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Mari-Ana Jones

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A Mixed Methods Study of Student Participation

Doctoral thesis

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Thesis for the Degree of
Philosophiae Doctor
Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences
Department of Teacher Education

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Trondheim, September 2022

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Mari-Ana Jones

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

Institute of Teacher Education

Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

2022

Summary

Internationally, student participation continues to gain prevalence in educational research and practice; however, its conceptualisation and associated practices remain indistinct. This is exemplified in the case of Norway. Student participation in schools has become increasingly important in Norway in recent years. This is reflected in the central position of student participation in the updated national curriculum (2018) and in the forthcoming updated Act of Education (2022). Despite requirements for and expectations of student participation, challenges persist and schools struggle to enable students to participate, leading to the overarching question addressed in this thesis: what are the necessary conditions for student participation in schools? This thesis provides answers through theoretical reflections and an exploration of student participation in schools using mixed methods. In doing so, this thesis contributes richer knowledge of current conceptions and practices of student participation, providing recommendations for future practice.

The thesis incorporates three papers. Paper 1: *'Redefining student voice: applying the lens of critical pragmatism'* presents competing discourses of student voice; emancipation and empowerment on one hand, and accountability measures on the other. The paper proposes the redefinition of student voice as more than a tool for improvement or a tokenistic nod to democratic education. By highlighting the powerful connection between student voice and teachers' critical reflexivity, the paper argues that when student voice is interwoven into school life, it becomes about teachers and students learning together. Building on theoretical perspectives in Paper 1, Paper 2: *'Exploring student participation in Norwegian schools'* presents data collected using mixed methods from seven schools located across Norway. Findings indicate a mixed and indistinct grasp of student participation, leading to practices which mirror this confusion. Participation was regarded as problematic, confusing, frustrating, time-consuming, and even threatening. The title of this thesis: 'We hope it isn't about them deciding everything!', said by one teacher in Paper 2, encapsulates these predominant concerns. At the same time, respondents excitedly described examples of co-creative partnerships in which students and teachers learned collaboratively. Highlighting these experiences, the paper proposes that student participation be understood as co-creation, thus leading to authentic learning experiences for children and adults together and as equals. Responding to the exceptional circumstances of the global Covid-19 pandemic, Paper 3: '*Learning from the COVID-19 lockdown experience: listening to pupils, parents and teachers'* presents survey data collected from leaders, teachers, students and parents in eight schools within one Norwegian municipality during school closures in March 2020. Respondents agreed that more learning had taken place during home schooling due to creative and collaborative learning activities which encouraged more student participation and independence. Leaders at the schools were keen to build on these experiences. Thus, Paper 3 suggests that schools use the pandemic as an opportunity to think critically about existing practices and structures and develop ways in which adults and students can work in partnership for better learning. Together, the papers present a strong case for student participation as an integral and invaluable part of learning and school life for adults and students, both during normal circumstances and during a time of crisis.

The case of Norway demonstrates that legislation and traditions are, on their own, insufficient. This thesis emphasises that student participation cannot be implemented as a measure or utilised as a tool according to adults' agendas. It is inseparable from learning and thus central to the purpose of education: 'participation-as-and-for-learning'. This thesis also shows, however, that schools need help with understanding and practising student participation. A topography of student participation is presented as a starting point for the development of contextualised understandings of student participation: supporting schools to reflect on existing practices and consider changes. Furthermore, three important actions for developing conditions for participation are identified and presented in a new model 'Actions for Participation': building community, co-creating and being critically reflexive. These actions are intended for all, participation is an essential and shared learning experience in which adults and students have differing but equally vital roles.

Acknowledgements

There is a well-known saying, ‘It takes a village to raise a child’. In the case of this PhD, it has taken an academic community to support its completion. Without the guidance and encouragement of my colleagues, both in Norway and internationally, this work would have been impossible. I am very grateful to everyone who has contributed to the process; you have inspired, energised, and challenged me.

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I dedicate this thesis to my family past and present, who have never doubted that I would succeed and whose history and tenacity (stubbornness!) have provided an excellent grounding for me to do so. Your confidence has sustained me.

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Mari-Ana Jones

Trondheim, 2022

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PAPER 2: Jones, M-A., & Dehlin, E. (under review) Exploring student participation in Norwegian schools

PAPER 3: Bubb, S., & Jones, M-A. (2020). Learning from the COVID-19 home-schooling experience: Listening to pupils, parents/carers and teachers. *Improving schools*, *23*(3), 209-222. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1365480220958797

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PART I

THE EXTENDED SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1 Introduction

Participation, although defined simply as ‘the act of taking part’ (Oxford English Dictionary, 2022), has many associations, including agency, action, rights, collaboration, dialogue, involvement, engagement, inclusion, co-creation, having a voice and being listened to. It takes on different meanings and purposes depending on, for example, context, agenda, historical and cultural factors and research fields, continually evolving as new ways and forms of participation become possible. Simply turning up, Rudduck (2007) reminds us, is not participation. In March 2021, Dr Tony Sewell CBE, Chair of the UK’s Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities claimed on BBC radio that this is ‘the age of participation’, arguing that more than ever before participation is being framed as necessary and worthy. In contrast, Literat (2016, p. 1790) is cautious, claiming that participation has become ‘a ubiquitous buzzword’ and proposing closer examination of what might be meaningful participation. Social media provides millions of people with opportunities to participate, at the same time there are concerns about the equity of participation (OECD, 2022).

Perhaps the attention afforded to participation can be explained by the feeling that it is an expression of a basic human need, that of freedom to take charge of one’s life (Pitkin and Shumer, 2016): in essence, to be the subjects in our own lives rather than the objects (Fenstermacher, 2006; Biesta, 2022). Power and identity are, therefore, key aspects of participation, and being denied participation can have serious consequences. If participation is so fundamental, then what happens in schools, the places where young people have ‘an opportunity to meet themselves and the world’ (Biesta, 2022, p. 23), demands scrutiny.

‘Student voice’ or ‘pupil voice’ is the term often used in English speaking countries to describe children being asked to give their opinions about school (Arnot et al., 2004), however, ‘student voice’ presents limitations. Black and Mayes (2020, p. 1067) draw attention to its uses as a ‘quantifiable noun’, suggesting teachers and students compete to have more voice. In Norway, where this study is situated, the term ‘student voice’ does not exist. Rather, the word ‘elevmedvirkning’ is widely used and ‘student participation’ is a more fitting translation of the Norwegian term. ‘Student voice’ implies a unique focus on the verbal contribution of students, ignoring other forms of participation. It also implies one-way transmission rather than dialogue, saying nothing about the listeners, should there be any. Student participation, on the other hand, accepts students as being part of something together with others and invites questions such as participating in what and with whom, and how actively or passively? Nelson and Charteris (2020, p. 1) advocate for student voice that ‘positions students as partners alongside their teachers’, which seems much closer to ‘student participation’. Recognising the cultural, geographical and historical nuances of these concepts, neither being 'perfect', the limitations and possibilities presented by both terms will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3.

Learning is the primary purpose and the core business of schools, and connections between participation and learning are not new. More than a century ago Dewey argued for the essentiality of participation for learning; through participation, one is part of creating learning and generating knowledge: 'subject-matter never can be got into the child from without. Learning is active' (1916/2011, p. 107). Biesta (2006, p. 30) purports that for Dewey, 'the central educational mechanism is participation'. Participation for Dewey is a social rather than an individual act, and all social participation is fundamentally educative (Dewey, 1916/2011). Thus, for Dewey, participation and education are inextricable. Writing more recently, Dragonas (2020, p. 314) reemphasises the participatory, relational nature of learning, arguing for 'the dialogic classroom', rather than the one-directional transfer of information from teacher to student. Learning, it would seem, can only superficially be understood or experienced without participation.

This poses a question: if participation understood as relational and active is essential to children's learning, indeed to their identities, why is it not more readily experienced in schools? One answer might be found in what Jones (2009, p. 20) describes as a 'slavish adherence to data analysis and test results' in schools. The growth of accountability measures during the past three decades and an increased focus on the outcomes of education have led to the consumerisation of education (Whitty & Wisby, 2007). Student participation has, according to Nelson and Charteris (2020) been colonised by neo-liberalist desires for quality assurance and might subsequently have more to do with measuring and improving educational standards than learning, creating divides between teachers and students. Cultures of performativity (Ball, 2003) may have contributed to participation being experienced by adults in schools as problematic - confusing, time-consuming and, at times, threatening (Mari-Ana Jones & Bubb, 2021). These uncertainties have confined participation to an 'occasional event' (Fielding, 2015, p. x), closely connected with 'decoration and tokenism' (Brasof, 2015, p. 23) and ensuring 'surface compliance' (Taylor & Robinson, 2009, p. 166). Thus, Deweyan interconnections between learning and participation are rendered indiscernible. Change is possible and arguably imperative.

This thesis emphasises participation as intrinsic to learning and to education. In practice, this is adults and students engaging in shared learning experiences in which they jointly construct knowledge and meaning. Schools can create the conditions for this, but as Moran (2018, p. xi) writes 'democratic spaces for learners are not created by chance'. The role of adults is vital because the intrinsic hierarchical structures of schools mean that the participation of students is entirely dependent on the attitudes and actions of the adults. Teachers and leaders have ‘tremendous power’ (Harber, 2015, p. 243) to shape the educational experience of the children within their care: ‘numerous research studies and reports state that leadership is a…key to success and improvement’ (Earley, 2017, p. 100). There is considerable support in the literature for school leaders to act decisively to create the conditions for student participation (discussed in Chapter 3). A particular consideration of leadership practices which develop student participation is therefore also essential.

Participation understood and practiced as essential and inextricable from learning; ‘participation-as-and-for-learning’, enables schools to become places where students are not simply prepared for an imagined future life but participate as active subjects in the life they are currently living. As a 13-year-old wrote in ‘The School I’d Like’ (1969, p. 8), ‘school was not invented just for the little people to become the same as the big people…’.

1.1 Aim of the thesis and research questions

What conditions are necessary for student participation in schools? This thesis aims to address this overarching question by theoretical reflection and by exploring student participation in schools using mixed methods research. In doing so, this thesis aims to contribute richer knowledge of current conceptions and practices of student participation, leading to recommendations for future practice.

These research questions (RQ) are posed:

RQ1: What are the current understandings and practices of student participation in schools?

RQ2: What challenges and barriers to student participation exist in schools?

RQ3: How might school leaders lead the development of student participation practices?

Working as a teacher and school leader in England and Norway for several years before moving to educating school leaders at university, consulting in schools and becoming a researcher, I have first-hand experiences of school life: the rich complexity of daily interactions, the creative and emotional energies from students and colleagues, the enormity of the responsibility of co-creating the future. Opportunities to support and encourage students’ participation throughout my time in education have inspired and influenced my thinking.

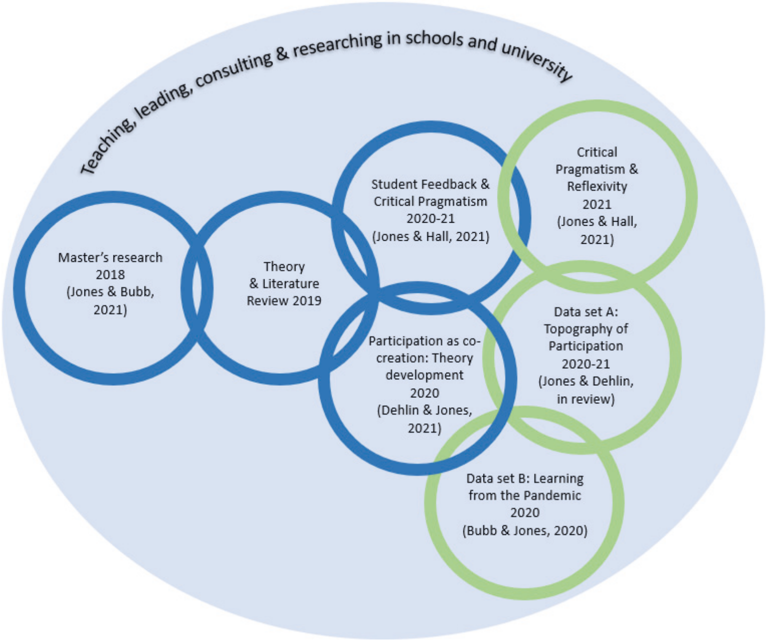
Teaching, leading, consulting & researching in schools and university
Master's research 2018 (Jones & Bubb, 2021)
Theory & Literature Review 2019
Student Feedback & Critical Pragmatism 2020-21 (Jones & Hall, 2021)
Critical Pragmatism & Reflexivity 2021 (Jones & Hall, 2021)
Participation as co-creation: Theory development 2020 (Dehlin & Jones, 2021)
Data set A: Topography of Participation 2020-21 (Jones & Dehlin, in review)
Data set B: Learning from the Pandemic 2020 (Bubb & Jones, 2020)

Figure 1: My research journey so far

Figure 1: *'My research journey so far'* illustrates how my actions and directions as a researcher are continually shaped by my previous and current experiences of working within education. The interlinking circles in Figure 1 narrate the development of my research, suggesting a manifold, rather than linear process. The blue circles indicate the work which enabled the production of the three papers which comprise this study (green circles). Master's research conducted in 2017-8 sparked my curiosity about what could be learned about the necessary conditions for student participation from the example of Norway. This study builds on the Master's research, which was subsequently published in a peer-reviewed journal article: *'Student voice to improve schools: Perspectives from students, teachers and leaders in 'perfect conditions''* (Jones & Bubb, 2021). Students, teachers and school leaders from three schools in Norway were respondents in a mixed methods study, which highlighted the challenges with student participation, evident 'even in the most "perfect" conditions' of Norway (Jones & Bubb, 2021, p. 11). The contribution to the field of that research lay primarily in raising awareness of the difficulties of student participation, as well as highlighting a need for further research on how these challenges might be better understood and overcome. Experiences from that study partly informed the design of the empirical research presented herein. It was clear that more knowledge was needed about the experiences of students, teachers and leaders with student participation, in order to better understand the challenges and to identify when respondents positively experienced participation.

Figure 1 shows how more background knowledge was acquired and further publications produced. A theoretical framework was developed using significant concepts as starting points for an extensive literature review, later expanded to include historical and sociological perspectives. These understandings partly led to the production of two theory-based publications: *'Student Voice and Student Feedback: How Critical Pragmatism Can Reframe Research and Practice'* (Jones & Hall, 2021a) and 'Ledelse av Lærernes Profesjonelle Læringsfellesskap I "Eleven-som-subjekt" skolen' [Leadership of Teachers' Professional Learning Community in 'Student-as-Subject' Schools] (Dehlin & Jones, 2021). In the former, we use critical pragmatism in connection with student voice for the first time, critically discussing practices related to feedback collected from students and suggesting how these might be improved to enable reflection. The latter presents a model with four types of student participation developed from theory which formed the basis for the topography of student participation described in Paper 2. Although these publications are not included in this thesis, they represent important developmental stages and have been vital to the abductive approach to data analysis described below in Chapter 4. Described as 'hunches…the seeds of new theory' (Sætre & Van de Ven, 2021, p. 684), the collaborative and creative thought processes leading to the production of these publications were serendipitous, borne out of a need to explain the unexplained and essential to the continuing development of my ideas (ibid.). Building on these theoretical foundations, a research design was constructed to collect the views of students, teachers and school leaders in seven schools from around Norway using mixed methods comprising an online survey, focus group interviews and individual interviews (hereafter known as data set A).

In the midst of my Ph.D. research, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, creating a chance to research student participation during the unprecedented school closures in March 2020, so further data collection was carried out (hereafter known as data set B). Researching during the pandemic provided unique and important perspectives on the necessary conditions for student participation, as traditional school structures and norms were changed and called into question. Taken together, data sets A and B have been used to map understandings and experiences of student participation in various school contexts. When combined with theoretical explorations, the research presented in this thesis enables a deeper consideration of the concept and practices of student participation, supporting fresh perspectives. The papers included in this thesis address the overarching question and research questions in different ways. Figure 2 presents an overview of the thesis, showing the connections between these questions and the papers.

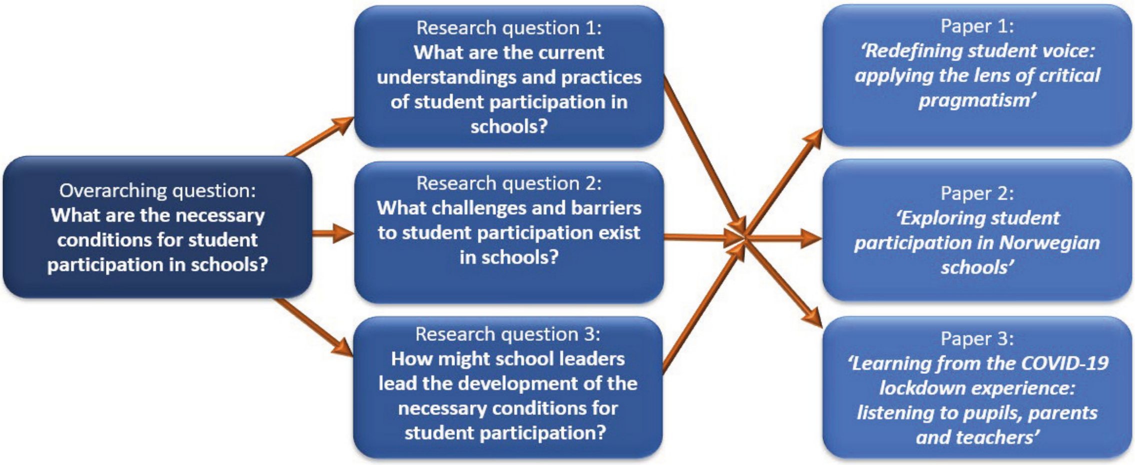
Overarching question:
What are the necessary conditions for student participation in schools?
Research question 1:
What are the current understandings and practices of student participation in schools?
Research question 2:
What challenges and barriers to student participation exist in schools?
Research question 3:
How might school leaders lead the development of the necessary conditions for student participation?
Paper 1:
'Redefining student voice: applying the lens of critical pragmatism'
Paper 2:
'Exploring student participation in Norwegian schools'
Paper 3:
'Learning from the COVID-19 lockdown experience: listening to pupils, parents and teachers'

Figure 2: An overview of the thesis showing the connections between the overarching question, the research questions, and the papers

Paper 1: *'Redefining student voice: applying the lens of critical pragmatism'* presents competing discourses of student voice; emancipation and empowerment on one hand, and accountability measures on the other. The paper proposes the redefinition of student voice as more than a tool for improvement or a tokenistic nod to democratic education. By highlighting the powerful connection between student voice and teachers' critical reflexivity, the paper argues that when student voice is interwoven into school life, it becomes about teachers and students learning together.

Building on theoretical perspectives in Paper 1, Paper 2: *'Exploring student participation in Norwegian schools'* presents data collected using mixed methods from seven schools located across Norway. Findings indicate a mixed and indistinct grasp of student participation, leading to practices which mirror this confusion. Participation was regarded as problematic, confusing, frustrating, time-consuming, and even threatening. The title of this thesis: 'We hope it isn't about them deciding everything!', said by one teacher in Paper 2, encapsulates these predominant concerns. At the same time, respondents excitedly described examples of co-creative partnerships in which students and teachers learned collaboratively. Highlighting these experiences, the paper proposes that student participation be understood as co-creation, thus leading to authentic learning experiences for children and adults together and as equals.

Responding to the exceptional circumstances of the global Covid-19 pandemic, Paper 3: ‘*Learning from the COVID-19 lockdown experience: listening to pupils, parents and teachers’* presents survey data collected from leaders, teachers, students and parents in eight schools within one Norwegian municipality during school closures in March 2020. Respondents agreed that more learning had taken place during home schooling due to creative and collaborative learning activities which encouraged more student participation and independence. Leaders at the schools were keen to build on these experiences. Thus, Paper 3 suggests that schools use the pandemic as an opportunity to think critically about existing practices and structures and develop ways in which adults and students can work in partnership for better learning. Together, the papers present a strong case for student participation as an integral and invaluable part of learning and school life for adults and students, both during normal circumstances and during a time of crisis.

