compulsory comprehensive schooling for all children (Telhaug and Mediås, 2003; Volckmar, 2016; Thuen, 2017). This expansive piece of legislation placed Norway then in the lead internationally in the development of a common school for all (Green, 2013). In 1936, the comprehensive school extended to seven years. Owing to the fact that the Government only funded schools that built directly upon the seven-year public school, private education was nearly abolished during the 1950s and 1960s (in 1970/71 only 0.4 per cent of primary school children attended private schools). In 1969, compulsory comprehensive education extended to nine years, and in 1997 to 10 years. There is no specialization until the age 16. At present the comprehensive system includes nearly all children from 6 to 16 years of age, and since 1994 all students also have a statutory right to receive three years of upper secondary education (Imsen and Volckmar, 2014; Telhaug and Mediås, 2003; Volckmar, 2016; Thuen, 2017). In reality, the Norwegian comprehensive education system applies to all students from six to 19 years of age.

Although private education in Norway nearly abolished in the 1970s, there have since been a growing demand for improved financial conditions for private alternatives to the public schools (Volckmar, 2016; Thuen, 2017). The Private School Act of 1985 accommodated this demand by providing 85 per cent state funding to private schools, which offered an alternative to the public school whether it be religiously, denominationally or pedagogically-oriented (e.g. Steiner or Montessori philosophy) schools. However, only a few students chose private education in Norway. The percentage of students enrolled in private primary schools remained below 1% throughout the 1980s. In 2003, a radical shift in private school policy occurred under a conservative-center-right coalition government. This government introduced the 2003 Free School Act, which maintained the same level of state funding to private schools but removed the previous requirement that they had to be based on religious beliefs or alternative pedagogy (Volckmar, 2010). In Norway, the political dividing line in the question of private education was, and still is, right between the coalition of the left-wing parties and the right-wing parties. When the left-wing coalition of parties assumed power in 2005, it immediately abolished the Free School Act and, in 2007, introduced a replacement act. This act was more in line with the previous 1985 Act and once again

introduced the old requirements (Volckmar, 2010; Volckmar and Wiborg, 2014). After winning the 2013 election, the conservative-led coalition government reintroduced a more liberal Free School Act in 2015 that allowed for more alternative schools and schools offering a distinct profile (i.e. math, sports, music, etc.) (Volckmar, 2016).

Despite these acts designed to stimulate growth in private education, the percentage of students attending private schools in Norway continues to remain very low. In 2013, only 3.1 per cent of primary and lower secondary school students enrolled in private schools (Statistics Norway, 2014). The number of students attending private upper secondary schools is a little higher at 7 percent. Private schools are subject to the same laws and regulations as the public schools as well as the same national curriculum. Moreover, school fees are very low and private schools are not allowed to make a profit (Volckmar, 2016).¹

The historical development of a public education system along comprehensive lines in Norway, which resulted in a small but highly regulated private sector, and a common national curriculum for both sectors, demonstrates that Norway in regards to the goals of equality, namely equality of opportunity, equality for all and equality on average across social groups have largely been achieved. There has been a high degree of political consensus towards the principles of free education, equal rights, a common curriculum and educating children from diverse social backgrounds in the same school (Imsen and Volckmar, 2014). In Norway, attending the same school has been a long-standing value because of a fundamental belief in the fact that it would enhance collaboration, solidarity and national integration in the society (Volckmar, 2008, 2016).

Australia

The British established several colonies in Australia from 1788 onwards, and the colonies, in turn, established their own education departments. These departments introduced Education Acts to provide public education alongside the existing church schools and private alternatives. However, public schooling evolved during the nineteenth century at the expense of the church-controlled denominational schools due to abolition of school fees and withdrawal of state funding. By the end of nineteenth century, centrally controlled public primary education was highly developed (Campbell and Proctor, 2014). However, despite the intention of providing schools for everyone,

this was not always the case. Aboriginal children particularly were exposed to neglect and racism (Theobald in Campell and Proctor, 2014, p. 73).

In a referendum in 1901, the colonies voted to unite into a federation. The Australian Constitution (1901) shapes the structure of Australian federalism. For instance, section 51 lists the powers given to the Commonwealth - the federal level. Powers not listed in section 51 are then the responsibility of the states. Since education is not included in section 51, it is thus the constitutional responsibility of the state governments.