Table 1: An overview of the thesis and the contribution of the papers

Overarching Question: *What are the necessary conditions for student participation in schools?*				
Key Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives: *Social Constructionism, Critical Pragmatism*				
Empirical Foundation: • *Mixed data collected from students, teachers and school leaders in seven schools in different areas of Norway (data set A)* • *Mixed data collected from students, teachers, school leaders and parents in eight schools in one municipality in Norway (data set B)*				
	Title	**Focus/Research Questions**	**Key Findings/Argument**	**Contribution to Study**
Paper 1	*Redefining student voice: applying the lens of critical pragmatism.*	Focus: A critical examination of research and practices of student voice (as an aspect of student participation) Redefinition of student voice as a concept and practices using the lens of critical pragmatism.	• An exploration of existing research and practices of student voice, demonstrating and critiquing tensions between the ideals of emancipation and associations with accountability. • Use of critical pragmatism to argue for student voice as integral to critically reflexive practice in schools.	• Traces the development of the concept of student voice • Provides critical perspectives on its current usages in research and practice, thus helping to answer RQ1 and RQ2 • Argues for full integration of student voice into everyday life in school • Argues that student voice can enable teachers to be critically reflexive and to learn together with students, thus answering RQ3 and the overarching question.
Paper 2	*Exploring student participation in Norwegian schools*	Focus: An empirical paper presenting the findings from mixed methods research in seven schools. Research question: What are the current understandings and practices of student participation in Norwegian schools?	• Understandings and practices of student participation in seven schools in Norway collected from students, teachers and school leaders using mixed methods. • Positive experiences of student participation, but also barriers, especially a lack of shared understanding • A topography of student participation which presents four different ways of understanding and practising student participation • Experiences of student participation as co-creation which led to the suggestion that participation is best understood as co-creation and the redefining of students, teachers and leaders as co-creators	• Demonstrates the confusions created in practice by conflicts in the legislative framework, values and the influence of performativity. • Provides findings from empirical data to answer RQ1, 2 and 3. E.g. descriptions of understandings, practices and barriers relating to student participation. Descriptions of leadership practices help to answer RQ3 • The findings provide rich material for the consideration of the overarching question.

Paper 3	Learning from the COVID-19 home-schooling experience: Listening to pupils, parents/carers and teachers.	Focus: Presentation of findings from surveys of school leaders, students, teachers and parents from eight schools in one municipality during home-school in March 2020 (n=.2010) Two research questions: 1. How did pupils, parents/carers and teachers experience home-schooling? 2. What did school leaders plan to change as a result of the home-schooling experience?	• Demonstrates how home-school was positive for many; more creative activities, better assessment and more student participation • Leaders wanted to build on these experiences in the future • Suggests that schools use the pandemic as an opportunity to think critically about existing practices and structures, considering new roles and approaches which potentially lead to better ways of learning	• Opens up new perspectives on the necessary conditions for student participation. • RQ1 is addressed through findings which indicate respondents experienced more student participation than usual, made possible by adults and children working differently • Answers RQ2, e.g. what happens when barriers related to structure and time are removed? • RQ3 is addressed through the responses of school leaders and by reflecting upon the structures and practices which constrain and enable student participation

1.3 Context of the Research

Norway provides a complex and important context in which to explore student participation in schools. It has a long-standing commitment to children's wellbeing and rights, expressed through its comprehensive framework of legislation and allocation of resources. There is a societal expectation that children will be heard and involved and those growing up in Norwegian society have had the opportunity to develop skills in sharing their views with adults. 'Equity, participation and welfare state' (Moos et al., 2013, p. 121) are central features of the education system in Norway, and teachers and students are regarded as nation-builders. Results from the 2016 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) indicate that Norwegian teenagers experience a very high degree of involvement in organised democratic activities such as student councils (Huang et al., 2017).

In 2015 the Norwegian government commissioned an expert committee to investigate and report on what was needed for 'The School of the Future' (Ludvigsen et al., 2015), echoing concerns that a focus on examination results and 'an assembly-line experience' had created schools unfit for purpose (Claxton, 2008, p. 184). The report concluded that schools needed to change to meet the dynamic challenges of future society, stating 'the subjects must be renewed, and school must be developed. This is how new conditions for pupils' learning can be created and how competences for the future may be developed' (Ludvigsen et al, 2015, p. 8). The outcome of this was the updated Norwegian national curriculum, launched in 2018 (Udir, 2018).

Student participation is a central tenet of the updated national curriculum, and the Act of Education (1998, §1-1) states that students have the right to shared responsibility and participation. Whilst it is mentioned numerous times throughout the Core Curriculum (Udir, 2018), associated with democratic education and inclusivity, the centrality of student participation can perhaps be best summed up in the sentence: 'students must participate and assume co-responsibility in the learning environment which they create together with the teachers every day' (ibid., p. 15). At the time of writing, the Act of Education is under review, and in the current White paper (Kunnskapsdepartmentet [Ministry of Education and Research], 2021), student participation is stipulated, connected both to learning and the right to be informed and heard.

Although it could be said that Norway has experienced the climate of global competitiveness and calls for greater efficiency in education (Shirley, 2017) to a lesser degree than other Western countries, concerns about academic results have been heightened in recent years due largely to underperformance in international rankings such as PISA (Trujillo et al., 2021). Gunnulfsen and Møller (2021) are in little doubt that Norwegian education policy and practice are becoming increasingly influenced by international trends of effectiveness and evidence-based practice, writing that 'national expectations emphasize the use of performance data to enhance educational quality' (ibid., p. 98). Imsen et al. (2017, p. 579) describe the erosion of typical Nordic participatory values in schools due to greater 'emphasis on efficiency and excellence, on a clear requirement for results…on more control and on more competition'. The language of performativity is somewhat at odds with the traditions of Norway's democracy and its welfare state, and whilst core values of inclusivity and participation continue to be exalted in the Norwegian national curriculum, these conflicting messages present challenges for schools. As Trujillo et al. (2021, p. 539) explain, 'leaders are expected to paradoxically safeguard equity in their schools, but their work is implicated in the reproduction of inequalities'.

Therefore, despite extensive measures and its child-centred and democratic reputation (MacBeath, 2004, p. 20), the conditions for student participation in Norway require closer and more critical examination. The Children's Ombudsman in Norway reported to the UN (2017, p. 18) that 'there is an ongoing lack of expertise in conversing with children and highlighting the views of children in several arenas including…the education sector'. Findings from Tjønn and Ræder's (2020) research on student participation in assessment activities indicate differing and somewhat lacklustre practice in schools, confirmed by the research published from my Master's study (Jones & Bubb, 2021), which identified a range of challenges reported by teachers, leaders and students relating to both practical matters and concerns about competence and power-sharing. This concurs with data from the obligatory annual national student survey of students in Years 7, 10 and 11, in which students are asked about their participation in school. Among the twelve categories, 'student democracy and participation' is consistently low scoring. These data appear to indicate that the mismatch of values, traditions and ambitions relating to student participation within the Norwegian education system impede schools from creating the necessary conditions for student participation.

Norway, therefore, provides a fascinating and important context in which to explore student participation. Why does student participation remain challenging? There is much to be learned. Legislation is apparently insufficient by itself despite being built on and promoting enduring traditions and societal expectations. Diluted and confused by alternative languages of performance indicators and efficiency, even repurposed as an accountability tool, the intentions of student participation as conveyed through the regulatory framework: social justice, inclusivity, creativity, and ultimately better learning, are challenging for schools to realise. How then are schools able to navigate this complexity and create the necessary structures and approaches for student participation?

Taking a social constructionist standpoint means that I view myself as part of the research context. The national and local contexts do not exist independently from my research, as Ball (2006, p. 3) explains, the world is not ‘waiting patiently and passively to be researched and known’. My experiences as a teacher, school leader, researcher and education consultant are significant because they define how I construct the research and make decisions about contextual relevance. Furthermore, the findings are both constructed through the interactions I have with respondents, as well as being ‘filtered through the…subjectivities that are produced in a socio-political setting at a particular historical time’ (Puig et al., 2008, p. 141). Later in this thesis, the necessity of researcher reflexivity will be explained, however, it seems important to state my position early on. My daily interactions with schools continue to foster a deep personal commitment to schools as spaces which are for learning, not conformity. Adopting a critical standpoint in this thesis, therefore, has been important, especially regarding existing discourses of student voice and participation and school leadership. At the same time, I am conscious of my duty to ensure that my research has practical, albeit potentially transformative, implications for schools.

This thesis uses empirical data collected from Norwegian schools to develop knowledge relevant for a wider audience about existing practices and challenges of student participation. Difficulties with student participation are not confined to Norway, and interest continues to grow; the OECD in a recent publication about the values necessary for shaping a better future (OECD, 2021) draws attention to the importance of reciprocal learning relations between teachers and students. Gaining more insight into current understandings in schools, combined with theoretical explorations, makes it possible to identify what necessary conditions are for student participation and how leaders might lead the development of them.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

This thesis has two sections; the first is the extended summary (or ‘kappa’), the second contains the three papers. The extended summary (Part 1) has seven chapters. It situates the thesis within the field, explains the methodological decisions, presents the key findings and demonstrates how the thesis represents a novel contribution to the field. Chapter 1, the Introduction, has provided the background and context for this study, as well as an overview of the research conducted. Chapter 2, the Conceptual Framework, explores and defines essential concepts. Chapter 3, the Literature Review, locates this study within the fields of student voice, student participation and associated practices. The methods and methodology are presented in Chapter 4 which includes an explanation of ethical considerations. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the key findings of the three papers. Chapter 6 discusses the research questions and demonstrates the contribution of the thesis to the field. Finally Chapter 7 summarises the recommendations of this thesis followed by conclusions.

Chapter 2 Conceptual Framework

This chapter explores theoretical understandings and central concepts in this study. It begins with an exploration of social constructionism as the overarching ontological and epistemological perspective, followed by an explanation of critical pragmatism as a theoretical lens. The chapter proceeds to discuss democracy in terms of schools, participation, co-creation, power and identity. These concepts have been selected because they are central to this thesis and utilised throughout; unpacking these concepts is essential to understanding them individually and to explain their interrelation (Leiulfsrud & Sohlberg, 2019).

2.1 Social Constructionism

Edley (2001, p. 434) described a social constructionist perspective as an important influence in all aspects of social science research, despite having 'ruffled the feathers of contemporary common sense' in both questioning the existence of and confusing the relationship between reality and representations. Postmodern in flavour (Gergen, 2020), but 'rooted in a deeper history' (Lock & Strong, 2010, p. 4) that includes (but is not confined to) pragmatism; social constructionism challenges the existence of objective, value-free knowledge and invites innovative thinking and practice (Gergen, 2020). Adorjan (2019) has argued the case for the continuing relevance of social constructionism in a 'post-truth climate…replete with 'alternative facts' and algorhythmically-driven news feeds on social media' (ibid. p. 160). In societies affected by the prevalence of 'fake news', conspiracy theories and growing mistrust of government authority and experts (Freeman et al., 2022) social constructionism opens up the processes of knowledge construction, allowing for refreshing alternative to truth-seeking.

Social constructionism, not being a 'unitary paradigm' (Edley, 2001, p. 436) might be considered elusive. Burr (2015, p. 2), whilst also recognising the absence of a single definition offers a useful description of social construction as the understanding that 'it is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated'. Burr's use of 'versions' in plural is key, social constructionism is defined by multiplicity and shuns truth as both subjective but also potentially subject to manipulation (Simon & Salter, 2020).

Perhaps Lock and Strong (2010, p. 5) are most helpful in their description of how people are understood in social constructionism:

'*We are not just individually encapsulated information processors, but are 'inherently social beings who go through a remarkable process of becoming encultured adults…we are humans who are constructed through our inherent immersion in a shared experiential world with other people'.*

Whilst interactions between people are important in the constructions of knowledge and understandings, so are the interactions between people and objects, Foucault's (1972, p. 54) description of discourses as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' is another way of understanding social constructionism. As Biesta (2006a, p. 31) explains, 'the meaning of the world is…not located in the things and events themselves, but in the social practices in which things, gestures, sounds, events play a role'. Objects are defined, given significance, and afforded meaning through the experiences and interactions of people (Mead, 1934).

Based on these few definitions of social construction, it is already possible to see how it allows a rethinking of the ways in which schools are organised. For example, what 'truths' about learning do we use in the organisation of schools, in the arrangement of classrooms and the objects within? How are students allowed and encouraged to be 'subjects in their own lives (Biesta, 2022, p. 2) rather than objects ('encapsulated information processors' (Lock & Strong, 2010, p. 5)) in factory-like education systems? Further exploration is, however, required to demonstrate the significance of social constructionism for this thesis and for the studies conducted.

There have been continuing discussions seeking to distinguish between social constructionism and social constructivism (Hyde, 2015). These have not been aided by the sometimes-interchangeable ways in which they have been written about (Burr, 2015). Fundamental to understanding the differences is an appreciation of their roots. Social constructivism, perhaps most readily associated with the work of Piaget (1972), relates to the construction of knowledge, specifically, how one uses experiences to construct knowledge (Hardy & Taylor, 1997). Each new experience helps to build and develop knowledge, suggesting an evolutionary aspect to knowledge creation. In contrast, social constructionism concerns the construction of 'reality' (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Although perhaps 'realities' in plural might be more fitting, Berger and Luckmann made a significant contribution with their theory (ibid.) that the world is created by humans through externalisation (in which things are created), objectivation (in which already existing things are given meaning) and internalisation (in which things become a part of culture and identity). Social constructionism rejects metanarratives (Hyde, 2015) and objectivity, singularity and dualism (Young & Collin, 2004). Crucially, Young and Collin (ibid., p. 377) explain that 'social constructionism does more than say that something is socially constructed: it points to the historical and cultural location of that construction', thus allowing for critical perspectives.

There are, however, issues. Nightingale and Cromby (2002) decry social constructionism's handling of 'things', arguing that there is a tendency to merely be critical of realism and objectivity without providing workable alternatives. Furthermore, there is contention about whether social construction provides an ontological perspective. Walker (2015), for example, claims that social constructionists accept the existence of external reality, but claim that it is only given meaning through interactions. On the other hand, Burr and Dick (2017) explain that social constructionism acknowledges the existence of objects (which is not the same as accepting the existence of reality), but what is more important are the ways in which significance is attached to things and people, especially by means of language. Such disagreements can become unproductive, especially when consensus is unlikely and there are practical issues of research to be solved. Nightingale and Cromby (2002, p. 710) propose that social constructionism is more productive when it attends to the processes which are 'constitutive or formative', and not only focus on the centrality of language, which is, they argue, is dangerously close to relativism. Relativism, however, lacks the productive and creative element of social constructionism. There is an important question about how language is defined. Biesta (2006), for example, in his discussion of Dewey uses an orange to demonstrate the importance of communication (rather than language) in creating meaning; in itself, an orange has no significance. The same example might be used to demonstrate the difference between social constructivism and social constructionism. In the former, humans use their experiences of and interactions with the orange to construct increasingly advanced knowledge of it. For social constructionists, the orange exists as such because humans have constructed it through interactions with each other. Its name, its features and its consequence are potentially fluid, depending on human interactions. It is the processes through which the orange is constructed which are given prevalence, rather than the results and the knowledge ultimately produced, as Gergen (1995, p. 20) explains, social constructionism is 'not so much a foundational theory of knowledge as an anti-foundational dialogue'. This, he argues, (ibid., 2020) is also at the heart of the challenges with social constructionism because this anti-foundationalism is threatening to the structures and organisations which for many form the fabric of society. Social constructionism is even akin to chaos, and the criticality and contextualism that are essential parts of social constructionism can lead to potentially uncomfortable and unprofitable destabilisation.

Despite these difficulties, or perhaps because of them and the possibilities they present, social constructionism continues to gain relevance (Gergen, 2020). In this study, social constructionism is important for several reasons. First, and perhaps most important, it underpins the significance of participation, as the means whereby we co-create our world and ourselves. More specifically, social constructionism emphasises the essentiality of participation for learning; learning occurs not by filling the heads of students but through interactions between those involved in the processes of knowledge creation and meaning making (Dragonas, 2020). It allows for a critical consideration of how schools are socially constructed; especially how members of school communities participate together in their construction and how an awareness of these processes has implications for understanding participation and learning. Furthermore, social constructionism draws attention to concepts; that student participation and learning are constructed and given meaning through interactions between people. Although student participation is mandated for schools in Norway, for example, what participation looks and feels like is formed by the people involved in it, namely the students, teachers and school leaders. This results in diverse understandings and practices within and across schools. Finally, social constructionism is the foundation for the research processes presented in this thesis, explained in Chapter 4.

Social constructionism as essentially focused on the interactions between people, as a 'bottom up' world view, has significant interconnections with pragmatism. These will be explored later in this chapter. First, however, an explanation of the key aspects of pragmatism is necessary.

2.2 Defining Pragmatism

Described by Russill (2016, p. 1) as 'an expanding collection of perspectives' rather than a defined school, pragmatism is complex and shifting (Garrison & Neimann, 2003) and 'diverse and complex' (Gava & Stern, 2016, p. 2). Ormerod (2006) explains that the history of pragmatic thought can be traced to classical times, the word 'pragmatism' itself having both Greek and Latin origins (etymologically related to action or deed), although the establishment of pragmatism as a philosophy is most often attributed to Charles Saunders Peirce (1839-1914). Peirce was inspired by, albeit critical of, Kant (1724-1804) and his use of the word *pragmatisch*. Gava and Stern (2016) whilst recognising the difficulty of identifying a pragmatist lineage, suggest that Kant's most fundamental contribution to pragmatism was 'the thought that we should regard our concepts and representations of objects as dependent on our human standpoint' (ibid., p. 4). Henschen (2013) explains that Kant's descriptions of pragmatism are more limited and less radical than those developed later. For example, Kant believed in some forms of objective validity, for example, regarding the existence of God (Henschen, 2013).

Peirce, together with John Dewey (1859-1952), William James (1842-1910) and George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) are perhaps best known as putting pragmatism on 'the intellectual map' more than a century ago (Ormerod, 2006, p. 892). Pragmatism is associated with a particular period of history of the United States of America, a 'time of enormous ferment' (Bernstein, 1992, p. 230), in which the country was undergoing significant transformation due to industrialisation and urbanisation, underpinned by the impact of mass immigration. In this somewhat bewildering climate, which Zack (2006) describes as being characterised by a rejection of theorising in favour of problem-solving, pragmatism as a philosophy raised important questions about the nature and production of knowledge, encouraging ‘a reflexive account of how theoretical thought and practical activity are understood…grounding intellectual activity in experience’ (Russill, 2013, p. 1). Hansen (2006) views Dewey as a social commentator, suggesting that Dewey wished to draw attention to the consequences of the rapid changes he witnessed. Although Peirce, James, Mead and Dewey have differing emphases in their explanations of pragmatism, they could be said to have a shared commitment to considering beliefs in relation to their practical applications, and a rejection of fundamentalism. Kridel (2010, p. 149) argues that Peirce’s central tenet was ‘clarity of meaning’, whereas Garrison and Neiman (2003) suggest a key emphasis on consequences. James (1907, p. 44) writes that a pragmatist ‘turns away from abstractions…he turns towards concreteness and adequacy’ and Ormerod (2006) argues that Dewey’s most significant contribution has been his advocation of an inquiry-based approach to problem-solving. Although at the time pragmatism was not overwhelmingly well received in Europe, being considered naïve and even populist (ibid., 2006), its later associations with Habermas, Rorty and others and thus its connections with critical thinking and postmodernism have contributed to pragmatism becoming a major intellectual tradition.

James and Dewey were particularly interested in education, both writing extensively about the purpose of schools and the roles of those within them. Garrison and Neiman (2003) explain that James framed learners as pluralistic, emphasising the uniqueness of individuals each making their own contribution. In the context of this study about student participation, these are powerful and highly relevant ideas. In Dewey’s own words (1916/2011, p. 31): ‘the purpose of school education is to insure the continuance of education by organising the powers that insure growth.’ According to Pring (2007), Dewey emphasises processes over outcomes and rejects the one-way transmission of knowledge as alienating. As Dewey (1916/2011, p. 75) states, ‘the act of learning or studying is artificial and ineffective in the degree in which pupils are merely presented with a lesson to be learned’. He wanted children to think, to both experience in an active sense (to do) and to reflect, giving meaning to the experience, rather than being fed information: ‘To fill our heads…is not to think. It is to turn ourselves into a piece of registering apparatus’ (ibid., p. 81). Sharing Biesta’s (2022) disappointment that there continues to be so much focus in education on performance in tests, the durability and continued pertinence of Dewey’s ideas is hard to ignore, especially with reference to student participation.

It is Dewey’s emphasis on inquiry, however, which is of particular interest, especially his conceptualisation of inquiry as active and creative: ‘inquiry…does not merely remove doubt by recurrence to a prior adaptive integration. It institutes new environing conditions that occasion new problems.’ (Dewey, 1938, p. 35). ‘New problems’ is not negative in this sense, rather, it means that inquiry for Dewey is more than the search for solutions, it is a creative act which brings new understandings and questions. In *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938, p. 502), Dewey is clear that in social inquiry (as distinct from scientific inquiry), 'any problematic situation…presents…*alternative* possible ends' [author's italics]. Furthermore, Dewey (ibid., p. 508) calls for 'cross-fertilisation of ideas, and greater scope, variety and flexibility of hypotheses'. This seems to be at odds with perhaps more 'everyday' interpretations of pragmatism as being about problem-solving, which Morgan (2014) views as a misunderstanding of pragmatism as practicality, as 'what works' (ibid.). Certainly these ideas of pragmatism would be incompatible with social constructionism, whereas the propagation of diverse outcomes and new understandings through active and creative inquiry described by Dewey, suggests more commonality. This will be further explored in the next section.