The Commonwealth has therefore limited centralized control over education policy. However, according to Burke and Spaul (2001), the Commonwealth became involved in the funding of schools in both the public and private sectors. While the colonies had implemented universal education at the primary school level, the challenge in the twentieth century was to develop secondary education. Secondary education up to the age of 15-16 developed gradually and during the period between 1950 and 1975, it was finally provided nationally. As such, the federal government had supported the expansion of public secondary education at the expense of non-government schools. Consequently, non-government schools struggled to survive during this period (Campell and Proctor, 2014).

In 1972, the federal Labor government appointed a committee, led by Peter Karmel, which examined the government and non-government primary as well as secondary schools in all of Australia, and made recommendations on how to improve these schools. In response to the Karmel report, the government re-introduced federal funding of non-government schools (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, and Karmel, 1973). In 1981, the High Court of Australia decided on federal funding of church-owned schools, a decision that according to Campell and Proctor “signalled the final collapse of the century old, post-1870s, state aid settlement. “A golden age for non-government schools had begun” (Campell and Proctor, 2014, p. 227).

The result of the strengthening of the non-governmental schools is a strongly divided education system, which has been maintained until present day. Receiving federal funding, the Catholic Education Offices (CEOs) have developed the second-largest national system of schools next to the government school sector. Furthermore,

older elite schools continued to regard themselves as independent despite their increased shares of government funding (Campell and Proctor, 2014, p. 229). Thus, on the one side, there exist government (public) schools and, on the other side, non-government (private) schools, including both Catholic and independent schools. In 2010, 66 per cent of the Australian students attended government schools, 20 per cent Catholic schools, and 14 per cent independent schools. The majority of the independent schools provide religious education, whereas a few of them promote a particular educational philosophy (Gonski et al., 2011).

While Australia and Norway share in common the effort of developing a public education system by central government during the 19th and first half of the 20th century, Australia departs from this endeavour during the 1970s and 1980s. However, this does not imply that Australia abandoned the goal of achieving equality of opportunity altogether. Students are granted equal right to education even if the education system is highly segmented. However, the segmented education system does not satisfy the requirement of equality in terms of providing the same school type for children from different socio-economic backgrounds. In regards to the equality goal of providing a common curriculum for all, Australia and Norway stand in stark contrast to one another. Following several years of debate about a common national curriculum, the Australian government introduced such a curriculum in 2014. However, due to the federal system, the implementation of it became the responsibility of the Education Ministers of the states (Department of Education and Training, 2016; Department of Education, 2014; Donnelly and Wiltshire, 2014).² In practice Norway have had a national curriculum since late 18th century and along with the 1936 legislation a curriculum with national minimum requirements was introduced (N39). Subsequently the curriculum have changed several times in accordance to legal amendments within education. Since 2006, Norway has had a common national curriculum for primary, lower and secondary education as well as vocational education and training (Imsen and Volckmar, 2014). Even if Australia finally managed to agree upon a national curriculum, at least in principle, it is questionable if this means the same curriculum for all students across the Australian states. The Norwegian education system appears to comply better than the Australian education system with Espinoza's three equality goals, defined as equality of opportunity, equality for all and equality on average across social groups.

So far, I have looked at the structure of the education system itself and to what extent it meets the equality-equity goals. Furthermore, the governing of schools and school funding are closely connected to these goals. In the following, I will address the resources put into education and analyse the efforts of the Norwegian and Australian governments' in providing equal funding for their schools. As school funding closely connects with governance of education, this aspect will be addressed, too.

School funding and governance

At first sight, school funding in Norway's highly centralised governing system seems far more transparent and fair compared to the Australian situation. However, the funding issue is more complex in Norway than perhaps expected for a centralised funding system.

Norway

During the post-war period, Norway developed a highly centralist governance model, characterized by detailed regulation of education. In the 1970s and 1980s, this model came under pressure and was accused for being coercive and excessively controlling (Telhaug and Mediås, 2003; Volckmar, 2016). Consequently, in 1991, a decentralized model based on the principle of management by objectives replaced the previous centralised model (St. meld. nr. 37 [1990-91]); Telhaug and Mediås, 2003; Volckmar, 2008; Volckmar, 2016). Nevertheless, education acts, curriculum and regulations remained the responsibility of the national government, as did the funding of education. As mentioned above, national regulations apply to both public schools and private schools.