2.3 Social Constructionism and Pragmatism

Morgan (2014, p. 1047) explains that rather than participating in discussions about the nature of reality or truth, 'Dewey and other pragmatists called for a different starting point that was rooted in life itself—a life that was inherently contextual, emotional, and social'. Rorty et al (2004, p. 74) agree, reminding us that people's actions and experiences in relation to each other are at the heart of pragmatist philosophy, 'the pragmatists suggest that you forget about the non-human and just assume all your moral and intellectual responsibilities were to other human beings'. This reading of pragmatism is more closely connected with the key elements of social constructionism: that our world and our understandings of it are constructed through our interactions with each other. Mead (a close colleague of Dewey) exemplifies the connection between social constructionism and pragmatism in his work. Wanting to understand 'how life is 'done' by the people living it' (Lock & Strong, 2010, p. 121), in *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), Mead explored the creation of meaning through social interactions. For Mead, meanings attributed to objects come to exist through 'the social process of experience, by the communication and mutual adjustment of behaviour among the individual organisms which are involved in that process' (1934, p. 78). Note here the importance of experience: our responses to the object, our uses of it and the language we use to describe it bring it into existence. Dewey (1916/2011) further emphasises the importance of experience in constructing meaning: doing something does not bring about meaning by itself, this indicates a dualist separation of mind and body. Rather, meaning is afforded when 'retrospect and outlook' (ibid., p. 78) are combined with the action of doing. Thus, the 'doing' becomes creative (Joas, 1993). Higham (2018, p. 354) in his discussion of Deweyan pragmatism highlights the social aspect of meaning making, framing dialogue as 'an act of making meanings'. Dole (2020, p. 352) has an almost identical definition of social constructionism as: 'the creation of meaning…generated and co-generated through our collaborative and relational dialogues'. Further demonstrating the relationship between social constructionism and pragmatism, Higham (ibid.) argues that the world is built through the processes of dialogue and the meanings thus created, which is at the heart of pragmatism's search 'for new understandings and responses' (ibid., p. 354). This, according to Gergen (2020) aligns with the intentions of social constructionism: to invite curiosity, to explore 'our potentials for co-creating new…ways of life' (ibid., p. 13).

Although a thorough consideration of dialogue is beyond the confines of this study, it merits consideration because of its prevalence in literature on social constructionism and participation. Thinking about the ways in which meanings are developed through the exchange and co-creation of ideas leads almost inevitably to thoughts of dialogue. What happens during the social construction of meanings? As previously explained, dialogue implies action and interaction, joining in rather than passively observing or receiving. For Gadamer (1988), meanings cannot be created by merely expressing an opinion and convincing others of its importance, dialogue involves a process of being changed 'being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were' (ibid., p. 378). Dewey (1916/2011, p. 9), describes communication in the same way: 'it modifies the disposition of both the parties who partake in it', because it involves sharing in 'what another has thought and felt and…has his own attitude modified'. Bakhtin (1981) was also interested in dialogue in which participants are responsive to each other's ideas, although rather than the shared experiences that Dewey (1916/2011) described as an outcome of communication, Bakhtin emphasised process and plurality. Furthermore, for Bakhtin (ibid.), the ways in which we put words on our ideas are formed by influences, not as remote external forces, but as continuing dialogues of which we are also a part. Nothing exists outside of dialogue, according to Bakhtin (ibid.), and participating in dialogue allows us to shape ourselves. Connecting these understandings of dialogue with participation leads to a framing of participation as a fundamentally social activity which is dependent both on our readiness to contribute and our willingness to be changed as a result. Linking the social construction of meaning and knowledge through experience (learning, in other words) with dialogue and participation demonstrates the interdependence of participation and learning. This has potential consequences for the roles and interactions of adults and children in school, explored further in Chapter 3.

The critical element of inquiry is also important in connecting social constructionism with pragmatism. James (1897, p. 177) describes a 'pluralistic, restless universe' which defies a unitary explanation. Dewey (1916/2011, p. 97) agrees on the importance of open-mindedness: 'intellectual growth means constant expansion of horizons…impossible without an active disposition to welcome points of view hitherto alien'. Being open to new and varied ways of thinking, asking questions and expecting to find multiple answers is important in pragmatism. Writing more recently than Dewey and James, Rorty (1996) expounds greater criticality, describing pragmatism's rejection of dualism and explaining the importance of asking not only how, but under what conditions? (ibid. p. 17), thus echoing the overarching question in this thesis. A contextual understanding is equally important in pragmatism and social constructionism, and like pragmatism, social constructionism embraces complexity. Burr (2015, p. 2) reminds us that social constructionism is not merely about describing interactions between people, but also about taking 'a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world'. The concept of critical pragmatism, which compounds the criticality of pragmatism described here and thus aligning even more closely with social constructionism, will now be discussed.

2.4 Understanding Critical Pragmatism

Critical pragmatism can be understood as describing the relationship between critical theory and pragmatism (Kadlec, 2006). It encourages inquiry and a critical approach whilst ensuring that proposed changes are anchored in real experience and specific contexts. According to Kridel (2010, p. 149) critical pragmatism 'requires the validity of meaning as well as clarity'; it emphasises the contextuality of knowledge (Feinberg, 2012) and is sensitive to power (Hoben & Tite, 2008). In this way, critical pragmatism can be said to refute charges that pragmatism is naïve, idealist and lacking insight into the ways in which power affects agency (Hogan, 2016). Harris (1999, p. xi) credits Alain Locke (1885-1954) as 'initiating' critical pragmatism, because he 'insisted on the role of power' (ibid.). According to Harris (1999), Locke was able to transcend the romanticism of Deweyan pragmatism due to his concerns with issues of race and diversity; he had little faith in the form of American democracy which he and fellow African Americans experienced. Fraser (1999) explains that for Locke, the problem of inequality was bound up with power and oppression; rather than simply advocating for an inclusive community founded on assimilation, he recognised the potential need for struggle.

For Kadlec (2006, p. 521), however, despite a 'long history of hostility toward pragmatism on the part of critical theorists' due to its misconception as being only concerned with practical problem-solving, Dewey was in fact, a critical pragmatist. Dewey according to Kadlec (2006) recognised individual experience as an opportunity for critical reflection and learning, and crucially, framed individuality as 'communicative, imaginative and critical' (ibid. p. 539). Hogan (2016) seeks to highlight pragmatism's consideration of power, drawing attention to an example of Dewey's writing on wage labour in which he describes the helplessness of the individual against the 'industrial order' while Midtgarden (2012) draws attention to Dewey's discussion of domination and power both in terms of political systems, but also between individuals. Wolfe (2012, p. 15) goes further by suggesting that Dewey had a ‘tacit’ theory of power because he discussed not only the shaping influences of inequality and societal structures, but ‘that power also operates through inter-actional modes’ (ibid.). Dewey was critical of ‘externally imposed ends’ (1916/2011, p. 61) which inhibit teachers: ‘the intelligence of the teacher is not free’ (ibid.). The excessive external control of education resulted in teachers uncritically delivering curricula by rote and demanding ‘materials which have already been subjected to the perfecting work of mind’ (ibid., p. 109). This brings to mind recent widespread debates in Norway about the use of textbooks in schools; teachers complaining that they were unable to do their job if textbooks were not provided (Ditlefsen & Hamre, 2022). Dewey wanted to reframe, possibly even empower teachers as active members of the educational community, as ‘curriculum makers’ (Pring, 2007, p. 174). Although in *Democracy and Education* (1916/2011), teachers remain somewhat two-dimensional figures, subjected to the weight of external agendas, elsewhere Dewey (1900, p. 110) argues that teachers, by not connecting with their social consciousness, become ‘hopelessly servile’, akin to soldiers ‘awaiting orders’: the only way for teachers to enact change is if they understand themselves, as well as their actions. Whilst not explicitly discussed by him, Dewey’s understanding of constructing and reconstructing society through reconstructing ourselves (Door, 2014) is close to an understanding of positive power and freedom *to*, although it could not be described as a theory of power. Furthermore, Feinberg and Torres (2001) note Dewey’s rather apolitical considerations of education as well as his faith in public education, leading to a limited criticality.

Feinberg (2015, p. 151) states: ‘the distinctive task of critical pragmatism is to bring competing norms to the surface’ by promoting critical reflexivity on, for example, existing value systems. Although the importance of locally gained experiences is recognised (Bourgeois, 2010), Feinberg (ibid.), advises that a questioning approach be taken to experiences and understandings, suggesting that the processes by which common-sense conclusions have been arrived should be interrogated for the influences of power. Paper 1 uses the lens of critical pragmatism to advocate for the reimagining of student voice, emphasising student voice as an essential element in critical reflexivity which can have a profound impact on the development of leading and teaching practices. Critical reflexivity, as described in Paper 1, is an expression of a critically pragmatic understanding since it involves self-examination and inquiry, a critical awareness of systems as well as emphasising action. Different from reflection, reflexivity is not, as Lather (1993, p. 675) explains ‘a matter of looking harder or more closely, but of seeing what frames our seeing’. Feucht et al. (2017) explain that whilst reflection is widely discussed in relation to teachers’ professional development, it is not a catalyst for change, because reflection is limited to considering events and actions without questioning personal epistemological beliefs. Reflexivity is clarified further by Ryan and Bourke

(2013), who describe as teachers examining their own subjective beliefs, as well as the ‘complex interplay of contextual structures’ (ibid. p. 414) in which they operate. In practical terms, reflexivity involves the ‘questioning what we, and others, might be taking for granted—what is being said and not said—and examining the impact this has or might have’ (Cunliffe, 2016, p. 741). There is general agreement in the literature that reflexivity rather than reflection is the key to bringing about change in schools. Warren (2011, p. 143), explains that critical reflexivity enables us to engage in ‘transformative conversation’ whilst Ryan and Bourke (2013, p. 412) argue that reflexivity allows teachers to connect with the ‘intellectuality’ of their profession, offering opportunities for the redefinition of roles and a move beyond reflection as connected simply with raising standards.

It is argued, therefore, that viewing critical reflexivity as a necessary replacement for reflection in schools is a key contribution of a critically pragmatic perspective. In this study, critical pragmatism provides not only a constant reminder of the importance of dialogue between research and practice, but it also highlights the significance of criticality; of an awareness of context, of existing norms and of power, of understanding one’s own identity and part in the co-construction of identities and experiences and in learning. These can be understood as defining features of democracy, which will now be explored.

2.5 Democracy and Schools

Whilst a comprehensive exploration of the concept of democracy is outside the remit of this thesis, it cannot be ignored in research about participation in schools. Emerson (2012) defines democracy as a means of restraining the absolute power of individuals through majority rule. He does, however, point out the diversity of the ways in which majority rule has been framed in different cultures. Mulgan (1968, p. 3) argues that defining democracy is a ‘dead horse’ because the forms of democracy are so diverse. Several decades later, being supportive of the multiplicity of the concept of democracy, Ingham and Wiens (2020) advise researchers to select a definition of democracy. In keeping with the focus of this study, the concept of democracy will be explored as it relates to schools.

For Gutmann (2007, p. 159) democratic education is both about shaping people to ‘share in governing their society’ and also about rejecting ‘claims to exclusive (or ultimate) educational authority’. Plurality, Anderson (2004) argues, is central to democratic education, potentially giving rise to tensions as differing views, beliefs, values and attitudes are expressed. Rather than seeking to neutralise frictions and educate for consensus, however, which raises questions about whose consensus is allowed to dominate, democratic education is about students appreciating and understanding difference; learning how to cope with and learn through potential disagreements.

Ludlow (2004, p. 6) suggests creating 'room for conflict' as both productive and a more authentic form of democracy. Critical thinking expressed through dialogue, questioning and inquiry is essential to democratic education (Brown, 2018). Guy (1999) argues that Alain Locke is an early contributor to this understanding of democratic education, as he sought to challenge the exclusive nature of American democracy in the first part of the twentieth century. Interpreting Locke, Guy (1999, p. 227) writes: 'learning understood simply as the acquisition of skills or the formation of moral habits falls short of the requirements for a society democratically constituted on pluralistic cultural values'. This encapsulates a critical pragmatist consideration of democratic education, eschewing replication in favour of continually questioning and recreating. This is a markedly different framing of democratic education to students rehearsing democracy through, for example, holding elections. Superficial, tokenistic and presenting a rather simplistic majoritarian definition of democracy (Lijphart, 2008), this form of democratic education does little to develop students' critical thinking.

Enslin and White (2003, p. 124) state that in a democratic society, schools are 'expected to be organised and run on democratic lines' in order to prepare students to be educated to take part in democracy, which, they argue, includes 'active participation in the life of the school' (ibid.) as one important aspect. Biesta (2006b, p. 35) writes that 'for Dewey, democracy *is* participation' (author's italics), explaining that Dewey believed that the democratic processes of communication and participation are central to education as a creative, rather than a reproductive, process. As Dewey (1916/2011, p. 16) states, 'the development within the young of the attitudes and dispositions necessary to the continuous and progressive life of a society cannot take place by direct conveyance of beliefs, emotions and knowledge'. For Dewey, it is the active co-creation of shared values and interests which is the hallmark of democratic education. These interests cannot be externally enforced or uniformly applied, nor should they be formed in isolation (ibid.), rather, it is through a rich variety and constantly evolving set of shared interests that democracy is constructed. According to Moses (1999, p. 163) Locke was in agreement with Dewey regarding the processes of democracy, seeing 'intergroup reciprocity' as crucial to progressive reform. The concept of community is relevant here. Feinberg (2018) agrees with Biesta's (2006) interpretation, emphasising Dewey's conceptualisation of the school as a democratic community in which adults and children participate actively as well as Dewey's conviction that the role of the school is in furthering society.

Dewey (1916/2011) sets himself apart from Hegel's (1802-3/1975 p. 115) purposing of education as 'that which makes him a citizen amid a great and good people', rather, seeing education as a 'continuous reconstruction of experience' (Dewey, 1916/2011, p.46) that happens when people interrelate in a community, developing shared interests. For Dewey, schools should not be preparing students to become democratic citizens, they should be participating in democracy whilst *at* school and thus continually contributing to the recreation of democratic society, which connects with ideas explained in the previous section about society being reconstructed through the reconstruction of ourselves. Locke, according to Franke (1999) was less certain than Dewey about communities as arenas for participation. Whilst Locke (1925) was positive to different groups of African Americans finding each other, he wondered about the challenges of developing a collective identity; being aware that it could exclude as well as include (Franke, 1999). Dewey (1916/2011), however, drawing on examples of gangs, also acknowledged that common interests in communities are not universally positive. Similar critical questions about community are also raised by Gergen (2009, p. xxiv), who draws attention to the 'boundaries' of communities as well as the potential dangers of 'communal commitments'.

It would seem, therefore, that democracy, participation and community, albeit interlinked, should not be taken at face value, nor should they be uncritically eulogised as virtuous ideals. Democracy, participation and community do not exist remotely, and viewing them as complex, often difficult, socially constructed processes may be more fitting as we are reminded of our roles in actualising and defining them. They take on form, relevance and meaning through the experiences of the people co-creating them, and those involved have the power and freedom to affect them.

Whilst Gutmann (2007, p. 164) highlights the tensions in democratic schooling between 'individual freedom and civic virtue', Fenstermacher (2006) chooses instead to highlight their interdependency, the agency of students as a fundamental aspect of democratic schooling. Inspired by Dewey, Fenstermacher (ibid.) argues that students need to be positioned as subjects in their education, as autonomous and active individuals who are participating in democratic communities. By relegating students to the status of objects, being moulded for some future purpose, there is a danger of placing 'democracy itself in jeopardy' (Fenstermacher, 2006, p. 109). Biesta (2022) suggests that the subjectification of students is one of the three key purposes of education (together with qualification and socialisation), explaining that 'subject-ness is…the question of *how* I am…how I exist, how I try to lead my life, how I try to respond to and engage with what I encounter' [author's italics] (ibid. p. 52). This, according to Biesta (2022) is at one with the idea of 'freedom to'; rather than using anti-democratic control to define how students participate in their education, they are afforded the opportunities to create their own education. Important here is the understanding that this does not mean that students can do whatever they like, or that the responsibility for their learning is passed to them 'basically turning *themselves* into an object of their own control and management' [author's italics] (Biesta, 2022, p. 53). Instead, students are aware of their actions and interests in relation to themselves and others, how they participate in their own lives and those around them.

Framing democratic schooling and learning as essentially participative, constructed in the everyday interactions of individuals within a community is important for this study. Linking back to Brown's (2018) understanding of democratic education as needing to be fundamentally critical in nature, democratic education is not simply about replicating democratic norms in whatever form agreed upon by a prevailing government. Rather, it is about continually engaging in democratic processes which include creating room for conflicts and using them as learning opportunities (participation-for-learning), the social construction of meaning, shared inquiry, but also critical thinking. The concept of participation will now be discussed more thoroughly.

2.6 Participation

In Chapter 1 and in previous sections of this chapter, connections between participation and learning were presented. In this section the concept and practices of participation will be more extensively explored. Participation cannot easily be described, being a culturally and temporally defined concept. Pitkin and Shumer (2016) view participation as a vital condition to bringing about change, a fundamental human desire. Raising questions about types of participation, however, Parry and Moyser (2016) suggest that voting, for example, although considered a form of participation, is not necessarily experienced as such.

Norway is worthy of particular consideration because according to Gustavsen (2011, p. 471), 'participation in decisions affecting one's work' forms a key part of the 'Nordic Model', along with 'freedom and learning in work' (ibid.) and it is these values which continue to attract global attention, described by Marklund (2016, p. 623) as 'Scandinavia's best brand'. Interest in participation in Norway grew with the development of workers' rights in the twentieth century (Moltu, 2005; Gustavsen, 2011). More than sixty years ago, French, Israel and Ås (1960) studied participation in a Norwegian factory and found that it had different meanings for different people. The authors had been inspired by previous studies elsewhere which indicated that participation had positive effects on children's behaviour, worker productivity and morale (Lewin et al., 1939; Coch & French, 1953). However, they found that the same conclusions were not so readily applicable in Norway, perhaps because of the existing participative traditions in the workplace, or because the understanding of participation was more complex than elsewhere. In short, it seemed to be taken more for granted as part of everyday working life, rather than as a particular productivity measure. Klev and Levin (2020) explain how trust, development and participation became key elements of the foundation of Norwegian working life during the past century, highlighting the importance of democratic processes in creating democratic working conditions. In Norway, participation in the workplace has been closely associated with humanist understandings of democracy rather than specific goals to increase productivity: in short, through involvement and recognition, employees experience meaning and value in their activities, seeing how they contribute to the continual development of the workplace (Klev & Levin, 2020). This links with the ideas of participation as a human right and a need presented in Chapter 1, ‘subject-ness’ (Biesta, 2022) discussed in the previous section, as well as with Dewey’s description of creating shared interests. Dewey understood participation as being aware of and interested in working towards a common aim together with others (Biesta, 2006). Through experiencing collective meaning-making in the workplace and positive ‘power to’, workers feel more human and less like parts of a machine (Morgan, 2006). Context is important, however, and it would seem that participation has been experienced differently away from Norway. For example, Gallie’s (2013) analysis of British workplaces describes participation happening via trade unions or participating in shared profit schemes.

Although ‘consultative participation’ as a more direct form of participation seemed to make some positive difference to workers’ wellbeing, Gallie (ibid.) reports, questions of power are pertinent as opportunities to participate remain at the discretion of the management, thus hindering their impact. Busck, Knudsen and Lind (2010) also raise questions about authentic participation, finding that unless participation was experienced by workers as them having real influence on decision making and/or on the organisation of their work, it appeared to have little impact on the work environment. Furthermore, participation can be threatening when process leaders invite the contributions of others and thereby reinforce power relations (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). Linking with the discussion of participation, democracy and community in the previous section, important here is how participation is understood and experienced. Simply using the word ‘participation’ is insufficient, workers recognise inauthenticity, leading potentially to greater divisions and an erosion of trust. Tokenistic practices should, therefore, be avoided. In 2.7 below, the ways in which participation has been framed as authentic within social constructionist practices will be presented.

2.7 Participation, co-creation and social constructionism

It can be summarised thus far that participation is a complex term. Framed variously as a right, as the means to bring about societal change, as a measure to increase productivity and as essential for learning, participation remains diffuse. As discussed in earlier sections, Dewey views participation as fundamentally creative, and within the field of social constructionist practice in which the relational is fundamental; participation is indistinguishable from co-creation.

Elden & Levin (1991) differentiate between the terms ‘co-generation’ and ‘co-creation’, defining co-creation as moving beyond being consulted in processes towards actually creating the processes. Based on their clarification, co-creation is the concept used in this study, and although linguistically ungainly, the term ‘participation-as-co-creation’ is used in the interests of simplicity. According to Ind & Coates (2013, p. 86), ‘co-creation has become a widely used term to describe…a more participative process where people and organisations together generate and develop meaning’. In the design industry, for example, co-creation is understood as a process in which designers and stakeholders/future users collaborate on the planning of a new product (e.g. Sanders & Stappers, 2008). Ind and Coates (2013), however, place less value on this but more value on the process of creating meaning, specifically through the conversations people have together. This is more akin to the ‘conjoint communicated experience’ described by Dewey (1916/2011, p. 50).

Klev and Levin (2020) in their explanation of organisational development connect co-creation and participation (although they use the term ‘co-generation’ in the English translation of their work) with learning and reflection in a Deweyan sense. An initial joint exploration of the situation is essential, they propose, before proceeding to identify possible ways forward. This mirrors Dewey’s (1916/2011, p. 58) argument that ‘the more adequate our observations, the more varied is the scene of conditions and obstructions…and the more numerous are the alternatives’, as well as his later (1938b) theory of inquiry. Dewey defines the process of inquiry as follows: ‘inquiry is the directed or controlled transformation of an indeterminate situation into a determinately unified one’ (1938, p. 117). First, Dewey (1938) argues that that inquiry is fundamental to being human and is borne out of interactions between humans, inquiry is a part of living in an ‘intimate and decisive way’ (ibid., p. 102): humans have ‘mind’ because of a ‘capacity for inquiry’ (ibid. p. 525). Dewey (1938, p. 35) is clear that inquiry (at least in a non-scientific sense) does not have an end point, because ‘every settlement introduces the conditions of some degree of a new unsettling’; if a final resolution is sought, ‘it ceases to be inquiry’ (ibid.). Furthermore, he explains solutions as possibilities, ‘not an assured present existence’ (1938, p. 114). Inquiry and participation-as-co-creation are seemingly inseparable; it is through investigating our world together that we make sense of it.

For Klev and Levin (2020), the importance of participation-as-co-creation is three-fold. First it is practical, in that it helps to mediate potential opposition to ideas, second, being anchored in democratic processes, it is a vital aspect of working and living in a democratic society, finally, and most significantly, it facilitates the creation of new knowledge. Figure 3 shows Klev and Levin’s model *‘Participatory change as co-generative learning’*, essentially a continual and socially constructed process of developing contextual understandings (defining the problem), taking appropriate action and reflecting together. The inclusion of multiple perspectives is important, indicated by the internal and external participants, as is the continuation of the process. Whilst there is progression towards solution-making in the model, this is situated within reflective processes. Klev and Levin's model is important in this discussion of participation and social constructionism because it illustrates the connections between participation-as-co-creation and knowledge creation through the actions of inquiry, as well as emphasising the continual processual nature of these connections. Finally, it is rooted in the pragmatist tradition. Klev and Levin (2020) write about organisational development, their model is intended as a practical tool for organisations to develop participative ways to bring about change.

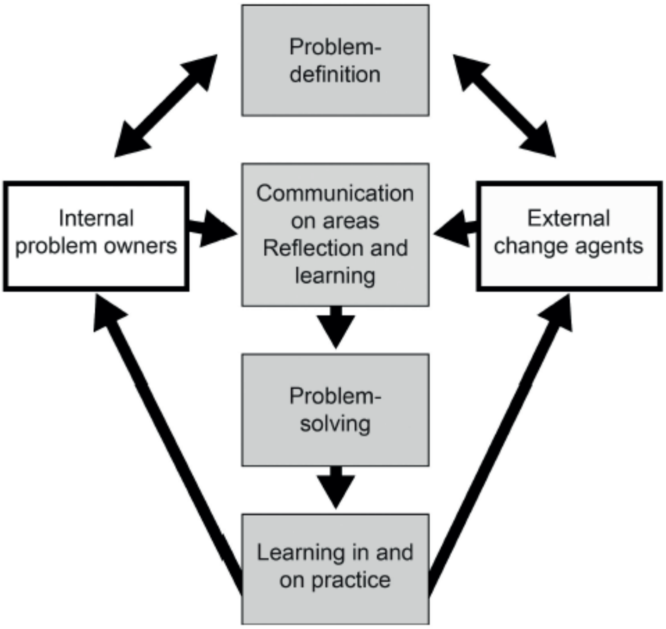

Figure 3: Participatory change as co-generative learning (Klev & Levin, 2020, p. 68)

As previously discussed, within social constructionism, participation is viewed as essentially co-creative: knowledge, meanings, ideas, practices and so on are produced through the interactions of people. Harking back to the connections with critical pragmatism, however, Gergen (2020, p. 5) explains that what is created is not random, being the products of 'the values, assumptions, and ways of life of the time and culture'. Participation-as-co-creation is both contextually situated and also simultaneously creating the context, thus necessitating the ability to 'move within fluidity, complexity, and unpredictability without having the answers beforehand' (Hersted, 2020, p. 237). This is not to be confused with 'making it up as we go along'. Dewey (1916/2011, p. 59) reminds us of the importance of acting with an 'aim in view', however, he explains that aims are experimental, not static. Those participating in a co-creative process have ideas about the purpose and the necessity of the process, as Haslebo (2020) explains, the *why* is already understood, it is the *how* and the *what* that need to be worked on.

From a social constructionist perspective, therefore, participation is inseparable from co-creation as it encapsulates both the relational and creative aspects of participation. Linked closely with critical pragmatism, this understanding of participation-as-co-creation involves active processes of reflexive inquiry founded on contextual cognisance and the appreciation of multiple possibilities and outcomes. In other words, participation-as-co-creation is participation-as-learning. Inherent in this is an awareness of power; how and by what/whom the processes of participation are shaped, as well as how the identities of those involved are constructed through their participation. The significance of these matters will now be further considered.

2.8 Power and Identity

In this study of student participation, power is key. Haugaard and Clegg (2009, p. 1) state that 'the concept of power is absolutely central to any understanding of society'. It is a fascinating and complex concept, having been variously defined and redefined 'as long as there has been interest about the nature of social order' (ibid.). Power as defined by Loomer (1976, p. 6) is 'the strength to exert a shaping and determining influence on the other, whatever or whoever the other might be'. This 'standard theory' (Turner, 2005, p. 1) about the relationship between power and influence suggest the usage of power as a tool for submission, however there are greater complexities.

Power defies the identification of a single explanatory metaphor. Foucault's (1979, p. 92) description of power as 'a multiplicity of force relations' is helpful. To say that power is inherent in the interactions between people means it shapes the interactions as a kind of external force, it is used consciously and subconsciously by those involved to shape the interactions, and it defines the boundaries of the interactions. People have the 'power to' participate in interactions, choosing not to participate is also an exercise of power ('power from'). Within interactions, power enables co-creation, whilst at the same time being co-created through the ways in which we construct and organise society, in our language and in the ways we interact with each other. That is to say, power is productive and also a product.

The reification of power is unhelpful because it indicates that power is a fixed entity, somehow existing separately from us and our social interactions; to be held by some and not others, to be apportioned or otherwise in a 'zero-sum relationship' (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008, p. 176) in which one gives away power whilst another acquires it, to be used to exert influence or to exclude. Taylor and Robinson (2009) question along Foucauldian lines the notion of power as a noun and somehow quantifiable. Clegg and Haugaard (2009, p. 413), agree, explaining that 'power is not comprised of a singular material'. An insistence on the framing power as an entity reinforces a hierarchical conceptualisation of power; continually framing those who have power and those who do not in terms of winners and losers (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008, p. 173). In contrast, the conceptualisation of power as active and processual is more enlightening in attempting to understand participation from a social constructionist standpoint. This incorporates ideas of power as relational (Warren, 2005) and power as both restrictive and creative. Linguistically, however, this is challenging to describe. The verbs 'powering', and 'empowering' are inadequate because they imply the giving of power from one to another thus reinforcing the reification of power. In social constructionism, power is ever-present, being manifest in the relational (Gallagher, 2008) and it is vital to 'acknowledge the inevitability and impact of power relations in making something together' (Simon & Salter, 2020, p. 88). Newbury (2020, p. 550) points to our roles in creating, reinforcing or dismantling structures of power: power is not simply an external force which defines the ways we interrelate, it is made and used by us.

Freire (1970, p. 45) described the learning he saw in 1960s Brazil as oppressive and dehumanising, a process in which 'knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing'. For Freire, the way to address this was to reimagine education as emancipatory, 'as the practice of freedom – as opposed to education as the practice of domination' (ibid., p. 54). This, he argued, could be achieved through the practice of 'co-intentional education' (ibid, p. 43), in which participants permanently co-create knowledge through dialogue, reflection and action. Whilst this sounds almost identical to the idea of participation-as-co-creation, Freire's intention is liberatory and transformational (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 47), potentially leading to a point at which the processes of learning are devoid of power. For Dewey (1916/2011) and Freire (1970), learners' participation within generative and regenerative communities would transform existing power structures, potentially erasing divisions between teachers and learners. Leana (1987, p. 228) agrees, describing participation as emphasising 'power equalisation'. Freire, it would seem, sees power as constrictive and oppressive (power over), rather than constructive (power to), as Göhler (2009, p. 29) describes '*power to* creates autonomy, while…*power over* limits the field of action' [author's italics]. Power can be understood as a restrictive force, preventing everyone from having equal roles in the processes of construction (Dreher, 2016), despite the best of intentions. But power should not only be considered in terms of creating inequalities, and thus the intentions become to somehow remove it. Feinberg (2012) reminds us to question continually the habits, norms and contextual influences of the communities we belong to, aiming not for a power-neutral utopia, but for awareness gained through reflexivity. In short, to continually acknowledge the existence and embeddedness of power as a creative and productive element.

Participation cannot be an event to which individuals are invited to by others, rather, it is the processes of participation and productive power which must be attended to (Tilly, 2009). For Foucault (1982), this is bound up in the understanding of people as subjects, either in the understanding of the word 'subject' as being controlled or as in the opposite of 'object', as being active and conscious. In participation-as-co-creation, individuals are positioned as subjects in the sense of being at the centre of the discourse about participation, indeed, being part of creating the discourse. If participation and power are inseparable, then participation is about having the power to act, although that form of 'power to' may not necessarily be positive (the power to participate in bullying, for example). Biesta (2022) reminds us of our power to make good and bad choices. Subjectification is not without difficulty as we are faced by our power to choose, rather than attributing our actions to other influences. This does not mean ignoring the factors which have shaped us through our interactions with them, nor does it mean that 'anyone can make it if they make the right choices', in the spirit of laissez-faire liberalism. Rather, it means that we accept that we create our sense of self through the ways in which we choose to 'buy-in to the social-discursive resources that constitute our identities' (Lock & Strong, 2010, p. 250). Thus, through a consideration of 'identification' (Leander, 2002) as the continual process in which we construct our identity, we have a greater understanding of our 'power to'.

One's conceptions and perceptions of power derive from identity. According to Turner (2005, p. 6), power is 'an extension of oneself'. Upholding norms can be linked to practises of defending or stabilising identity, (Leander, 2002) for the purpose of 'ontological security' (Kinnvall & Mitzen, 2020). Understood in this way, the manifestations of power are products of our identities, of processes of 'identification' (Leander, 2002). Using the example of student participation in schools helps to explain this. McGregor (2004) suggests that power structures in which teachers are in control and students are passive recipients of instruction have remained virtually unchanged in schools, agreeing with Mayes and Groundwater-Smith (2013, p. 1) who describe 'a certain 'script' and set of 'roles' for students and teachers which are adhered to. A child quoted by Hargreaves (2017, p. 27) pictures their teacher as being "in the middle of the room with a great big remote control and you have to do everything she says or you will get into trouble. It is too simplistic, however, to attribute such experiences to an unequal balance of power in favour of the adults because this explanation is reliant on a reification of power. Power understood as processual, as an expression of identity, however, sheds a different light. Teachers' concerns about losing control are an illustration of the identities they have created for themselves as teachers; for example, being in charge of obedient students, delivering good academic results and maintaining an orderly classroom. Alternatives which appear to threaten this identity, such as student participation, are unthinkable.

The same may be true for students seeking perhaps to conform to cultural ideals of compliance, as Groundwater-Smith (2007, p. 115) asks: ‘what are we to do if students themselves are the conservative forces?’.

The central points to take from this section relate to the understanding of power as processual and productive, and its connections to identity. Power understood as a tool of oppression or exclusion to be somehow neutralised, or as quantifiable leads to feelings of fear and oppression and their ensuing actions. Participation does not mean the giving away or receiving of power, it allows those involved to have ‘power to’ interact, co-create, learn and become subjects in their lives.

2.9 Summary

Chapter 2 sought to explore the concepts most important for this study. It began by presenting social constructionism as a world view which destabilises notions of truth and established structures and practices. Rejecting neutrality in favour of criticality, social constructionism emphasises productive dialogic processes in which meanings are constructed, and significances are attributed.

The chapter explains the compatibility of social constructionism and pragmatism, in particular critical pragmatism. The interrelations between these perspectives can be seen in shared understandings of collective and critical inquiry and reflexivity and in seeking to create new and diverse knowledge and understandings. Here, participation can be understood *as* learning. Links between learning and participation are further highlighted by unpacking ideas of democracy and community in schools: democracy and community, with their attendant tensions and diversities, evolve from those who participate in them as subjects, not objects. In these ways, participation is *for* learning. In the defining of participation through an exploration of its traditions, participation-as-co-creation is proposed as a conceptualisation of authentic participation. For participation to be *as* and *for* learning, it needs to be co-creative, implying potentially new roles for students and adults in schools. Power can be seen as both productive and produced within processes of participation.

In ‘Chapter 3 Literature Review’, educational research which relates to the themes of participation, learning and leading is examined to understand how these concepts are applied in schools and to demonstrate how this study contributes to the field.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

This chapter, together with the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2, provides the background for this study, and enables it to be situated in theoretical landscapes and in relation to existing research. While Chapter 2 discussed key concepts in terms of philosophical and theoretical perspectives, here a selection of relevant literature from the past thirty years, primarily produced in English-speaking and Scandinavian countries is presented. This reflects the availability of published literature as well as contextual relevance. Mindful of a social constructionist perspective of knowledge production, this chapter does not systematically review the literature to expose knowledge gaps, but rather provides a map of the literature to enable an understanding of the field in its current state as well as demonstrating the contribution of this study to existing discourses.

The review contains an exploration of the research relevant to the research questions of this study within the fields of student voice and student participation, incorporating ideals and intentions, practices, challenges and related considerations of school leadership. The aim here is to provide an overview of these areas, enriching the literature reviews already provided in the papers included in this study.

Literature selected for inclusion here primarily comprises peer-reviewed papers and academic books. As previously explained, this study evolves from my Master's research completed in 2017, which provided a grounding in existing literature and therefore a springboard for the identification and selection of literature for this study. A search of the literature was conducted using ProQuest and Google Scholar, and, together with exploring citations and recommendations from researcher colleagues, key texts were identified, processed and incorporated.

The method of review employed is based on an integrative approach (Snyder, 2019), which allows for the incorporation of both empirical and theoretical literature (Hopia et al., 2016). Although this review does not strictly adhere in a methodological sense to the process for integrative reviews developed mainly in the healthcare and human resources research disciplines (see Toronto, 2020; Torraco, 2016), it takes the integrative approach described by Torraco (2016, p. 404) in that 'it reviews, critiques and synthesises representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives are generated'. According to Toronto (2020, p. 4), such an approach enables the researcher to 'provide a more holistic understanding'. Rather than being exhaustive or summative, this review intends to provide an overview of the research landscape and contribute fresh perspectives on the existing literature. Therefore, this review is organised conceptually rather than temporally.

This chapter begins with an exploration of student voice and student participation as concepts, encompassing intentions and ideals. It proceeds to present practices and challenges associated with student voice and student participation, incorporating questions of school leadership. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the positioning of this study and its contributions.

3.1 Exploring the concepts of student voice and student participation

3.1.1 Introducing the concepts

Whilst student voice as a term has been avoided in this study, for reasons explained in the introduction, it is nevertheless essential to explore both student voice and student participation as presented in the literature. Neither concept is unproblematic; and mapping their development is somewhat challenging, because of their overlap. Because researchers in various disciplines use 'participation' and 'student voice' in differing ways, it is difficult to know whether they are talking about the same thing (Messiou et al., 2022). The literature indicates a growing interest in student voice and student participation in the latter half of the twentieth century. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007, p. 3) attribute this to societal interest in democratic principles and the rights of the previously unheard. Despite calls from more conservative elements in the 1970s to 'get the teacher back at the front of the class and the desks in orderly lines' as described by Holland (2008, p. 45), student voice and student participation continued to gain interest as learner-centred education became increasingly more accepted.

Student voice may be seen as a form of participation, in that students use their voices to take part in something. Or, it may be seen as a concept with a life of its own, becoming a 'movement' (Czerniawski & Kidd, 2011, p. xxxv). Cook-Sather (2006, p. 360) suggests that no 'clear and definite conception exists for student voice', and Arnot and Reay (2007, p. 311) describe the concept of student voice as 'problematic'. Cook-Sather (2018, p. 17) describes the increasing complexity of the field of student voice research, demonstrated by an expansion of terminology, the methodological and ethical considerations and the diversification of research informants and contexts. The concept of student participation has been similarly described. Albeit more than twenty years ago, Anderson (1998, p. 572) wrote that 'the language of participation has penetrated educational discourse'. More recently, Graham et al (2018, p. 1029) writes that 'much has now been written about student participation at school'. Despite an apparent proliferation of literature, Thomson and Holdsworth (2003, p. 373) write that participation in schools 'has no fixed meaning'. Neither student voice nor student participation have universal definitions, and the majority of literature comes from the Western world: North America, Australia, New Zealand and Europe. Cook-Sather (2018, p. 17) describes the increasing complexity of the fields as demonstrated by an expansion of terminology, the methodological and ethical considerations and the diversification of research informants and contexts. Although there has been more focus in recent years on the experiences of socially and economically disadvantaged children (e.g. Ng, 2018; Quinn & Owen, 2016) and of children from diverse ethnic backgrounds (e.g. Charteris & Smardon, 2019; Caetano et al., 2020), the range of research deriving from non-Western countries published in international journals is limited. As such, both student voice and student participation remain concepts largely defined by educational practices in advantaged countries.

Discussions of student voice and student participation are further complicated by the incorporation of and overlap with associated terms, for example, ‘student agency’ and ‘student leadership’. Graham et al. (2022) in a recent study of student participation in Australia identify eight different framings of student participation in policy documents. It is difficult to summarise their contributions to discussions of student voice and student participation because they are incorporated in many different ways, furthermore, they are fields in their own right. Whilst an expansive review of these terms is beyond the reach of this study, it is important to acknowledge their presence, and some examples of how they intersect in the literature are thus presented here.

Cook-Sather (2020) argues for the interdependence of student voice and student agency, suggesting voice allows for representation whilst agency is about action. In contrast, Vaughn’s (2020) description of student agency (although almost indistinguishable from definitions of student voice and student participation elsewhere) encompasses student voice as part of the ways in which student agency is socially constructed. Goodman and Eren (2013) use voice and agency interchangeably, whilst Nieminen et al. (2021) differentiate individual agency from social and contextual agency, asserting the importance of relationality. Agency is no less complex a concept when discussed in relation to student participation. Clarke et al. (2016) describe students’ understandings of self-agency as defining how they participated in learning activities, whereas Richardson (2019) defines agency as freedom; the freedom to choose how to participate and in what. This echoes Frost’s (2006) earlier discussion of the centrality of free will in agency. From this brief consideration, it seems that actions themselves as well as the understanding of one’s ability and opportunities to act are central to understanding student agency.

Although very close to student agency in its focus on actions, ‘student leadership’ suggests an intention to emphasise students as equals with adults. It is similarly difficult to define and extrapolate. McGregor (2016) describes interest in student leadership as an extended form of distributed leadership, but a lack of understanding among school leaders of what this might entail in practice. Black et al.’s (2014) examples of student leadership practices in schools are almost identical to descriptions of practices of agency, voice and participation found elsewhere in the literature. Lizzio et al. (2010) have a different understanding of student leadership related to formal and informal roles, arguing for the importance of the actions and perceptions of leadership by the adults in schools, describing ‘flow-on effects’ (ibid., p. 98) on students’ experiences of and motivations for leadership.

As already explained, it is difficult to map interrelationships between student voice, student participation, student agency and student leadership. No clear divisions exist between the concepts; they are variously defined and, at times, used interchangeably in the literature. Based on investigations conducted for the purposes of this review, it would seem that student voice and student participation are more prolific in the literature and are most encompassing. Messiou et al. (2022) in their analysis of policy documents in five countries found student voice and student participation to be most prevalent. Therefore, this review will focus on literature which contains these concepts.