Differences in school funding emerged across the country due to the decentralisation process. A Municipality Act was introduced in 1992, which bestowed counties and municipalities with increased freedom in the administration of schools.³ Within the framework of national laws and regulations, more authority and responsibilities were transferred to the local level, such as the county administration (upper secondary schools), the municipality administration (primary and lower secondary schools), and the individual schools and teachers (Imsen and Volckmar, 2014). According to the Municipality Act, public money is provided as block grants to

the counties and the municipalities. It is the responsibility of these authorities to distribute money to the different public sectors such as social, health, and welfare services. This means that the schools have to compete for funding with these sectors at the local level. This has led to noticeable differences between counties and municipalities in how much money is spent on the school sector in comparison to other public sectors (Imsen and Volckmar, 2014). This situation is exacerbated by a significant difference in the capital income of the municipalities. In 2015, children in the wealthiest municipalities in Norway received more than twice the national yearly average allocated per student (KOSTRA, 2015).⁴

While all Norwegian schools are entitled to basic national funding, the decentralised governing structure allows for variation in the funding of schools, depending on the municipalities' economy and willingness to support education. Consequently, this leads to marked differences between the municipalities in the resources put into education. According to Espinoza's model - the goal of achieving equality as equality for all - has therefore not been fully achieved in Norway. However, the unequal allocation of resources spent on education between municipalities does not appear to affect the goal of equality on average across social groups because funding to schools within the municipality is equal (see also Blossing, Imsen, and Moos, 2014).

Australia

Dowling described the Australian school funding system as 'unhelpfully complex and exceedingly opaque' long before the Gonski review (Dowling, 2008). This statement needs some explanation.

First, the complexity of the funding system of schools is explained by the Australian federal system (Angus, 2007). In their article on Australian federalism and education policy, Keating and Klatt (2013) refer to Lingard who "points out two types of federalism: coordinate and collaborative, where coordinate federalism implies a clear distinction between the policy responsibilities of the national government and those of the sub-national authorities, while under collaborative federalism, national and sub-national responsibilities are more symbiotic, shared responsibility" (p. 412). Since Australian federalism makes a clear distinction between powers given to the Commonwealth and powers given to the states and territories, it is, according to

Lingard, best described as a coordinate system. Education is constitutionally the responsibility of the state and the territory governments. This makes national governance of education in Australia a challenge (Bagnall, 2000).

According to the Gonski review (2011), all the schools in Australia receive some level of funding from both the Australian government and the state and territory governments. Moreover, schools receive private funding in the form of parental fees, fundraising campaigns, donations, and interests and profits. Government schools receive most of their funding from the state and territory governments. Catholic schools receive the majority part of their funding from the Australian government, and independent schools from private sources in addition to national government funding. On average, the independent schools receive the highest level of private income. In 2009, the income per student was AUD 11 121 for the government sector, AUD 10 002 for the Catholic sector and AUD 13 667 for the independent sector (Gonski et al., 2011). The Liberal-National government substantially increased the allocation of federal funding to non-government schools in the period from 1996 to 2007 (Watson 2003 in Campell and Proctor, 2014, 261). The Gonski Review reported a notable decline in students attending government schools in recent years, and, at the same time, an increase in students attending non-government schools (2011). Generous federal funding to independent schools caused this change.

Education structures, school types, funding and school starting age differ among Australia's eight states and territory governments. Furthermore, according to Keating and Klatt (2013), the government sector and non-government sector operate under different principles. While the two principles of need and entitlement have been present in independent schools since the Karmel report in the 1970s, the principle of universalism is embedded in the state school system, and, in some part, in the Catholic sector. It is absent in independent schools, however. This situation has allowed Australian non-government schools to have a high level of autonomy (Keating and Klatt, 2013). Keating and Klatt claim that the very existence of universal state systems provides protection for the autonomy and separateness of Catholic and independent schools (2013).

However, as Keating and Klatt maintain, recent national implementation of such as the National Assessment Programme and the "My School" website⁵ demonstrate an

increase in “the number and depth of incursions into education policy-making of national government” (2013, p. 412). They argue that education is increasingly driven by *concurrent* federalism; that is, intertwined responsibilities and coexisting jurisdictions, “where the sub-national authorities have a prescribed policy responsibility but the national government plays an assisting or complementing role” (Keating and Klatt, 2013, p. 413). This is also evident in the above-mentioned process towards a common Australian Curriculum. Nevertheless, the state governments and non-government sector have only accepted power sharing when they see it as being in their own interests.

According to Keating and Klatt, the Gonski Review and the proposed funding model could have been “an exercise in concurrent and cooperative federalism” (2013, p. 419). But they claim that the states and territories are likely to be the main obstacles to the proposed reforms as “state governments and the non-government sector both want Commonwealth monies but then want to be left alone” (2013, p. 417). In retrospect, we know that three out of eight states did not sign the National Education Reform Agreement before the election in 2013 and that the Liberal Coalition Government turned the agreement down. The Australian federal model appears to be an obstacle for national education reforms as was witnessed in regards to the Gonski funding model. The mandate of the funding model was to create a fairer, more just and transparent funding system, but the Gonski Review’s recommendations did not actually challenge the non-governmental school sector.

In summary, the complex and diverse funding system in Australia is a serious obstacle to meet the equality goals of “equality for all” and “equality on average across social groups”. By contrast, the governance of education and school funding in Norway is more centralised, transparent and straightforward. However, it does not fully prevent an unjust allocation of school funding. The main reason, as shown earlier, is that the municipalities have discretion to decide how much money they wish to allocate to the schools.

Diversity and School Choice

To this point, equality of educational opportunity, formal rights to education, universal school provision and allocation of school funding to public and private schools have

been addressed. In the following, I will turn to the issue of diversity and choice, which is usually perceived as the antithesis to equality of educational opportunity. Demands for diversity and choice are based on an equity concept that considers individual circumstances and justifies differences in input to achieve fewer differences in the effect of schooling (Coleman, 1968; Espinoza, 2007). On the contrary, enhanced student performance calls for individual solutions, school choice and diversity. How has Norway and Australia facilitated diversity and school choice in their education policies? Furthermore, how do these relate to the contemporary understanding of the equality-equity ideal?

Norway

There is limited choice in the Norwegian education system due to the relatively small private school sector. Conversely, Australia has a much larger private school sector and therefore offers more choice for parents. According to the Norwegian Education Act from 1998, the students are entitled to go to the nearest school in their catchment area, but they may choose another public school in the same area or a private school if there are any available (Imsen and Volckmar, 2014). Parents and students in rural areas can hardly exercise their right to choose a school as most private schools are located in urban areas. However, in some rural areas in Norway, parents have re-opened former public schools as private Montessori schools. The municipalities had closed down the public schools, which were deemed to be too small and costly (Volckmar and Wiborg, 2014). Thus, choice is limited and closely linked to place of residence.

The breakthrough of neoliberal education policy in Norway in the late 1980s brought with it a demand for more choice and diversity *within* the public education system. The political response to meet this demand runs along the lines of the block of left-wing parties and the right-wing parties, arguing for collective and individual solutions respectively (Volckmar and Wiborg, 2014; Volckmar, 2016). When enhanced student performance is perceived as the “success factor” for a high quality education system, choice and individual solutions seem to gain headway.

Adapted teaching (individualized training) has been an important principle in Norwegian education since the 1970s. Back then, adapted teaching was targeted at smaller groups of students with special needs, but from the 2000s onwards, adapted

teaching increasingly came to include almost all students. At present day, adapted teaching is the main principle for all teaching in primary and secondary schools (Meld. St. 18 [2010-2011]). This implies that adapted teaching now also target high performing students.

The principle of adapted teaching thereby justifies individual solutions to increase student achievement and it is expected to enhance the individuals' potential. In the autumn of 2016, the government opened "talent centres" in math for lower secondary students in the four largest Norwegian cities.

Briefly summarized, since the millennium education policy in Norway has promoted a higher degree of choice and diversity *within* the public education system. The purpose seems to be to enhance student performance and excellence in education.

Australia

The large number and different types of non-government schools in Australia provide parents with a high degree of choice in school options for their children (Gonski et al., 2011, p. 11). The OECD (2015) confirms that school choice in Australia compared to other OECD countries "is widely available" (p. 192). Even though school choice is a highly valued feature in the Australian school system, the Gonski Review voices concern about the consequences of the competitive school "market". Not all Australian parents are able to access or afford private schools, especially those with low socioeconomic status. The demographics of the student population vary within and across the two sectors as do the resources available to schools in each sector. 36 per cent of all government school students were from the lowest quarter of the socioeconomic group compared to 21 per cent of Catholic school students and 13 per cent of independent school students. Almost half of all independent school students fall into the top quarter socioeconomic group (Gonski et al., 2011). Additionally, government schools have a larger proportion of indigenous students, students with disabilities and students from remote areas than both the Catholic and the independent schools (Gonski et al., 2011). Hence, non-government school subsidies reinforce the consumer's right of choice, but are likely to increase inequality in schools.