3.1.2 Student voice

Student voice is rooted in an emancipatory discourse in which voice is intended to enable the liberation of previously unheard groups (in this case, children in schools), encapsulated by Soohoo’s (1993, p. 386) description of students as ‘treasures in our very own backyards’. Although received as a novel perspective at the time, understandings of student voice have evolved from viewing students as sources of ‘truth’ yet undiscovered by adults, to aspiring to a more egalitarian relationship between adults and children. Messiou et al. (2022) notice the wide range of practices and understandings which are associated with student voice: ‘the idea of student voice encompasses a range of meanings, from expression of views, either verbally or non-verbally, to active participation in decision-making’.

In an attempt to clarify, Nelson and Charteris (2020) have provided their definition of student voice: ‘educational activity (including research and pedagogy) that operates to include students centrally in educational debate, design and decision-making’. Whilst their summary is useful as a catch-all definition, it could be argued that the use of ‘include’ continues to position the adults as in control. Clarifying further in a later publication, Nelson (2021) delineates between student voice which is elicited by adults and student voice activities which bring teachers and students together in dialogue. Listening, Nelson (ibid.) argues is equally important to using one’s voice, emphasising the ‘major themes of dialogue and consultation’ (Czerniawski, 2012) which have developed in student voice research during the past two decades. Student voice as a practice in schools has been associated with ‘partnership’ between adults and children (Flutter, 2007; Pedder & McIntyre, 2006;

Thompson, 2009; Robinson, 2011), further emphasised through the use of the word ‘consultation’, (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007, p. 7) and supported by Quaglia and Corso (2014, p. xiv), who describe collaboration and students having a role in decision-making.

Nelson and Charteris (2020, p. 227) describe student voice as having a ‘radical social justice intent’ and Fielding (2010) advocates a continuation of the radical element of student voice, as an important counterbalance to the use of student voice as an accountability measure. ‘By inviting students to speak, all student voice activity redresses their traditional exclusion in some way’ (Nelson, 2021, p. 136). Framed in this way, Mayes and Groundwater-Smith (2013, p. 10) see student voice as rupturing ‘the ordinary power relations at work in schools’. Whilst perhaps exciting for some, these associations with radical upheaval are far from problematic. Concerns about the growing power of children have been compounded by the influence of neoliberalism and the consequent consumerisation of children. Questions are raised by Buckingham and Tingstad (2017) about the degree to which children are empowered by this, or in the case of school become merely agents of the state as they report on the quality of their education. Bragg (2007, p. 355) is especially critical of the positioning of children as agents, describes such practices as ‘neoliberal governmentality’, drawing on Foucault’s (1980) thinking about government as being a transferral of power from formal institutions to the individual; rather than students being empowered as a previously downtrodden group, they have been indoctrinated in the ‘dimension of self-subjectification’ (Bragg, 2007, p. 345). Fielding (2010) agrees, drawing attention to the value placed on student voice only when it is useful to achieve adults’ intentions, so-called ‘reductive student voice activity’ (Nelson, 2021, p. 138).

Baker (1999, p. 369) questions the use of the term ‘voice’ itself: ‘there is no agreement to begin with over what this thing called ‘voice’ is’, suggesting that it goes beyond ‘audible articulations’ (ibid, p. 380). James (2007, p. 261) explains that whilst voice has become representative of participation, ‘a symbol of the modern welfare state’s commitment to the values of freedom, democracy and care’, this has led to an indiscriminatory and generalised approach. Spyros (2016, p. 7) agrees, disapproving of an ‘uncritical assumption that voice…reflects truth’. Several (e.g. Orner, 1992, Cook-Sather, 2006 and Spyrou, 2016) have called attention to silences as essential to guarding against the simplification and singularisation of voice.

Pearce & Wood (2016) see the association of student voice with quality as positive, suggesting that the overtly idealistic tone of student voice has interfered with its potential to raise standards in schools. Instead of negatively associating student voice with accountability, researchers have been exploring ways in which students can provide feedback. Van der Scheer et al (2019), for example, presents data from primary school children's feedback, suggesting student voice as a useful alternative to classroom observations in professional development. Rather than teachers receiving comments from one individual, a greater range of perspectives which includes children's experiences can enable deeper reflections on classroom practice. These alternative perspectives raise an important question about the heady notions of student voice dubbed by Moran and Murphy (2012, p. 180) as a 'romantic quest'. Are the radical traditions of student voice too far-removed from the realities of school life? Arguably, the concept of student voice has become too awkward. On the one hand, associations with consumerism lead to students being valued in terms of the quality of feedback they provide for adults. On the other hand, the so-called empowering of students has resulted in adults feeling threatened. This is juxtaposed with the ideals of student voice as enabling active partnerships between students and teachers (MacBeath et al., 2010). Although Nelson (2021) suggests that student voice also includes teachers, the concept itself does little to affirm that, its linguistic limitations potentially leading to the reinforcement of barriers between teachers and students. Inspired by Fielding's (2010, p. 62) suggestion that student voice 'goes beyond consultation to embrace a participatory mode in which young people's voices are part of a more dialogic, reciprocal way of working', this study proposes student *participation* as a more inclusive description of co-creative and reflexive practices which could be part of everyday school life. The literature relating to student participation will now be discussed.

3.1.2. Student Participation

The concept of participation in a wider sense has been discussed in Chapter 2 and therefore this section of the review will focus on literature relating directly to student participation in schools.

Frost and Roberts (2011, p. 67) highlight a defining feature of participation: that it 'implies *voluntary* involvement or engagement', thus differing from ideas of elicitation by adults described by Nelson (2021). Mager and Nowak (2012) explain various ways in which student participation in schools has been constructed, relating to, for example, differences between individuals and groups participating, intentions of democratic training or school improvement, one-off gathering of views or participative processes. These variations, they (ibid.) make comparisons of student participation difficult and call for further research. Graham et al. (2018, p. 1029) agree, describing student participation as 'beset by persistent definitional and conceptual ambiguity'. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007, p. 8) summarise the span of understandings of student participation thus: 'participation as 'bums on seats' and the elaborated, community-orientated ideal'. They (ibid.) propose consultation as a more precise description of the type of participation they advocate for, in which students are actively engaged in talking with their teachers about 'things that matter to them in the classroom and school' (ibid, p. 8). Leek (2019) associates participation in schools with the development of citizenship and involvement in current affairs. This definition is seen as problematic by Hanson (2017, p. 281), who rejects (together with Dewey, 1916/2011) the notion that children are being prepared for a future life because it underemphasises their lived experiences as children.

How might schools make sense of student participation in the light of these considerable difficulties? Models published during the past thirty years have variously attempted to provide definitions of participation and guidance for practice. For the purposes of this review, three well-known models (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; Lodge, 2005) are selected to provide both converging and contrasting presentations of children's participation. Hart's (1992) model and Shier's (2001) model are intended to be applicable to education as well as other contexts, whereas Lodge's (2005) model relates to schools.

Hart's (1992) model of youth participation (Figure 4) is perhaps the most well-known model of children's participation. The model utilises a ladder metaphor to indicate increasing degrees of participation, with the highest degree labelled as 'child-initiated shared decisions with adults'. According to Hart (2008, p. 29), the top rung was meant to signify children 'who think of themselves as members of a larger community that includes adults and other children'. Lower down the ladder, 'non-participation' is described in terms of adult-led practices which may be compliance related, ad hoc or deliberately superficial. Organising the steps in this way suggests a hierarchy of participation, with children taking the lead at the top. This is an oversimplified representation of participation, which seems to position children above adults, rather than emphasising partnership. It is, however, important to note that the model was published by UNICEF following the UNCRC and was intended, according to Hart (2008) to initiate discussion and debate in what was then an underexplored area. Since then, however, the model has been widely used not only to inform but also assess practice. Hart (2008, p. 19) has later written that the model was meant as a 'jumping-off point' for reflections on children's participation rather than as an evaluative tool, providing a framework for adults to use when discussing their work with children's participation. Its early impact and simplicity have resulted in its endurance, inspiring the production of more complex versions.

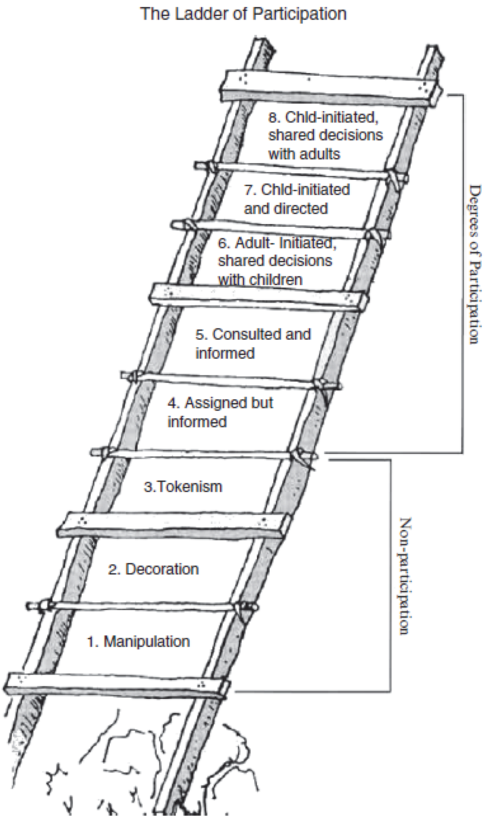
The Ladder of Participation
8. Chld-initiated, shared decisions with adults
7. Chld-initiated and directed
6. Adult- Initiated, shared decisions with children
5. Consulted and informed
4. Assigned but informed
3.Tokenism
2. Decoration
1. Manipulation
Degrees of Participation
Non-participation

Figure 4: The Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1992, p. 8)

One such model inspired by Hart's ladder, is Shier's (2001) 'Pathways to Participation' (Figure 5). Shier (ibid., p. 109) writes that the model could be used as 'a tool for practitioners, helping them to explore different aspects of the participation process'. His model uses five levels of participation, avoiding Hart's descriptions of 'non-participation'. It seeks to differentiate between 'differing degrees of commitment' (ibid., p. 110) throughout the processes of participation. Shier (2001) explains that level 5 'Children share power and responsibility for decision-making' requires that adults are prepared to give up some power in favour of the children. Whilst this aspect of the model is helpful in reminding practitioners of the significance of power in participation, this understanding of power is too simplistic, suggesting power as quantifiable. Likewise, the questions in the model, being apparently addressed to the adults reading it, continue to position adults as controlling the process of participation. This seems counterintuitive to the intentions of participation. Finally, the instrumentalist form of the model and rather accusatory tone of the questions renders it unconstructive when attempting to appreciate the complexities of participation; by reducing student participation to a series of procedures there is a danger that intentions of democracy and inclusivity are lost.

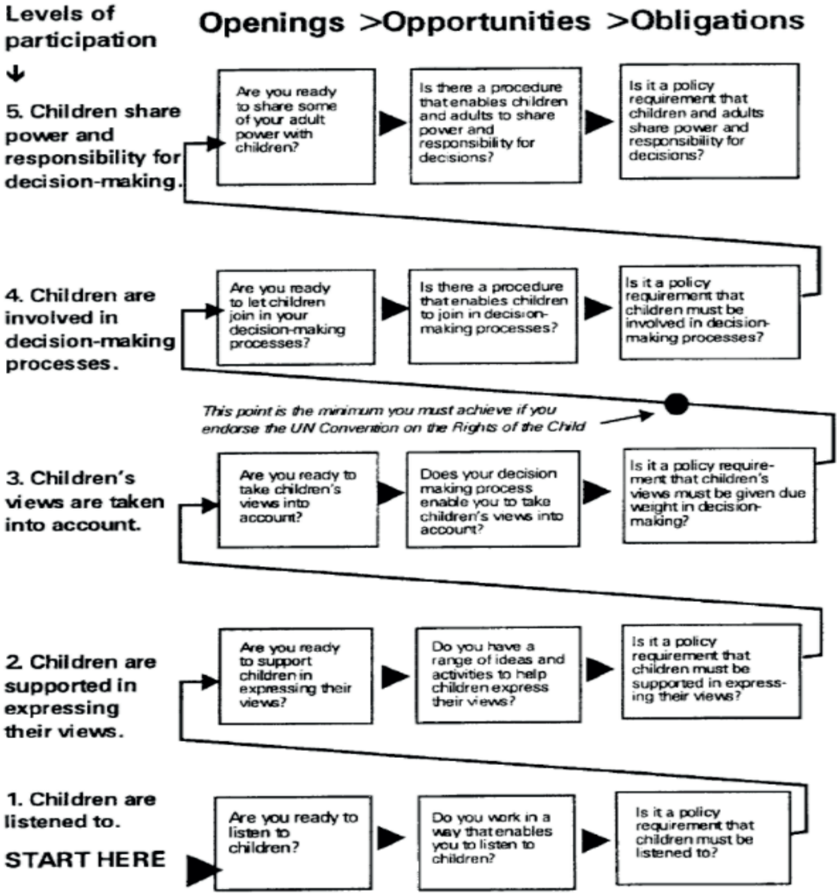
Levels of participation
Openings >Opportunities >Obligations
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.
Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?
Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?
Is it a policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?
4. Children are involved in decision-making processes.
Are you ready to let children join in your decision-making processes?
Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decision-making processes?
Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decision-making processes?
This point is the minimum you must achieve if you endorse the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
3. Children's views are taken into account.
Are you ready to take children's views into account?
Does your decision making process enable you to take children's views into account?
Is it a policy requirement that children's views must be given due weight in decision-making?
2. Children are supported in expressing their views.
Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?
Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?
Is it a policy requirement that children must be supported in expressing their views?
1. Children are listened to.
START HERE
Are you ready to listen to children?
Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?
Is it a policy requirement that children must be listened to?

Figure 5: Pathways to Participation (Shier, 2001, p. 111)

Lodge's (2005) lesser-known model (Figure 6) 'Approaches to student involvement in school improvement' has been included in this review for several reasons. First, it is worth mentioning that despite having 'involvement' in the title of the model, Lodge (ibid., p. 125) states that the purpose of the paper presenting the model is to 'extend the discussion about active participation of young people', proposing dialogic participation as the version most likely to improve schools. In the pursuit of this aim, Lodge (ibid.) creates a 'typology of approaches' (ibid. p. 129), which maps the differences in the ways in which student participation is treated in the literature in terms of its uses in school improvement work. The term school improvement is challenging: Lodge (ibid., p. 131) differentiates between school improvement for increased efficiency ('functional') and for 'human development' (ibid.). Lodge's explanation of the latter is somewhat limited and perhaps best understood in terms of the emphasis attributed to relations in the construction of knowledge and meaning; school improvement as creating opportunities for dialogic communication and therefore learning. Although some years have passed since the paper's publication, tensions indicated on the two axes (passivity and activity as description of children's roles; functionality and community as the purposes of school improvement) continue to have relevance. Furthermore, the identification of four 'ideal types' (Lodge, 2005, p. 132) of student participation, still recognisable in research and practice, provided stimulus for the topography developed as part of this study (see Chapter 6). Aligned with Nelson's (2021) distinction between the extraction of students' views by adults and more authentic partnerships discussed earlier, the two top quadrants in Lodge's model position students as instruments of quality control and sources of information. The two bottom quadrants are more active forms of participation. In the bottom left, 'compliance and control' can relate to Bragg's (2007) concerns about students becoming agents of the state and suggests that students actively participate in school improvement efforts which are intended to increase efficiency. The bottom right quadrant labelled 'dialogic' is presented as the form of participation which enables schools to improve as learning communities. This, Lodge (2005) argues, is an antidote to the prevalence of performativity because participation understood as dialogic brings about learning, echoing points made in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Lodge (ibid., p. 134) defines dialogue 'as the building of shared narrative', making explicit connections between dialogue, social meaning-making and learning. Dewey is not mentioned in Lodge's paper, however, there are similarities with Dewey's (1916/2011) description of communication as developing shared experiences, although whereas for Dewey participation and education are symbiotic, Lodge (2005) maintains a more limited perspective that learning is the outcome of dialogic participation. Nevertheless, the model does enable the consideration of differing understandings and practices of student participation, and although Lodge (ibid.) is somewhat unclear about the uses of the model, it has provided inspiration for the model developed as part of this study.

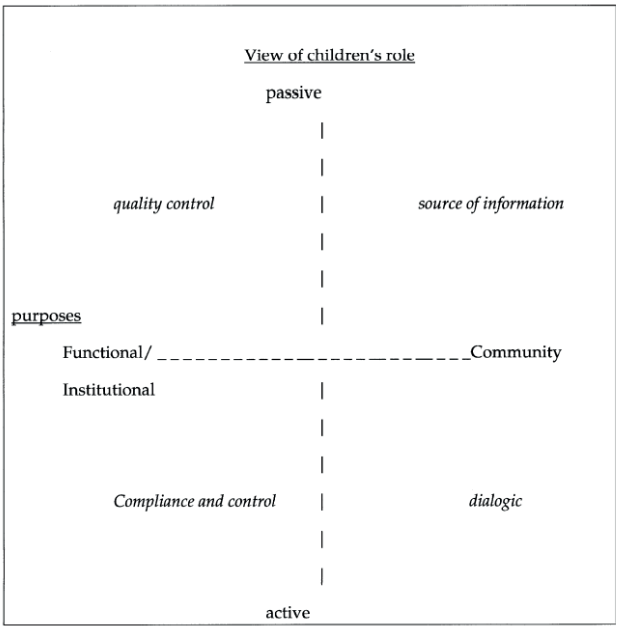

Figure 6: Approaches to student involvement in school improvement (Lodge, 2005, p. 131)

To enable a fuller exploration of the practices outlined in the three models presented here, the review now examines literature concerning practices and challenges related to student voice and student participation.

3.2 Student Voice and Student Participation: Practices and Challenges

It is important to investigate what has been written thus far in relation to the overarching question: what are the necessary conditions for student participation in schools? For reasons already explained, literature relating to both student voice and student participation is included and in the interests of clarity the term 'student voice/participation' will be used in this section. Rather than providing an exhaustive account this section visits significant themes in the literature which are most pertinent. It is divided into two subsections: challenges which hinder student voice/student participation and practices which facilitate student voice/student participation. Research relating to the actions of school leaders will be incorporated throughout, being both an important theme in the literature and in this study. Table 2 presents a summary of key points from this section and examples of where they can be found in the literature. The selection of references given here is by no means comprehensive, however, it includes many of the most active student voice/participation researchers from the past two decades.

Table 2: An overview of practices from the literature which facilitate and hinder student voice/participation

Practices which facilitate student voice/student participation	Practices which hinder student voice/student participation
A culture of dialogue, inclusivity, openness and trust in schools *e.g. Flynn, 2014; Pedder & McIntyre, 2006; MacBeath et al., 2010; Lyons et al., 2020*	Adult resistance/discomfort/reluctance *e.g. Black & Mayes, 2020; Susinos & Haya, 2014; Bragg, 2007; Batchelor, 2006*
Schools framing student voice/participation as partnership between students and adults (including redefining roles) *e.g. Mannion, 2007; Mitra, 2008; Rudduck, 2007; Robinson, 2014, Demetriou & Wilson, 2010*	Schools using student voice/participation as a control mechanism over teachers, either specifically or as part of wider emphases on effectiveness *e.g. Nelson & Charteris, 2020; Brown et al., 2019; Keddie, 2015; Mitra, 2003*
Schools which frame student voice/participation as part of everyday practice *e.g. Bostedt & Eriksson, 2020; Bron et al., 2018, Nelson, 2018, Fielding, 2011*	Student voice/participation opportunities in schools which feel tokenistic and inauthentic *e.g. Groundwater-Smith, 2009; Fleming, 2015; Charteris & Smardon, 2019, Hall, 2019*
School leaders who support and encourage teachers in student voice/participation practices *e.g. Lewis & Burman, 2008; Lac & Mansfield, 2018; Mansfield et al., 2018; Smyth, 2006*	Perceptions of organisational barriers such as time, space and pressures to deliver the curriculum *e.g. Rudduck, 2007; Jones & Bubb, 2021; Sussman, 2015; Le Fevre, 2014*
School leaders who see and model leading as a shared activity with teachers and students *e.g. MacBeath et al., 2010; Waterhouse & Møller, 2009; Brasof, 2015, Coffey & Lavery, 2018*	Existing and persisting hierarchical structures and practices in schools *e.g. Frost, 2006; Burke & Könings, 2016; Bourke & Loveridge, 2018; Moran & Murphy, 2012*
Legislative and regulatory frameworks which require/expect student voice/participation *e.g.* Lundy, 2007*;* Lundy et al., 2013*;* Fleming, 2015*;* Rudduck & Flutter, 2000	

3.2.1 Practices which hinder student voice/participation

Robinson (2014), acknowledges the significance of the UNCRC in encouraging student voice/participation work but describes practice as varied, limited by the 'underlying beliefs' (ibid., p. 81) of adults about children. Brown et al (2019) describe the idealistic, divisive and threatening nature and experiences of student voice, pointing to a degree of scepticism among teachers and school leaders. James (2007, p. 263) agrees, noting that children's perspectives often present 'adults with provocative accounts that challenge many of the taken-for-granted assumptions about what children do or think'.