Both the highly segmented Australian education system and the unitary

Norwegian education system scored above OECD average in reading in 2009 and in science in 2015 - albeit Australia slightly better than Norway (OECD, 2012, 2015). There is no indication that the Australian government has plans to abolish its competitive independent schools. As we have seen, Norway is well under way to implement special centres for gifted students and open more private schools.

Equity in education understood as “equity for equal needs”, “equity for equal potential” and “equity for equal achievement” legitimize a turn away from universalism and collective solutions on education. A unitary comprehensive education system might even be perceived as an impediment to a higher level of student achievement, as diversity and competition between alternatives are seen as a way of enhancing student performance. Diversity and school choice will certainly raise some students’ performances. However, it is questionable if independent schools and special centres for gifted students will break down the relationship between performance and socio-economic background.

Comparative analysis and Discussion

This article has addressed how Australia and Norway have sought to promote equity in education in elucidation of Espinoza’s distinction between the intertwined concepts of equality and equity. The analysis was structured around three crosscutting themes, which were seen as especially relevant for comparing two education systems and their efforts to achieve equity. The main purpose was to achieve an improved understanding of two highly different countries in their persistent effort to enhance both equity and achievement in education and identify possible factors that may have impeded this process.

The Norwegian unitary education system seems to accommodate the Spinoza’s equality requirements of “equality of opportunity”, “equality for all” and “equality on average across social groups” to a greater extent than the highly segmented Australian education system. A small, regulated private sector, and a free, integrated primary and secondary education for all children, provided in a comprehensive education system, seem better equipped to give a genuine common education for all regardless of social background than a segmented system with a large portion of private independent schools. Additionally, the long-standing history of a national curriculum in Norway

ensures that students are taught a common academic content. In contrast, only recently a national curriculum has been introduced in Australia. Prior to this, the individual states had their own curriculum. Differences in school structures and the organisation of public and private education in Norway and Australia are caused by different historical trajectories in the respective governing structures and assigned responsibilities.

School funding and allocation of resources proved to be a complex matter. Australia's diverse funding system is obviously incompatible with a fair allocation of funds. However, the Norwegian situation shows that the Municipality Act from 1992 allows for uneven school funding among counties and municipalities. Therefore, some counties and municipals are enabled to offer better equipment, teaching aids and a higher degree of teacher density than others do. Neither Australia nor Norway fully prevents an unjust allocation of school funding. However, while the unequal allocation of resources between municipalities in Norway do not actually affect the goal of equality on average across social groups, the Australian funding system has proved to provide various income per student depending on school sector, which attracts different socio-economic groups (Gonski et al., 2011). In this way, school funding might impede equality in opportunity in both countries, but to a far greater extent in Australia than in Norway.

Diversity and school choice is largely built-in within the public education system in Norway rather than in the form of private education. In contrast, diversity and school choice in Australia is available through a competitive school market, which allows a sizable private school sector. In respect to the equality concept as 'equality of opportunity', 'equality for all' and 'equality on average across social groups', diversity and school choice outside public education is likely to increase inequalities in the school system. Since enhanced student performance is perceived as the 'success factor' for a high quality education system, choice and individualized teaching seem to gain headway now also within public education systems. It is expected that parents choose what is best for their children. However, not all parents possess the resources to make such choices.

This article started out by presenting OECD's understanding of equity in education, the relationship between equity, student performance and high quality education systems. This success criterion for equity in education is that all students

should reach a basic minimum level of skills, e.g. student performance as measured in standardized national and international tests. Furthermore, the success criterion for a high quality education system is a high level of average student performance. Thus, the current understanding of a high quality education system is inextricably connected to “equity”. According to Loughland and Sriprakash (2016), PISA and OECD’s understanding of the relationship between quality and equity has significantly influenced the Australian education policy. Education has been reshaped through the market logics of commensurability, standardisation and competition. Accordingly, the focus on measurement in international rankings produced by OECD and PISA “has shaped the political discourse not just relating to performance but also how ‘equity’ is understood” (Loughland and Sriprakash, 2016, p. 237). For instance, in the recent Australian policy documents equity is re-contextualized as a performance measure (Loughland and Sriprakash, 2016; Thomson, 2013). We see a similar change in the Norwegian education policy context after the millennium when the implementation of the major educational reform, Kunnskapsløftet, took place (The Knowledge Promotion) (Sjøberg, 2014; Prøitz, 2015; Volckmar, 2016). While the understanding of equity in Norwegian education policy in the 1990s is linked to socio-economic background and the collective, equity after the millennium is increasingly related to the individual student performance (Aasen, 2007).

The point here is that OECD’s education policy claims that a high quality education system is one that also has a high level of average student performance. This also defines the current understanding of equity (OECD, 2015). According to Thomson (2013) this shift in the understanding of equity emerged around at the same time as the development of the global knowledge economy (GKE) (1990s onwards), which was partly caused by the OECD. The OECD encourages its member states to improve their education systems to compete in the global economic market. In the global market, there are winners and losers as some member states do better than others. The point is that the current understanding of equity as a measure on a standardised test “deflect attention from the real human consequences of long-term inequity” and does not address structural educational disadvantages inherent in the education systems (Loughland and Sriprakash, 2016, p. 243).

My analysis demonstrates that the Norwegian unitary school system is more equitable than the Australian segmented system. The institutional characteristics of the Norwegian education system, such as the small private sector, still largely centralised and transparent governance, reasonably fair and just school funding, and controlled access to school choice are factors which contributes to increased educational equality. On the contrary, the significant differences between the government and non-government schools in Australia, the lack of federal governance, diverse and unfair school funding and extensive use of school choice, is a hindrance in promoting equality in education. In Australia, the autonomy of the states and territories stand in the way of implementing national education reforms. National governance can indeed be effective in addressing the equality-equity challenge as we have seen in the case of Norway. The Gonski Review proposed a set of principles (universalism alongside need and entitlement) for funding of all schools across Australia, which challenged both the autonomy of the states and territories as well as the autonomy of non-governmental schools. However, the Australian government did not achieve sufficient consensus to implement this model. To quote Keating and Klatt: “[I]n general, the Commonwealth lacks the capacity to generate and formulate coherent education policy and initiatives in any systematic and ongoing manner” (2013, p. 417).

The current understanding of equity as student performance and quality as a measure of student performance has influenced both Australian and Norwegian education policies. The strive for high scores on student performance in national and international tests has prevented Australia from initiating necessary structural changes to the education system but led Norway in promoting a greater degree of privatisation, diversity and school choice.

References

- Aasen, P. (2007). Equality in Education Policy. A Norwegian Perspective. In R. Teese, S. Lamb, & M. Duru-Bellat (Eds.) *International Studies in Educational Inequality: Theory and Policy* (Vol. 2, pp. 127-142). Doordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Angus, M. (2007). Commonwealth-state relations and the funding of Australia's schools. In L. Connors (Ed.) *Making federalism work for schools: Due process*,

transparency, informed consent (pp. 112-116). Sydney: NSW Public Education Alliance.

Australian Government. (2014). *Australian Government response to the Senate Select Committee on School Funding Report*. Canberra: Australian Government.

Bagnall, N. F. (2000). The Balance between Vocational Secondary and General Secondary Schooling in France and Australia. *Comparative Education*, 36, 459-475. doi: 10.1080/713656653

Blossing, U., Imsen, G., & Moos, L (Eds.). (2014). *The Nordic education model: 'A school for all' encounters neo-liberal policy*. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

Burke, G., & Spaul, A. (2001). Australian Schools: Participation and funding 1901 to 2000. *Year Book Australia 2002* (No 83). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Campbell, C., & Proctor, H. (2014). *A History of Australian Schooling*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Coleman, J. (1968). The Concept of Equality of Educational Opportunity. *Harvard Educational Review*, 38 (1), pp. 7-22.

Department of Education. (2014). *Review of the Australian Curriculum. Initial Australian Government Response*. Canberra: Australian Government.

Department of Education and Training. (2016). *Review of the Australian Curriculum*. Retrieved 11 April 2016 from <https://www.studentsfirst.gov.au/review-australian-curriculum>

Donnelly, K., & Wiltshire, K. (2014). *Review of the Australian Curriculum. Final Report*. Canberra: Australian Government.

Dowling, A. (2008). 'Unhelpfully complex and exceedingly opaque': Australia's school funding system. *Australian Journal of Education*, 52, pp. 129-150.