In Norway and elsewhere, some adults feel that children have been given too much power, thus eroding the position of teachers. This perceived threat may serve to weaken teacher-student relationships and hinder the development of those positive partnerships described above. The concept of a child as 'negotiator' (Thuen, 2008) is presented by Mikalsen, Nes and Dobson (2013) as a force to be reckoned with, the child being accustomed to exerting influence over parents and teachers alike. They (ibid.) report that teachers struggle with children having too many opinions and expectations - one teacher described a classroom full of small princes and princesses. This is recognised by Wyness (2013) as the marginalisation and restriction of adults, seen as counterproductive to the democratic intentions of student voice.

Although Batchelor (2006) is writing about higher education contexts, she discusses the concept of vulnerability in student voice/participation and suggests that vulnerability implies both fear of exposure and openness to new ideas. Teachers who feel overwhelmed by classroom management issues may find student voice/participation challenging because faced with high-risk situations they feel unable to be receptive to students' suggestions. For example, Lundy (2007) relays children's experiences of being shouted at by their teachers. Black and Mayes (2020) give examples of teachers being frustrated by perceived bad behaviour of students and thus reluctant to 'allow' them to have more say or collaborate with them: 'where student voice brings creativity and satisfaction to some teachers' practice, it may bring others blame, shame and anxiety' (Black & Mayes, 2020, p. 1073). A teacher who feels that children's personal traits predefine how they participate can feel powerless to make changes (Susinos and Haya, 2014). Another teacher (ibid.) recognises that children's self-expression is being stifled, but that it is difficult to avoid taking too much control.

Pring (2007, p. 115) agrees that schools *should* be communities 'par excellence' but posits that their rigid 'hierarchical and autocratic' structures get in the way of cooperation between teachers and students. Ignoring these entrenched histories and traditions of hierarchy, argue Burke and Königs

(2016) dooms any change attempts to failure. Bottery (2003) notes discordance between the ideals of learning communities and a climate of performativity in education, as well as being critical to the misappropriation of learning communities by governments to raise results and meet targets. Brough (2012) explains that an emphasis on responsibility for students' attainment makes it extremely difficult to have equal partnerships with students, however much they may agree with the idea in principle. The 'teacher-proofing' of classrooms in a quest for standardisation (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015) has led to teachers being required to teach to scripts, leaving little room for students to shape their learning. This potentially hinders student voice/participation work in several ways. First, teachers fear that improvisation and dynamic learning activities might get in the way of achieving good test results; they may also feel their professional identity is put into doubt, compounding concerns about diluting their status by partnering with students.

A focus on efficiently getting through curricula results in teachers feeling time-pressured and student voice/participation can feel like an unnecessary diversion. At the same time, compliance with requirements for student voice/participation and the management of quality lead to schools designing inauthentic 'tokenistic' practices (Keddie, 2015). Bragg (Bragg, 2007) quotes a teacher who felt compelled to join a student voice/participation project to improve her reputation among students, 'as a PR exercise' (ibid. p. 351). Furthermore, Bragg (ibid.) draws attention to how school leaders pay lip-service by coupling projects with increasing student attainment, rather than having genuine intentions of community-building. Nelson and Charteris (2020) concur, arguing that the 'co-option of terms such as choice and empowerment' has resulted in 'micro-politics of little fears' (Ball, 2016, p. 1053) in which teachers receive feedback from teachers with the expectation of improving teaching quality. The literature indicates a range of competing agendas with which schools contend. Traditional structures and identities combined with pressures of efficiency and compliance contribute to teachers feeling insecure and incompetent. At the same time they feel compelled to be part of student voice/participation activities so requirements can be met, and boxes ticked. Taken together, these hindrances result in student voice/participation practices being confusing, limited and superficial. How teachers view their roles and responsibilities is key, as well as their emotional experiences of student voice/participation: feelings of marginalisation and threat are not conducive to co-creative partnerships. What is needed to tackle these difficulties? In the next section literature which suggests practices that facilitate student voice/participation will be presented.

3.2.2 Practices that facilitate student voice/participation

Lundy (2007) underlines the importance of the UNCRC (1989) as a legal right and obligation, potentially 'having transformative potential' (ibid., p. 940) when understood as more than a pedagogical guideline. In a report for UNICEF UK on the implementation of the UNCRC in twelve countries, Lundy et al (2012) found that incorporating the UNCRC into domestic law (as Norway did in 2003) was important because it sent a strong message ‘about the status of children and children’s rights’ (ibid., p. 4). Alone, however, Lundy et al. (ibid.) reported that this to be insufficient, needing to be combined with public opinion, pressure groups and regular follow up reporting.

Although in the previous section, the formalisation of student voice/participation in education policy documents was described as having negative effects in practice, Fleming (2015) explains how, in Ireland, changes in education legislation and requirements for internal and external school evaluations have been a ‘catalyst for student voice’ (ibid., p. 223), obliging teachers to adopt more dialogic and inclusive teaching strategies. Rudduck and Flutter (2000) agree, arguing that whilst the regulatory impetus provided by the UNCRC provides a vital background, the school improvement agenda has been crucial in moving student voice/participation from being a right and an ideal to making it a central pillar of learning. The negative consequences of this have been discussed in the previous section, in terms of compliance, performativity and tokenism, however, Rudduck and Flutter (ibid.) point to the importance of schools being compelled to include students in gaining knowledge of the characteristics of good schools and the processes of developing them.

For schools to translate the values espoused in regulations and requirements (Bostedt & Eriksson, 2020) into practice and utilise them as a platform on which to develop student voice/participation, the literature suggests a range of conditions. MacBeath et al. (2010, p. 3) suggest the importance of a ‘dialogic climate’ which is characterised by ‘informal interaction’ between teachers and students. The significance of culture recurs in the literature. Pearce and Wood (2016, p. 126) describe the necessity of ‘an ethos of care and compassion’, whilst Pedder and McIntyre (2006, p. 156) identify ‘norms of reciprocity and trust’ as essential for student voice/participation. Lyons et al (2020) propose how organisational structures for student voice/participation can be arranged to support the development of participatory cultures in schools, including students in various committees, for example and Robinson (2016) points to the importance of schools agreeing to promote respectful forms of communication between all. These seem to be important to mitigate the negative and difficult experiences and feelings of teachers and students described above. Seeking to acknowledge and address the challenges of partnership between adults and students, framed within expectations of mutual esteem is important. It would be interesting for schools to critically reflect upon the norms and arenas for communication understood as dialogue. In what ways and where do adults and students talk together, for example? All too often communication can be one-way; being informed is not the same as participating. Emphasised here is the active involvement of all. Leaders cannot change cultures on their own, cultures are co-created and co-maintained.

Robinson (2016, p. 90) thinks of student voice/participation as adults and students being 'active partners of change', suggesting that for this to be realised, there needs to be a 'reconceptualisation of adult-pupil relationships' (ibid.) and that schools need to create varied opportunities for everyone to participate. Demetriou and Wilson (2010) see partnerships as essential for sustaining teachers in the profession. In contrast to teachers feeling threatened and undermined by student voice/participation, Demetriou and Wilson (ibid.) find that partnerships are mutually beneficial because they improve relationships and offer enriching learning opportunities for teachers as well as students. Mannion (2007) explains that through framing student voice/participation as a partnership, adults' essential role is recognised and there is an emphasis on *shared* meaning-making. Listening to children alone, he argues, is one-sided, perhaps leading to adults feeling marginalised. Taking this further, Fielding (2011) advocates for student voice/participation as integral to creating inclusive schools which encourage shared responsibility. This involves an understanding of student voice/participation as incorporated into 'the here-and-now of daily encounter' (ibid., p. 66), as part of 'a process of mutual learning that is dialogic and emergent in its processes, dispositions and intentions'. Bron et al (2018) support this, arguing that student voice/participation should focus on teaching and learning in classrooms, however, they also point to the necessity of flexibility in the curriculum to allow for teachers and students to co-create learning. Instead of student voice/participation reinforcing or creating situations in which teachers worry about their professional roles being eroded by students taking charge, when teachers actively engage in partnerships with students and experience that their participation is equally sought and valued in schools then there are new opportunities for learning.

The conditions for student voice/participation identified in the literature have thus far been concerned with the actions of teachers and students and the organisational structure of schools. However, as Flynn (2014, p. 170) explains, 'taking the opportunity to promote a culture of listening and caring is not possible without the support and vision of the school leader and significant personnel'. The literature is clear: school leaders are essential in the active fostering of student voice/participation practices. Lac and Cumings Mansfield (2018, p. 51) believe that this begins with the realisation of values in a school's ethos, stating that 'educational leaders cannot purport democratic principles in the mission statement of their schools while also excising students and families from the decision-making process'. They (ibid.) argue for school leaders to integrate student voice/participation into everyday school life, normalising participative processes in all areas of the school. If genuinely trusting and reciprocal environments and partnerships are to be created, then there is no room for superficiality. For MacBeath et al. (2010, p. 5) this involves coherence on the part of school leaders, which Brasof (2015) agrees with, emphasising the importance of school leaders continually modelling the values and behaviour they wish to see in their schools. In a later publication, Cumings Mansfield et al. (2018) emphasise this idea, proposing that school leaders need to adopt a critical approach to their own practices, identifying and adjusting actions which reproduce and reinforce marginalisation. This may involve rearranging structures to allow for a 'multiplicity of voices' (Robinson, 2016), facilitating the inclusion of students in decision-making processes at an organisational level, thus enabling them to use their unique perspectives to developing learning, but also being willing to take risks in questioning established routines and practices (Robinson, 2014). For Lac & Cumings Mansfield (2018, p. 46) this involves 'recognising students as potential co-constructors of knowledge', suggesting that partnerships between students and school leaders as well as teachers need to develop.

In the previous section, teachers' fears of relinquishing control and feelings of vulnerability were presented as barriers to student voice/participation. Black and Mayes (2020) raise the question of how leaders might attend to the emotional challenges of student voice/participation, recognising the need for teachers to be supported. Robinson (2014) agrees, advising leaders to have patience and a supportive approach, which MacBeath et al. (2010) proposes incorporates 'professional development that supports the growth of a more participative approach'. Smyth (2006) advises leaders to promote cultures of mutual respect and avoid exposing staff to 'fears of retribution' (ibid., p. 282), thus emulating the intended classroom cultures. Interestingly, whilst there is general consensus in the literature that student voice and student participation are challenging concepts, there seems to be less focus on this as a barrier to practice, nor is developing a shared understanding of what student voice/participation prevalent in the literature as an important leadership activity. Sharing leadership is, however, an important theme which deserves closer attention in the next section.

3.3 Leading for participation: the significance of learning communities, participative leadership and distributive leadership

Coleman (2011, p. 310) asserts that 'the move towards increased collaborative working represents the single most significant change for schools in the 21st century' and the expectation that schools develop and maintain Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) has become a global trend (Hargreaves, 2007), not least in Norway where it is a requirement of the national curriculum. The significance of PLCs in schools was arguably first described by Little (1982) who identified collegiality as an important feature of successful schools, and then expounded upon by Rosenholtz et al (1986) in their study of professional development in 78 American schools. Finding that successful and productive schools were those in which teachers learned together and leaders were 'able to share their authority' (ibid, p. 102) has been the root of a powerful discourse on shared leadership. The Deweyan ideal of schools as communities where inquiry and communication are essential to learning underpins much of contemporary conceptualisations of schools as learning communities (Furman & Starratt, 2002). Although *professional* learning community is the term which has perhaps received the most attention in educational research in the past three decades, for Busher (2005) the incorporation of the word 'professional' implies restrictive exclusivity which he deems inappropriate. Brasof (2015, p. 32) questions the logic of professional learning communities, and counters that whilst they may well promote a 'bottom-up approach…tapping into the expertise of all' and thus indicate inclusivity and openness, 'the bottom stops with the professionals…excluding students as meaningful participants'. Rather, *learning community* implies the involvement of students, parents and other stakeholders. For Pring (2007) this inclusivity is an essential aspect of the definition of community. Mitchell and Sackney (2011, p. 5) agree: 'learning…is enriched and extended by the interactions and discourse that take place among the people in the building…teachers and students are connected, rather than isolated'.

If the conceptualisation of schools as communities offers opportunities for the participation of students and teachers as partners, how can school leaders lead schools as communities? Participatory leadership and distributed leadership are two potential answers offered in the literature, and both have become significant trends in recent years.

Sleegers et al. (2013) remark on the prevalence of participative leadership in research on PLCs, however, although Bush and Glover (2014) in their review of leadership in schools mention participatory approaches, participatory leadership is not a term often used in research on school leadership. It is, however, widely discussed in leadership research outside of education (e.g. Rogiest et al., 2018). Argyris (1955) defines participative approaches to leadership and management as being about involving everyone within the organisation in decision making processes. Somech (2002, p. 342), however, argues it is more 'multidimensional': whilst decision-making is central, the context, structures and perceived purpose of participation are also important. Rogiest et al (2018) find that participative leadership depends largely on the ways in which members of an organisation perceive their leaders, so it is possible that people will resist participation. For example, Møller (2009) describes how teachers 'reinforce the formal leader as a symbolic figure', despite efforts by the principal to share leadership. Murray and Clark (2013) in their paper about leadership in early years education define participatory leadership as 'co-construction of learning through active involvement, dialogue and shared knowledge' (ibid., p. 292). Participatory leadership, they argue, is different from distributed leadership because it is focused less on the actions of those with formal leadership positions, and more on the interrelations of everyone in the organisation.

Bush and Ng (2019, p. 281) state that ‘distributed leadership has become the most fashionable leadership model in the twenty-first century’; there is little disagreement that it has become a significant trend, especially in schools. Defined by Harris (2013a, p. 12) as ‘leadership that is shared within, between and across organizations’, according to Crawford (2012), distributed leadership is part of a general movement away from the attributes of individual leadership towards participatory approaches in which interactions are emphasised. Highlighting shared inquiry and collective learning as important aspects of distributed leadership, DeMatthews (2014, p. 184) argues that distributed leadership increases an ‘organisation’s capacity to learn, problem-solve, and take ownership’. Harris and Jones (2010) highlight the shared emphasis on teacher collaboration and teachers leading their own learning. They (ibid., p. 174) suggest that ‘distributed leadership provides the infrastructure that holds the community together’.

Whilst the lines are clearly blurred between participatory leadership and distributed leadership, there are, however, two key differences. The first is that unlike distributive practices, participation can be conceptualised as a right, a value and an obligation (Koopman & Wierdsma, 1998). Understood in this way, involving people in their own work and organisation is fundamentally humanist. The second difference relates to power: Lumby (2013) writes that the act of distribution implies that someone (i.e. the leader) is handing out the power, as Leana (1987) explains, it is the formal relinquishing of power which makes distributed leadership more about reassigning authority whereas participatory leadership is less about handing out leadership roles and more about building a ‘participatory structure that is inclusive of…intersubjective meanings’ (Raelin, 2012, p. 18). When leading is viewed in this way, however, the term participatory *leadership* can be called into question because seemingly its associated practices have little to do with leadership as focused on the ‘bounded being’ (Gergen, 2009, p. 331) or as a noun. Perhaps therefore, the concepts of participative leadership and distributed leadership are too ‘leader-centric’ (Niesche, 2018) to be the answer to creating conditions for student participation. Arguably, if a ‘a space of participation’ (Higham & Booth, 2018) is to be opened, then a singular leadership style may be inadequate. Looking back at the findings from the literature on leading for student participation, which emphasise the importance of the relational, the dialogic and the fostering of partnerships between all, the theoretical intersection between social constructionism and critical pragmatism is brought to mind. Gergen and Gergen (2007, p. 464) demonstrate how social constructionism presents an understanding of leading as relational: everything emerges from processes ‘of coordination’ which are ‘not possessions of the individual, but of people acting together’. Cunliffe (2009, p. 95) agrees that leading is relational, inviting leaders to see themselves as ‘a-self-in-relation-to-others’ and highlighting reflexivity as a means to greater responsiveness and critical awareness. Leading schools as participative communities in which all are subjects, creating meaning and thus learning through co-creation implies a need to frame leading as fluid, complex and unpredictable (Hersted, 2020). Rather than working within a set of criteria associated with a leadership style or attempting to implement student participation through a set of measures, school leaders need to organise structures and spaces which allow for ‘polyvocality’ (Hersted, 2020, p. 236) and model inclusivity, critical reflexivity and inquiry.

3.4 Leading for Reflexivity

In Chapter 2, the centrality of reflexivity in critical pragmatism was explained. Reflexivity, Bradbury (2020) argues, enables self-understanding by encouraging the investigation of what shapes us, thus allowing for greater understanding of how and why we act as we do. Reflexivity is at the heart of inquiry, as Bradbury (2020, p. 51) explains: ‘reflexivity in inquiry is a central practice of the self-development necessary…for transformation’. The questioning of self-beliefs, actions and a critical approach to the structures in which they reside is therefore essential to the development of teachers’ practice. Belden-Charles et al. (2020, p. 276) highlight the importance of ‘collaborative reflexivity’, in which groups ‘explore a situation and how they may have collectively contributed to that situation’ (ibid.). By exploring experiences together, teachers are able to notice how practices compare with intentions, surfacing disparities and making changes. Supporting and encouraging this kind of analysis, however, is not easy, and Bradbury (ibid.) suggests that ‘we may feel our sense of dissonance increase and sense of agency decrease’ as we unpack the taken for granted and invite the unpredictable. However, it is exactly this complexity that allows for co-creative and participative learning. How, then, can school leaders create opportunities for reflexive practice? Although reflexivity in research is widely written about, and reflexivity in the education of teachers and school leaders is also well established, reflexivity for school leaders is seemingly discussed less. The suggestions presented here for how leaders might be reflexive and encourage reflexiveness in others mainly come from literature relating to leadership practices in other fields. Cunliffe (e.g. 2004; 2009; 2016) has been responsible for a continued focus on reflexivity in leadership, emphasising critical reflexivity and defining it as ‘questioning what we, and others, might be taking for granted—what is being said and not said—and examining the impact this has or might have’ (2016, p. 741). Cunliffe (2016) proceeds to suggest a range of critically reflexive leadership practices, which include thinking about the group rather than oneself and being aware of intersubjectivity, treating others with respect and as subjects rather than objects and asking questions about accountability and responsibility. Genao (2021) agrees with Cunliffe regarding the need for leaders to be critical aware, arguing that leaders need to model reflexivity by demonstrating critical awareness. Furthermore, Genao (ibid.) proposes that genuinely inclusive participatory practices require a responsiveness to the multiplicity of community members, thus leaders need to understand how to be more responsive. Cohen (2013) highlights the critical aspect of reflexivity, framing reflexivity for school leaders as a form of protest against quality assurance measures, and Vagle et al. (2017, p. 298) take this further in a call for 'radical reflexivity' in which beliefs and norms are questioned with a preparedness to be shocked.

These ideas of reflexivity as radical echo Fielding's (2006) exploration of school leadership and student voice/participation, in which he advocates for 'radical collegiality' between adults and students, brought about by 'an inclusive imperative that challenges role boundaries' (ibid., p. 307) and contests existing structures. Fielding discusses student voice/participation as both needing a critically reflexive approach and being an essential part of critically reflexive practice. He (ibid., p. 307) calls for an 'educational interrogative voice', which should be used in 'scrutiny...of ways in which the practices we advocate have hallmarks of the values and aspirations they intend to achieve'. By this, Fielding (ibid.) means that school leaders have a duty to question existing student voice practices and the discourses within which they are situated (i.e. be critically reflexive) and lead communities in which all voices (and silences) are equally valid. Understood in this way, student participation and critical reflexivity are inextricable: the development of genuinely inclusive communities requires critical reflexivity because it involves an upturning of roles and norms but also opportunities for new identities and practices to be formed. In Paper 1, we show how student participation offers opportunities for teachers' critically reflexive practices as 'interwoven into the everyday practices of teaching and learning' (Jones & Hall, 2021, p. 11). The ability of school leaders to be critically reflexive and to encourage critical reflexivity in others, therefore can be seen as an essential aspect of leading for student participation and learning.

3.5 Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter, although not all-encompassing, provides a backdrop for the overarching question in this study: what are the necessary conditions for student participation in schools?