Espinoza, O. (2007). Solving the equity-equality conceptual dilemma: a new model for analysis of the educational process. *Educational Research*, 49, pp. 343-363. doi: 101080/00131880701717198

- Gonski, D., Boston, K., Greiner, K., Lawrence, C., Scales, B., & Tannock, P. (2011). *Review of Funding for Schooling - Final Report*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Green, A. (2013). *Education and state formation: Europe, East Asia and the USA* (2nd ed.). Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Hanrahan, D. (2015). How inequitable is Australian education anyway? Retrieved from <http://teachforaustralia.org/stories/australian-education-and-inequity-pisa-oecd/>
Downloaded November 11, 2016.
- Hofman, R. H., Hofmann, W. H. A., & Gray, J. M. (2008). Comparing key dimensions of schooling: towards a typology of European school systems. *Comparative Education, 44*, pp. 93-110.
- Imsen, G., & Volckmar, N. (2014). The Norwegian School for All: Historical Emergence and Neoliberal Confrontation. In U. Blossing, G. Imsen, & L. Moos (Eds.). *The Nordic education model: "A school for all" encounters neo-liberal policy* (pp. 35-55). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, & Karmel, H. P. (1973). *Schools in Australia: Report of the interim committee for the Australian Schools Commission*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Karlsen, G. E. (2014). Internasjonale aktører som premissgivere for norsk utdanningspolitikk med særlig vekt på OECD [International players who set the agenda for Norwegian education policy, with particular emphasis on OECD]. In K. A. Røvik, T. V. Eilertsen & E. Moksnes (Eds.). *Reformideer i norsk skole. Spredning, oversettelse og implementering* (pp. 121-146). Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Keating, J., & Klatt, M. (2013). Australian concurrent federalism and its implications for the Gonski Review. *Journal of Education Policy* 28, 411-426. doi: 10.1080/02680939.2012.742139
- Kenway, J. (2013). Challenging inequality in Australian schools: Gonski and beyond. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 34, 286-308. doi: 10.1080/01596306.2013.770254

- KOSTRA. (2015). Netto driftsutgifter til grunnskolesektor (202, 215, 222, 223), per innbygger 6-15 år [Operating expenses in compulsory education per inhabitant]. Statistics Norway
<https://www.ssb.no/a/kostra/stt/variabel.cgi?f=101412719454480&m=101412719454480&t=2015&std=checked&v=101412418650902>
- Lamb, S., Markussen, E., Teese, R., Sandberg N., & Polesel, J. (Eds.) (2011). *School Dropout and Completion: International Comparative Studies in Theory and Policy*. Doordrecht, Heidelberg, London, New York : Springer.
- Landman, T. (2008). *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge. Third edition.
- Landman, T., & Carvalho, E. (2017). *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge. Fourth edition.
- Loughland, T., & Sriprakash, A. (2016). Bernstein revisited: the recontextualisation of equity in contemporary Australian school education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 37, 230-247. doi: 10.1080/01425692.2014.916604
- Mahoney, J., & Rueschmeyer, D. (Eds.). (2006). *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meld. St. 18 (2010-2011). *Læring og fellesskap*. [Learning together]. White Paper. Oslo: Ministry of Education and Research.
- NOU 1976: 46 *Utdanning og ulikhet* [Education and inequality]. Official Norwegian Report. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- OECD. (2012). *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*. OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264130852-en>
- OECD. (2013). *PISA 2012 Results: Excellence through Equity. Giving every student the chance to succeed* (2). PISA: OECD Publishing.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201132-en>
- OECD. (2015). *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen*. OECD Publishing. ISBN 978-92-64-22544-2.

- Prøitz, T. S. (2015). *Læringsutbytte* [Learning Outcome]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Ragin, C. C. (1994). Introduction to Qualitative Comparative Analysis. In T. Janoski & A. Hicks (Eds.). *The Comparative Political Economy of the Welfare State* (pp. 299-320). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Savage, G. C., Sellar, S., & Gorur, R. (2013). Equity and marketisation: emerging policies and practices on Australian education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 34, 161-169. doi:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2013.770244>
- Senate. (2014). *Select Committee on School Funding. Equity and excellence in Australian schools*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. ISBN 978-1-76010-010-0
- Sjøberg, S. (2014). Pisafisering av norsk skole. En suksesshistorie fra OECD [PISA in Norwegian schools. A success story from OECD]. In K. A. Røvik, T. V. Eilertsen & E. Moksnes (Eds.). *Reformideer i norsk skole. Spredning, oversettelse og implementering* (pp. 195-225). Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Solbergregjeringen. (2013). *Political platform for a government formed by the Conservative Party and the Progress Party*. Sundvollen: The Norwegian Government.
- Statistics Norway. (2014). Retrieved 29.09.2014 <http://www.ssb./152671/elever-i-grunnskolen-og-grunnskolar-etter-eigarform>
- St.meld. nr 37 (1990-91) *Om organisering og styring av utdanningssektoren*. [About organisation and management of the education sector]. White Paper. Oslo: Ministry of Education and Research.
- St.meld. nr. 16 (2006-2007) ... *og ingen stod igjen. Tidlig innsats for livslang læring*. [... no one left behind. Early intervention for lifelong learning]. White Paper. Oslo: Ministry of Education and Research.
- Telhaug, A. O. (2005). *Kunnskapsløftet - ny eller gammel skole*. [The Knowledge Promotion – new or old school]. Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk.

Telhaug, A. O., & Mediås, O. A. (2003). *Grunnskolen som nasjonsbygger: Fra statspietisme til nyliberalisme* [Compulsory school as nation builder: From state pietism to new liberalism]. Oslo: Abstrakt.

Thomson, P. (2013). Romancing market: narrativising equity in globalising times. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 34, 170-184. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2013.770245>

Thomsen, S., De Bortoli, L., & Buckley, S. (2013). *PISA in brief. Highlights from the full Australian report. PISA 2012: How Australia measures up*. Canberra: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Thuen, H. (2017). *Den norske skolen. Utdanningssystemets historie* [The Norwegian School. The history of the education system]. Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.

Volckmar, N. (2005). *Fra solidarisk samværskultur til kunnskapssolidaritet: det sosialdemokratiske skoleprosjekt fra Sivertsen til Hernes* [From solidary public spirit to knowledge solidarity. The social democratic school project from Sivertsen to Hernes]. Doctoral thesis. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Volckmar, N. (2008). Knowledge and solidarity: The Norwegian socialdemocratic project in a period of change, 1945-2000. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 52, 1-15. doi: 10.1080/00313830701786560

Volckmar, N. (2010). 'En skole for alle' og privatisering: en analyse av de skandinaviske landenes privatiseringspolitikk [‘A school for all’ and privatisation: An analysis of the Scandinavian countries privatisation policy]. *Uddannelseshistorie*, 44, 33-49. Copenhagen: Selskabet for Skole- og Uddannelseshistorie.

Volckmar, N. (2011). *Fra solidarisk samværskultur til (solidarisk) kunnskapssamfunn. Etterkrigstidens utdanningspolitikk som danningsprosjekt. [From solidary public spirit to (solidary) knowledge society.]* In K. Steinsholt, & S. Dobson (Eds.). *Dannelse: Introduksjon til et ullent pedagogisk landskap* (pp. 255-278). Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk.

Volckmar, N. (Ed.). (2016). *Utdanningshistorie. Grunnskolen som samfunnsintegrerende institusjon* [History of Education. Compulsory school as a social integrating institution]. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

Volckmar, N., & Wiborg, S. (2014). A Social Democratic Response to Market-Led Education Policies: Concession or rejection? In U. Blossing, G. Imsen, & L. Moos (Eds.). *The Nordic education model: "A school for all" encounters neo-liberal policy* (pp. 117-131). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

Waldow, F., Takayama, K., & Sung, Y.-K. (2014). Rethinking the pattern of external policy referencing: media discourses over the ‘Asian Tigers’ PISA success in Australia, Germany and South Korea. *Comparative Education*, 50, 302-321, doi: 10.1080/03050068.2013.860704

Windle, J. (2014). The Rise of School Choice in Education: An Analysis of Two Policy Moments. *Educational Policy*, 28, 306-324. doi: 10.1177/0895904813513151

Windle, J., & Stratton, G. (2013). Equity for sale: ethical consumption in a school-choice regime. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 34, 202-213. doi: 10.1080/01596306.2013.770247

Notes

¹ The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has the regulatory authority to ensure that private schools comply with the legislation. Private schools that do not comply with the Free School Act 2015 may lose their public funding.

² The Australian Government released the “Review of the Australian Curriculum. Final Report” 15 August 2014. The aim is to implement a common Australian Curriculum from 2015.

³ As of January 2013, there are 19 counties and 428 municipalities in Norway.

⁴ KOSTRA is an online registration system for Norwegian municipalities and counties.

⁵ ‘My School’ website was launched in 2010. It is a recourse for parents, educators and the community and provides information about school achievements and characteristics in Australian schools.