The literature and the research included in this study suggest that these necessary conditions are comprehensive, and the challenges are considerable. To get to grips with the concept of student participation, the review started with a consideration of student voice and student participation, demonstrating the problematic nature of these concepts. The concept of student voice is too limiting, not only because it implies verbal expression, but also because of its quality control and accountability associations on one hand, and its idealistic tendencies on the other. Student participation seems to be less fraught than student voice, and interrelationships are implicit, although this is concept is not problem-free. The literature also presents an array of conflicting discourses relating to both student voice and student participation which have resulted in considerable barriers to practice in schools as well as eclipsing essential connections between participation and learning: seemingly the provision of legislative frameworks in various countries is insufficient to upend traditional structures and change attitudes. Rather, the literature indicates that schools need to critically review the ways in which children and adults interact in everyday school life, which implies a reconsideration of roles. Cultures of mutual respect and dialogue are necessary to enable teachers and students to develop partnerships in which each other's contributions are equally valued. Viewing student participation as a challenge to adults' professionalism is unhelpful: 'participation-as-and-for-learning' is dependent on teachers and leaders welcoming partnerships with students in all aspects of school life. Critical reflexivity is essential, although there is potential for further considerations of the connection between participation and critical reflexivity relating to teachers' learning and how school leaders might strengthen this association. Whilst distinct leadership styles are suggested in the literature, more dynamic, dialogic, and improvisatory forms of leading seem to be more in keeping with 'participation-as-and-for-learning'. How the empirical research was framed and designed will now be discussed in Chapter 4 Methods and Methodology.

Chapter 4 Methodology and Methods

This chapter introduces debates surrounding educational research and positions this study within them. It proceeds to explain how the research design is situated within the ontological and epistemological foundations of this study, including considerations of validity and ethics. Data collection, handling and analysis processes are described, and an overview of how the research design addresses the research questions is presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the research conducted.

4.1 Rationale

Educational research as a field is difficult to define. Hedges was quoted as stating that educational research was going through an 'existential crisis' due to its inability to produce replicable findings (George, 2019). He laments the 'very amorphous state' of educational research which had 'no coherent narrative' in the early 2000s (Hedges, 2018, p. 2) and celebrates the 'progress' being made (ibid.) 'the scientific rigour of education research has increased dramatically since the year 2000' (ibid. p. 1). In Hedges' opinion, this is attributed to the introduction of large-scale statistical analysis, randomised trials and the ability to generalise findings (ibid, p.18). His opinions are supported by others. Berliner (2007, p. 18) complains that 'educational research is considered too soft, squishy, unreliable and imprecise to rely on as a basis for practice' and Hargreaves (2007, p. 5) laments the lack of cumulative research, protesting that there was no attempt to create a 'body of knowledge which is tested, expanded or replaced' and educational research only succeeded in producing 'inconclusive and contestable findings of little practical relevance' (ibid.). Hammersley (2007, p. 18) casts 'doubt on the capacity of research to produce knowledge' as does Mausethagen et al (2016, p. 11), who described parts of the field as 'anecdotal' thus making it challenging to summarise what is known and what is not.

These views, described by Hoben and Tite (2008, p. 84) as a 'politicisation of methods', could be described as a reaction to post-structuralist, postmodernist perspectives in educational research, which reject generalisation as an ideal, instead valuing the experiences of the individual (both those involved in the research and the researcher), questioning the 'very notion of systematic explanation' (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 1). Rejecting rationality, legitimising and 'faith in science' (ibid., p. 9), these perspectives invite confrontation and a critical approach, proposing a multiplicity of approaches. They rebuff post-war traditions of falsification (Popper, 1959) and uniformity (Merton, 1945), and seek to 'undermine the universal legitimacy of notions such as truth' (Scott & Morrison, 2006, p. 170). It is clear from the arguments presented by Hedges and others that a number of educational researchers feel uncomfortable with the 'bewildering instability' (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 10) offered by postmodernism, particularly when the funding for educational research is often provided by governments seeking justifications and reportable results.

Other researchers have proposed a compromise. They recognise the complexity and diversity and suggest a broad and tolerant approach. Pring (2015, p. 45) argues that ‘educational research is both and neither’, agreeing with Donmoyer’s (2007, p. 19) suggestion of ‘paradigmatic proliferation’. Phillips (2014, p. 14) claims that whilst there is nothing inherently wrong with the use of empirical educational research, its associated methods are ‘only part, and do not constitute anything like the whole…they cannot be the gold standard’. Phillips (ibid., p. 21) ‘seeks to “complexify” – to reassert the potential width of educational research’. For Roth (2011, p. 108) the idea of a cumulative development of knowledge is invalid, because ‘as theories change, so do its posits…with different posits, there turns out to be no way to connect successive theories as theories about the same objects’ and points out the ‘absence of a stable object of inquiry’.

This study is aligned with this ‘middle view’. Schools are complex, and this study aims to describe the diversity and complexity of student participation, whilst also intending to have relevance for practice. Years spent working as a school leader and now working with school leaders and teachers in a university context has led to my personal conviction that educational research can make a difference to schools when it is anchored in the everyday challenges they experience. Not to be confused with offering solutions, educational research is an opportunity to investigate questions which invite curiosity, and which feel relevant. The schools which were part of this study were genuinely interested in student participation and saw the research as a starting point for conversations about the development of future work. Such interactions between practitioners and researchers allow the creation and recreation of understandings, ideas and suggestions which can be tried out, reflected upon and adjusted in continual cycles of inquiry. Figure 7 provides an overview of the methodological framework, which will now be described in more detail.

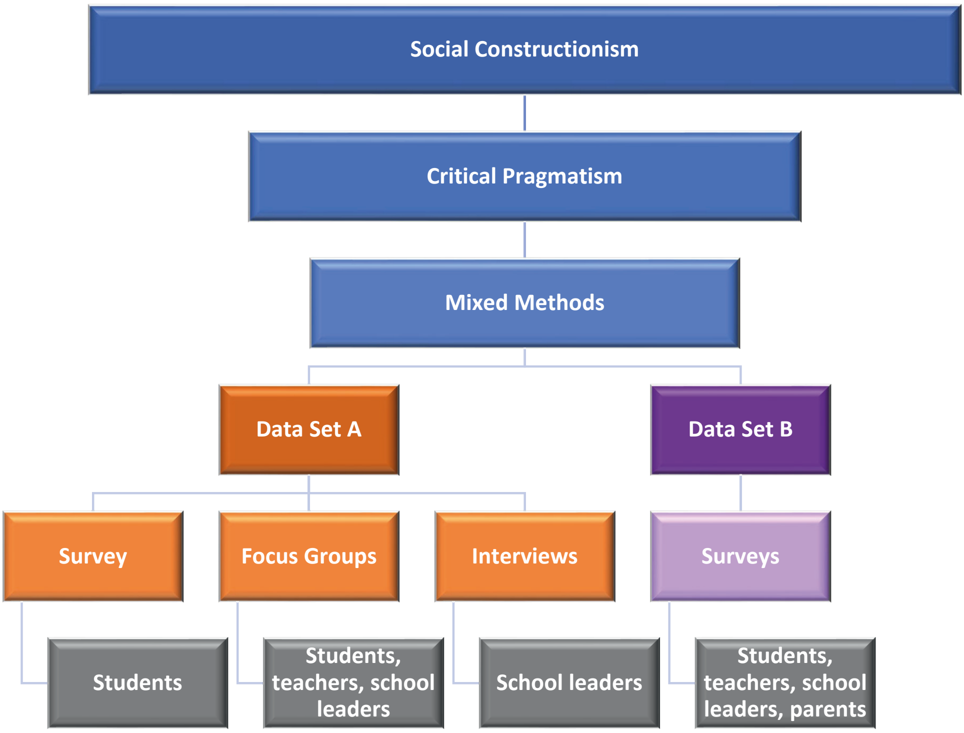
Social Constructionism
Critical Pragmatism
Mixed Methods
Data Set A
Data Set B
Survey
Focus Groups
Interviews
Surveys
Students
Students, teachers, school leaders
School leaders
Students, teachers, school leaders, parents

Figure 7: An illustration of the methodological framework of the study

4.2 The Research Design

Whilst there is no 'deterministic link' (Morgan, 2014, p. 1045) between social construction, critical pragmatism and mixed methods, and empirical studies which combine them 'seem rare' (Romaioli, 2021, p. 1), connections are well-established in methodological literature. This section contains an explanation of how social constructionism and critical pragmatism have shaped the research design, informing the choice of mixed methods.

4.2.1 Social Constructionism

Durrheim (1997) advocates the methodological application of social constructionism, writing that it offers a compelling alternative to positivist empiricism because it 'highlights the social, historical, and collective nature of human consciousness' (ibid., p. 175). As discussed in Chapter 2, a social constructivist perspective allows for a focus on understandings and experiences of student participation, central to this study. As a world view, social constructionism rejects reality and research as discovery (Gergen, 2020). Within social construction, there is no body of knowledge which is added to with each new study, or phenomena waiting to be uncovered: rather, research is viewed as a process of relating from which we develop our understandings of the world (Gill & Gergen, 2020). Thus, research designs which allow for discussion, interaction, diversity and various methods are in the spirit of social constructionism and enable the exploration of the dynamic complexity of schools. At the same time, social constructionism presents interesting challenges and opportunities in the research design, relating specifically to my role as a researcher. Viewing the world as continuously being constructed socially means that my interactions with respondents also create meanings and experiences; respondents do not simply relay their preconceived thoughts in interviews and surveys, they have not pre-sorted their experiences to share neutrally and impassively. Nor do I impartially observe and collect them. The construction of their experiences happens through being asked to describe and discuss with myself as a researcher. Subsequently, I construct the research data. This is especially pertinent in the focus groups and interviews, in which I directly interact with students, teachers and leaders, inviting and responding to their thoughts and comments. Koro-Ljungberg (2008, p. 430) describes these processes as ‘social meaning-making acts’, explaining that researcher and respondent collectively engage in the ‘co-construction of (temporarily) shared discourses’ (ibid. p. 431). Neither the respondents nor the enquirer is a neutral element in this co-construction, rather, our ‘multiplicity of competing and often contradictory values’ (Gergen & Gergen, 2007, p. 474) underpins our interactions and the ‘emergent, socially constructed’ (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008, p. 430) data so produced. A critically reflexive awareness of this is fundamental in every aspect of the research process, focussed by the lens of critical pragmatism in the application of findings in practice.

This view has consequences for the validity of this study. Social constructionism frames the way validity is defined, as well as impacting on how validity is evaluated. Rather than understanding validity in terms of whether the research measures what we want it to (Muijs, 2011), Lather (2006, p. 52) argues that the ‘legitimisation of knowledge’ (ibid.) is more complicated, especially in research which is concerned with criticality and difference. Aguinaldo (2004) agrees, proposing that rather than research being valid or invalid, the important question is for whom the research is valid. This is expanded upon by Gergen and Gergen (2007, p. 463), who state that ‘it is not whether an account is true…but rather the implications for cultural life that follow from taking any truth claim seriously’. Connecting this with the discussion at the start of this chapter, this somewhat fluid approach to validity would not be acceptable in some areas of educational research.

Notions of truth and reality are incompatible with the ontological and epistemological standpoint of this study. Its validity cannot be assessed through a consideration of the extent to which it accurately represents reality nor the degree of objectivity. Indeed, attempts to capture ‘reality’ by, for example, excessively prompting respondents would be detrimental to the validity of this study (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2014), which seeks to recognise multiplicity and welcomes subjective opinions. Although the validity of the surveys can be considered in terms of their content, in other words, whether they allow the collection of data about participation in schools, ideas about whether the findings represent a 'correct' version of participation in schools are misplaced. Rather, its validity is underpinned by attention to critical reflexivity in the research design, specifically the use of mixed methods, and pertaining especially to my role as a researcher in the construction of the data, contextual sensitivity (Czerniawski & Garlick, 2011, p. 279), awareness of multiple manifestations of power and the intention of the research to invite discussion, rather than to merely produce procedures to be unilaterally applied. Mixed methods, combined with an abductive approach to data analysis, enables, according to Hall (2013), the warranting of assertions (from Dewey, 1938), not merely by checking data produced from different methods against each other, but through continual processes of reflecting on the relevance of the findings in differing contexts. This last point is important in addressing Aguinaldo's (2004) argument about for whom something is valid. By exploring as well as participating in the creation of the rather messy world of student participation and schools as learning communities and by asking questions and suggesting theories this study has validity for all who seek to critically understand and lead schools in which everyone learns. These intentions are also highly appropriate when applying critical pragmatism, according to Hall (2013): pragmatist research requires the creation of knowledge which can be applied and evolved in different contexts. This is different from providing universally applicable solutions (if such things exist), instead it offers actions which can be tried out in practice, leading to the development of new experiences and new knowledge. The importance of critical pragmatism in the research design will now be explored.

4.2.2 Critical Pragmatism and Researcher Reflexivity

Feinberg (2015) explains that research conducted in the spirit of critical pragmatism should, at its heart, have the intention of improving lives by tackling problems. This, he argues, is achieved not by providing solutions, but rather by identifying norms and values which are restrictive, and thus suggesting previously 'unimagined possibilities' (Feinberg, 2015, p. 153). Zimmerman (2018) is one of few researchers to have explicitly utilised critical pragmatism as a methodological tool. In her research exploring the concept of capability in French workplaces (ibid.), she explains that whilst pragmatism emphasises empirical inquiry, it is the abductive approach advocated by Peirce (1901), with the researcher moving 'between empirical and conceptual inquiry' (Zimmerman, 2018, p. 943) which is key to understanding a critically pragmatic methodology. Rather than seeking *reality* through empirical inquiry, or testing hypotheses, research seen through the lens of critical pragmatism is, says Zimmerman (ibid., p. 943) 'aimed at confronting the normative prescriptions that are supposed to structure life in society and the actual means people have of coping with them or fulfilling them in a given environment and situation'. This description summarises the most important ways in which critical pragmatism influences research design: a critical awareness of power, attention to lived experience and the significance of context.

Critical pragmatism has influenced the study design in several ways. The valuing of local knowledge and experience through the exploration of experiences of students, teachers and leaders is key. Zimmerman (2018) advises a multi-level approach, guarding against the privileging of some respondents' contributions over others. Whilst this study was not strictly multi-level in that it did not include an analysis of structures and systems, it incorporates the views and experiences of students, teachers, leaders and parents and compares and contrasts them on equal terms. This required a flexible and adaptive approach to data collection, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Contextual sensitivity is another important consideration in this study, particularly relating to values and norms. Being a foreigner, albeit a long-term resident fluent in the Norwegian language, positions me as an outsider, which has implications for the ways in which I relate to the Norwegian context and respondents' perceptions. Taking account of the national context is important, but so is an awareness of the uniqueness of schools' cultures and the consequences this has for the interactions during data collection, data analysis and the production of recommendations. This appreciation underpins the flexible structure of the focus groups and interviews which allowed for local adaptations in the interactions between respondents and researcher. The attention to researcher reflexivity is another vital aspect of critically pragmatic research, as well as being essential in this study which advocates the centrality of critical reflexivity in schools. For Call-Cummings and Ross (2019, p. 4), reflexivity is fundamentally about positionality, because it 'requires us to think about how our background and experiences play a role in our relationships with participants…helping readers understand how the lens through which we see the world is reflected in our research'. Hall's (2013) emphasis differs slightly, arguing that pragmatic reflection aims to ensure that research is promoting democratic values and enhancing social justice: 'a pragmatic evaluator must be responsive to the economic, cultural, and social characteristics of the context at hand' (ibid. p. 4). Indeed, both criteria are important in this research. Inherent to this research are my own encounters and thoughts on student participation. During my time as a schoolteacher and leader I developed a commitment to student participation as fundamental to school life, working consistently to include students in every area of the school. Even if I accepted the existence of a neutral position, I could hardly be said to occupy one.

Whilst the various positions I have held in the Norwegian education system (teacher, school leader, researcher, consultant, parent, board member) have allowed first-hand familiarity with a variety of challenges and dilemmas, I am aware that these roles variously define the interactions between respondents and me during the research process. Overall, I feel that my prior experiences served to enhance the validity of the research, affording me unique skills and insights as a researcher. Several of the school leaders and teachers who participated in and helped to facilitate this research in their schools were already known to me because of their involvement in study programmes and projects at the university. For them I filled many roles: researcher, practitioner, 'expert' and university educator, leading to vibrant and multifaceted conversations in the focus groups and interviews, catalysed by our pre-existing relationships. I felt genuine engagement, curiosity and enthusiasm during the discussions, and that my prior knowledge and professional experience enhanced my ability to ask questions which facilitated dialogue. Fifteen years in schools enabled me to feel at ease talking to students in the focus groups, although to them I was an unfamiliar adult 'looking in' at their school, so it was important to reassure and encourage them. These reflections are an important part of recognising my role in co-constructing the data as well as the ways in which power is immanent in the research process.

It might be imagined that, in a study of participation, participatory methods would be appropriate. Veale (2005) claims that they address power relationships and Beazley and Ennew (2006, p. 193) suggest that participatory approaches help 'to gain insights into how communities 'think''. The growth of participatory research, called a 'flourishing culture' by Holland et al (2010, p. 372) in which researchers and children produce data together, has been a response to calls to recognise children as competent social actors (Thomson, 2007). Participatory methods have become increasingly attractive, due to the central positioning of children as experts on their own experiences. Despite the emancipatory tone, however, there are difficulties. Hunleth (2011, p. 91) advises against 'taking for granted' the usefulness of participatory methods to 'supply insight into children's worlds'. Bringing adults and children together can be highly problematic. Beazley and Ennew (2006, p. 189) describe 'a confrontation between the powerful and the powerless, a relationship fraught with possibilities of misunderstanding and exploitation'. Furthermore, the extent and nature of participation is ultimately controlled by adults, as Greens and Hill (2005, p. 8) state, 'children's independence and autonomy as researchers are fundamentally and intrinsically constrained'. There is no guarantee that just because adults define research as participatory, it will be experienced as such by the children involved (Holland et al, 2010). Participatory research, therefore, cannot be seen as an 'answer' to issues of power or a richer understanding of children's experiences and it was decided not to use participatory methods in this study. The students, teachers, school leaders and parents whose comments, opinions and reflections are part of this study are described as respondents. Instead of (fruitlessly) seeking to neutralise power, in the spirit of knowledge creation in pragmatist traditions 'underlying processes…such as power' will be acknowledged (Hathcoat & Meixner, 2015, p. 436). Methodologically, critical pragmatism adds an important dimension.

Multiple perspectives are crucial, but so is a focus on challenges in everyday practice which invite curiosity and inquiry. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p. 36) point to four key aspects of a 'pragmatist worldview': an interest in the consequences of actions, problem centred, pluralistic and real-world practice oriented. This chapter now explains the decision to use mixed methods as critical pragmatism in action.

4.2.3 The Case for Mixed Methods

Mixed methods are explained by Burke Johnson et al (2004) as an alternative paradigm responding to continued disagreements about the suitability of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Whilst Hibberts and Johnson (2012) see mixed methods as a means of producing better evidence to support claims, for Pring (2015) mixed methods allow for the intricacies of multiplicity, enabling a deeper consideration of opinions, experiences and contradictions. As such, Pring (ibid.) views mixed methods as entirely compatible with pragmatism. Biesta (2010, p. 3) describes the connection between mixed methods and pragmatism as 'fairly unproblematic', because mixed methods research enables researchers to choose the method best suited to answering their research questions. Whilst this seems logical, it also represents, Biesta (ibid.) argues, an overly simplistic understanding of pragmatism, akin to arguing 'that a screwdriver is generally a better tool for fixing a screw than a hammer' (ibid., p. 3). Pragmatism understood in this way, explain Hathcoat and Meixner (2017), has been used to deal with the apparent incompatibility of quantitative and qualitative methods by de-philosophising and therefore de-problematising research design by purporting a 'what-works maxim' (ibid., p. 436). This trivialisation of the importance of pragmatism in mixed methods research (Hall, 2013) is unfortunate, because several writers (e.g. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Hibberts & Johnson, 2012) point to the distinct relationship between Dewey's framing of the creation of knowledge through inquiry and mixed methods. At its centre is the very act of human inquiry: understanding problems through actively investigating them in a variety of ways to arrive at potential and tentative solutions.

This study can be described as mixed methods in a number of ways. First, data set A was collected through the deployment of surveys, focus groups and interviews. Second, although data set B was collected using surveys, the surveys enabled the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. On a metalevel, the study combines data collected in various ways to answer the research questions and the overarching question. In general, the use of surveys to generate data sets A and B enabled the collection of a wide range of views, facilitating for a greater number of students than would be otherwise be possible to directly relay their opinions, albeit within predefined structures. The surveys were not intended as a tool by which to measure levels of student participation or support the comparison of schools, but rather to gather a wider range of perspectives, allowing for greater variety and a richer understanding. In short, a ‘wide-angle lens’ which enables the capturing of diversity and allows for the exploration of an unknown population (Braun et al., 2020, p. 643). In data set B the surveys were an essential and effective means to gathering experiences during lockdown and travel restrictions. The surveys in data sets A and B were designed to allow respondents to complete them unaided, particularly to provide students with an opportunity to have a say without needing the input of adults. The qualitative comments provided by respondents in the surveys were therefore of equal importance to the quantitative data. A disadvantage of this is the potential for literacy barriers, thus special consideration was given to the design of questions to make them as accessible as possible. Based on feedback from adults in some schools in data set A, this was not always successful. In data set A, the survey contributed to more dissonant findings than the focus groups and interviews, perhaps partly due to questions being misunderstood, although many of the qualitative comments were informative. In data set B the comments from respondents were especially interesting, not only due to the rich and sometimes candid insights they offered, but also because the open questions gave adults and students an opportunity to reflect, to ‘think out loud’ in the safety of anonymity whilst still in the midst of the pandemic.

Research can combine methods in mixed methods research in different ways to reach conclusions about the phenomena studied. In this study, both sequential explanatory and convergent designs are used. A sequential explanatory design (presented in Figure 8) was intended in data set A, which is denoted as quant→QUAL (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) as the surveys (quantitative data collection) were planned to be conducted prior to the interviews (qualitative data) being carried out, allowing for the quantitative data to inform the interviews.

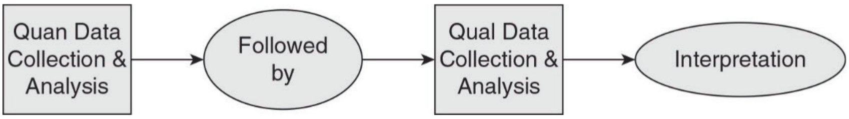
Quan Data Collection & Analysis
Followed by
Qual Data Collection & Analysis
Interpretation

Figure 8: A Sequential Explanatory Design (adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018)

The capitalisation denotes that the qualitative data carries more significance in the drawing of conclusions from data set A. This is due both to the quantity and perceived quality of the qualitative data. It was not always practically possible for schools to carry out the survey well enough in advance to allow for findings to play a part in the interviews, and in School L it was not possible to carry out follow up interviews due to travel restrictions during the pandemic.

In data set B, quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently in the survey, analysed separately and the results combined to produce findings (shown in Figure 9). This is denoted as QUANT+QUAL because the quantitative and qualitative data carried equal weight.

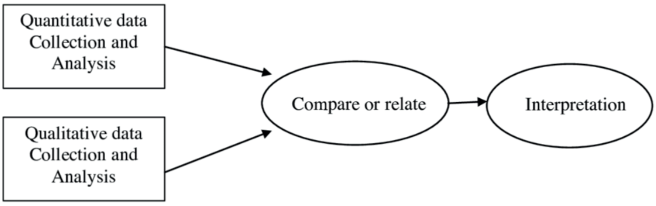
Quantitative data Collection and Analysis
Qualitative data Collection and Analysis
Compare or relate
Interpretation

Figure 9: A Convergent Design (adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018)

A convergent design creates the opportunity to ‘synthesise [data sets] into a complementary picture about the phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 188). Exploring convergence also implies the possibility of divergence, where data sets suggest conflicting findings. Findings from data sets A and B are merged in this study to answer the research questions and overarching questions. A more detailed explanation of the data collection processes, and the data produced follows in the next section.

4.2.4 Considering Reliability

From the discussions so far of social constructionism, critical pragmatism, validity and the intentions of this study, it can be surmised that a positivist definition of reliability resting on reproducibility and the minimisation of bias cannot be applied. Indeed, reliability understood in these ‘conventional, scientific ways’ (Weenink & Bridgman, 2017, p. 106) was unattainable and even undesirable (Bush, 2012). In a study founded on social constructionism, seeking standardisation of data collection or consistency of results regardless of context is incongruous. Ideas of consistency and stability are difficult within a world view defined by relationality and co-creation (Schudson & Gelman, 2022). Social constructionism frames reliability as a relationally negotiated concept which incorporates an acknowledgement of subjectivity, thus perhaps more appropriately described as authenticity (Weenink & Bridgman, 2017). In this mixed methods research, it is important to explore how reliability relates to the various aspects of the research design. Whilst Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) recognise a consideration of reliability as authenticity in relation to qualitative data, they state that quantitative reliability is dependent on generalisability. The reliability of surveys understood as instruments of measurement rests on replicability, in other words, getting the ‘same results on different occasions’ (Thomas, 2013, p. 138). As explained above, the surveys in this study served a different purpose, and therefore reliability is a trickier concept. The surveys were not designed to be subjected to reliability tests, and therefore they could not be meaningfully conducted.

This study agrees with the framing of reliability as ‘consistency of judgement’ (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 14), thus incorporating two vital aspects of this study: researcher reflexivity and a focus on comprehensiveness, the ‘wide-angle lens’ approach advocated by Braun et al (2020). Thus, the ‘reliability’ of the surveys relates to their purpose in contributing to the capturing of diverse perspectives and enabling the construction of a ‘big picture’ of student participation which helps to address the questions at the centre of this study. The surveys were intended to gather a range of perspectives in order to support the process of meaning-making about student participation which included data from focus groups and interviews: meaning-making which occurs through continual researcher reflexivity (Durrheim, 1997). Overall, the use of mixed methods increased the opportunities to understand the complexities of student participation as understood by those involved; not as a phenomenon to be measured, but as a relational, contextual and shifting concept. The specifics of how the data was collected will be described in the next section.

4.3 Data Collection and Description of the Data

This study makes use of data collected during two processes. The first (data set A), which took place between March and November 2020 in seven schools. An overview of the schools and the data collected in each of them is provided in Table 3. Data set B was collected in March 2020 during school closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Table 4 provides further information about the data collected in this process. Table 5 provides an overview of the questions asked in the surveys and interviews (data sets A and B). In the interests of clarity, the following descriptions will differentiate between the two research processes.

4.3.1 Collecting Data Set A

As explained in Chapter 1, the research design of data set A was based on experiences gained during Master’s research, subsequently published in a peer-reviewed paper (Jones & Bubb, 2021). In that work, the research involved three schools, and incorporated an online survey and focus groups and interviews with students, teachers and school leaders. The original study was an important opportunity for researcher reflexivity, and much was learned from the processes of the data collection, as well as the findings themselves indicating a need for further research. The quality of the data obtained during this study demonstrates the value of a mixed methods approach in gathering experiences at different levels within the schools; both personal insights in the focus groups, interviews and survey comments and the ‘bigger picture’ of students’ experiences in several schools gained from the quantitative survey data. It showed the usefulness of the survey in facilitating the expression of views from a wider section of students than those selected by the school to participate in the focus group, while also showing the limitations of the study in terms of designing questions which students were able to complete independently. Reflections on the conversations with respondents in the focus groups and interviews led to the inclusion of opinion statements in the focus groups and interviews in this study to facilitate discussion more readily.

Therefore, the original study, having recently been conducted, could be described as a pilot for this study. Although this PhD study had not been conceived at the time of the Master's research, the original study provided a wealth of learning experiences which formed the foundation for this study's design.

In data set A, students, teachers and school leaders from seven schools were the respondents. The schools were selected because their leaders were known to me through my work at the university and they had expressed interest in wanting to explore student participation. The school leaders at each of the schools were genuinely interested in learning more about student participation in each of their contexts, although apart from school L, none of the schools had focused on developing student participation. They viewed the research opportunity as a way to investigate current practices and understandings, with a view to developing student participation in the future. Several of the schools invited me to present data collected and findings to the staff to facilitate discussion and reflection. Because the schools involved in the research had an active interest in finding out about their own practices, it was important to allow them to decide who was answering the surveys and how the focus groups would be comprised. The school leaders (in consultation with me) decided which year groups would be invited to participate in the short, anonymous digital survey in which students reported their experiences of participation at school survey. This decision was based largely on perceptions of how able students were to complete the survey independently. In the schools with primary age children, this was deemed to be children in year 5 and upwards (over the age of 10). In the middle schools, all children were invited. It was decided by the high schools not to ask final year students. The link to the survey was distributed by the schools via their learning platforms, and in most schools, students were allocated time during class to complete the survey, although it was emphasised that participation was voluntary and anonymous. Although the national student survey in Norway (conducted annually and compulsorily for students in years 7, 10 and 11) contains questions about student participation, the data from these surveys were not considered sufficient for use in this study because in the national student survey, students are asked about how often they are able to give suggestions about learning activities, how often the school listens to their suggestions and whether they are part of deciding classroom rules. There are also no opportunities for students to write comments about what is important for them. The questions do not enable satisfactory responses to the research questions in this study. Brevity and clarity were essential considerations (Bell & Woolner, 2012) in the survey's design. Thus, it was decided to present two questions about types of participation (with seven predefined options) and statements to which students indicated their agreement or otherwise using a Likert scale. The survey was designed in 'Nettskjema' which is the survey tool approved for use by NTNU and endorsed by the Norwegian

Centre for Research Data because of its levels of security and useability. Although Likert scales can be problematic because respondents interpret the options in different ways (Bell and Woolner, 2012), the decision to use them was based on the need to ensure a user-friendly format and collect subjective experiences. The opportunity for respondents to write comments at the end of survey was also important to gather a greater range of perspectives. As a further preparation for the data collection in this study, the student survey used in data set A was piloted in an eighth school, with students aged 12-16. By examining how students had tackled the questions, as well as discussing with a teacher how students had responded to taking the survey, the piloting allowed for further adjustments to the survey questions. An important aspect was the need to 'unpack' student participation practices to help students to describe their experiences. This led to the inclusion of the option for students to select from descriptions of student participation practices to find out *what* they experienced, rather than only questions about *how* students experienced it. Further clarity regarding the formulation of the statements was needed, the removal of two questions in the interests of concision, as well as adjustments to the Likert scale to reduce the number of available options. Table 5 presents the questions asked in the survey and during the interviews (translated from Norwegian), and copies of the survey and interview guides are included in Appendix A.

In each of the schools (apart from school L due to school closures) one focus group interview was conducted with students and one focus group with teachers. A school leader was interviewed, although in some schools leadership teams wished to participate as a group and in those cases focus group interviews were conducted. Students and teachers were invited to participate by the school leadership, with selection processes varying between schools. Most schools selected respondents from those who volunteered based on a wish to represent a diverse cross section of the community, inviting teachers from different disciplines and levels of experience and students of various ages and abilities. Permission was obtained from respondents and the parents of the students involved. Interview guides were produced for each focus group and interview and distributed to schools in advance. The interview guides were designed to be flexible. They comprised an initial question about understandings of student participation, followed by a series of statements which were intended to encourage discussion. These were not often needed, however, because respondents often talked freely and at length about issues and experiences which were important to them. The focus group settings proved useful in facilitating more spontaneous discussions between respondents. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 175) explain, 'the aim of the focus group is not to reach consensus about, or solutions to, the issues discussed, but to bring forth different viewpoints'. Although more ethically challenging, it was essential to give students the opportunity to describe their 'own experiences and understandings of their world' (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 168) within their own focus groups, students often recounted events in seemingly uninhibited ways. Later in this chapter ethics related to including children as respondents are discussed.

Table 3: Description of the data collected during March-November 2020 (data set A)

School	**Key Information**	**Period of Data Collection**	**Type of Data Collected**	**Survey – age of respondents (years), numbers and response rates**
School A	Primary School (ages 6-12) Large, rural town centre location	October-November 2020	Digital survey of students 1 x 30 min focus group interview with 6 students 1 x 30 min focus group interview with 2 teachers 1 x 40 min focus group interview with 4 members of the school leadership team	10-12 163 students 93%
School M	Primary School (ages 6-12) Small, rural location	October-November 2020	Digital survey of students 1 x 30 min focus group interview with 6 students 1 x 40 min focus group interview with 4 teachers 1 x 30 min focus group interview with 3 members of the school leadership team	10-12 27 students 73%
School D	Primary School (ages 6-12) Small, rural location	October-November 2020	Digital survey of students 1 x 30 min focus group interview with 4 students 1 x 40 min focus group interview with 3 teachers 1 x 30 min interview with principal	10-12 17 students 94%
School O	Middle School (ages 12-16) Large, rural town centre location	November 2020	Digital survey of students 1 x 30 min focus group interview with 2 students 1 x 30 min focus group interview with 3 teachers 1 x 30 min focus group interview with 5 members of the school leadership team	12-16 208 students 91%
School T	Primary and Middle School (ages 6-16) Large, rural location	March 2020	Digital survey of students 1 x 30 min focus group interview with 4 students 1 x 40 min focus group interview with 2 teachers 1 x 30 min interview with principal	12-16 64 students 74%
School V	High School (ages 16-19) Medium, rural location	March 2020	Digital survey of students 1 x 40 min focus group interview with 3 students 1 x 30 min focus group interview with 3 teachers 1 x 30 min interview with principal	17-18 20 students 25%
School L	High School (ages 16-19) Medium, remote location	March 2020	Digital survey of students	17-18 72 students 71%
				Total survey respondents: *n*=571

4.3.2 Collecting Data Set B

For data set B the unprecedented school closures during the pandemic presented a unique opportunity to explore student participation and other aspects of learning. Respondents were from all eight schools within one municipality of Norway. All students, teachers, parents and school leaders within the municipality were invited to complete anonymous online surveys about their experiences of home-schooling prior to students returning to school. Table 4 presents the survey questions which are relevant for this study. The surveys are available in Appendix C. Due to lockdown restrictions and school closures it was not possible to conduct interviews, so it was decided to include opportunities for comments following each question and at the end of the survey to enable respondents to express their opinions, which they did at length and with high response rates. These comments provided fascinating insights and expounded the validity of the quantitative data.

This study used different questions from data set A because it aimed to collect various experiences of home-school rather than solely focusing on participation. It was also necessary to alter the wording of the surveys for the different groups of respondents. In the interests of clarity and brevity we used statements with a Likert scale and the option to write comments. Students in years 5-10 and teachers were asked one open question. It was decided not to ask the open question to the youngest children because of potential literacy issues. In these surveys, how statements were phrased assumed even more importance owing to school closures limiting opportunities to seek clarification. The survey was designed using Smart Survey, which is equally as user-friendly as Nettskjema, but includes more options for data analysis. Links to the various surveys were distributed by school leaders and by the municipality.

Table 4: Description of the data collected during home-school in March 2020 (data set B)

Respondents to digital surveys	**Number of respondents**	**Response rates**
Teachers	151	76%
Parents	779 (1048 students)	61%
Students aged 6-10	320	49%
Students aged 10-16	745	69%
School leaders	15	75%
Total	***n=2010***	

Table 5: Overview of Survey and Interview Questions

	Data Set A		**Data Set B**
	Survey Questions/Statements	**Interview Questions/Statements**	**A selection of the most relevant survey questions/statements (Likert scale with 4 options)**
Students	1. I experience participation in the following (choice of 7 options) 2. How much participation do you experience? (Likert scale with 4 options) 3. I would like to experience more participation in the following (choice of 7 options, same as question 1) 4. I know a lot about how my school could be better (Likert scale with 4 options) 5. At my school students and teachers cooperate to make my school better (Likert scale with 4 options) 6. My school could be better if teachers and students cooperated more (Likert scale with 4 options)	Introductory questions about how and where they experience participation in schools, followed up by the use of the following statements to stimulate discussion (according to need): • Student participation is not needed because adults know best • Student participation can be difficult because students have surprising and challenging ideas • Student participation can be important for developing schools • Student participation is important to learn about being part of democratic society • Student participation should be more inclusive as often only the best students are given opportunities	1. What was the best/most difficult aspect of home-schooling? (choice of 5 options) 2. I've learned a lot of new things during home-school 3. I've done more work during home-school than normal school 4. I've had more exciting/interesting learning activities during home-school than normal 5. Feedback from teachers has helped me more than usual 6. I've become better at working independently during home-school 7. I have experienced more opportunities to decide about my own learning than usual 8. I got good help from adults during home-school 9. What should schools learn from home-schooling?
Teachers		See above	1. Students have learned more at home-school 2. I have planned more creative learning activities than usual 3. I have given more useful feedback to students than usual 4. Students have become more independent in their learning during home-school 5. Students were dependent on help at home during home-school 6. What should schools learn from home-schooling?
School Leaders		See above, plus questions about how they involve students in their work as leaders and how they see their role in leading student participation	School leaders received a different survey which focused on what they planned to develop as a result of the experiences of home-schooling. This is a selection of relevant statements respondents were asked to consider: 1. I'm going to organise for more student participation in the future/I want to organise for more student participation, but it is challenging 2. I'm going to organise for more student participation in learning activities 3. I'm going to organise for more creative learning activities
Parents			1. I think my child has learned more at home-school 2. My child has done more schoolwork than normal 3. My child has received more creative learning activities than usual 4. Feedback from teachers has helped my child more than usual 5. My child has become more independent during home-school 6. I have developed more insight into my child's learning 7. What should schools learn from home-schooling?

4.4 Data Analysis

This section describes how the data analysis was carried out on each of the data sets.

4.4.1 Data Set A: Data Analysis

In accordance with a pragmatist world view, an abductive approach to data analysis was deployed on data set A. Described by Rinehart (2020, p. 7) as 'exploratory, creative, speculative, and about inference', Timmermans and Tavory (2012, p. 169) explain that the key to an abductive approach is the analysis of empirical data against a background of diverse theories, with the aim of 'theory construction'. In a later publication, they (ibid., 2014, p. 2) discuss how theory and empirical data 'not only intertwine, but amplify each other'; it is not merely the sum of their contributions, but how researchers are able to use both dynamically to create new meanings in 'an ongoing intellectual conversation' (ibid., p. 5). Abduction, Hall (2013) states, is fundamental to credibility in mixed methods within the pragmatist tradition because it requires reflection, essential for developing contextually sensitive understandings of implications of research. As previously described, the aim of this study is both to explore experiences of participation and to develop theory about participation and leading schools which have relevance for practice. Therefore, it was appropriate to engage in a 'continuous cycle' (Feilzer, 2010, p. 6) of abduction, moving back and forth between theory and data. Figure 10: *The abductive research process* designed by Kovács and Spens (2005, p. 139) demonstrates the connections between the theoretical and empirical aspects of the research process. Prior theoretical knowledge informs observations from the data, which may or may not match the original ideas from theory. The arrows at the centre of Figure 10 show how the researcher moves between theory and findings (steps 1 and 2), resulting in conclusions (relating to hypotheses *H* or propositions *P*) and their eventual application.

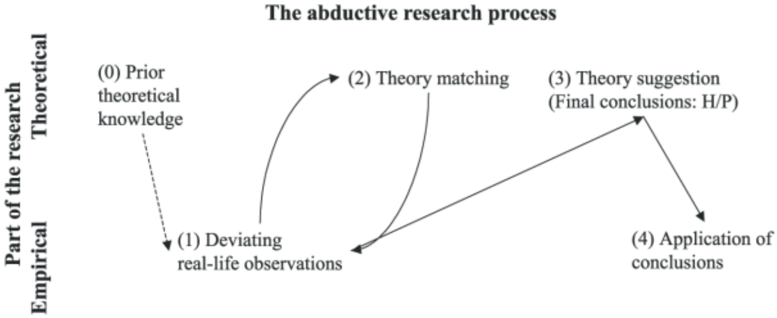
The abductive research process
Part of the research
Theoretical
Empirical
(0) Prior theoretical knowledge
(2) Theory matching
(3) Theory suggestion (Final conclusions: H/P)
(1) Deviating real-life observations
(4) Application of conclusions

Figure 10: The abductive research process (Kovács & Spens, 2005, p. 139)

In this study, the previous Master's study (Jones & Bubb, 2021), the publications shown in Figure 1 (Dehlin & Jones, 2021; Jones & Hall 2021a), extensive reviews of existing literature and regular opportunities to work in schools provided a pre-existing theoretical foundation and contextual awareness when approaching the data. When possible, the survey data from each school were analysed first. Frequency analysis was conducted on the quantitative data from each school in Excel to generate graphs which indicated which participative activities students currently experienced and what they wanted to experience more of. Qualitative data from the surveys in the form of comments was coded to identify recurring themes, using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998), although in accordance with an abductive approach 'one-off' insights were also noted. As with the qualitative data from the focus groups and interviews, the coding process, in accordance with an abductive approach, used prior theoretical understandings combined with content of the data to construct themes, which were then given simple codes. Thematic analysis allows for both 'manifest' (based on content) and 'latent' (based on underlying inferences and meanings) themes to be identified during the same analysis process (Boyatzis, 1998). The initial findings from the survey helped to create an understanding of the differing contexts of the participating schools, which was helpful when proceeding to conduct the focus groups and interviews. Having prior knowledge of where students experienced participation, and/or indications of how they would like student participation to develop was potentially useful in the focus groups and interviews, although their relatively open and dialogic nature meant that discussions sometimes moved in other directions according to the interests of the respondents.

Once the survey had been completed by all participating schools and data from the online surveys were transferred to Excel, it was possible to consider how the answers compared between the schools. Although this cannot be said to be a measure of reliability, and as explained above, reliability is a more readily associated with a positivist tradition (Bush, 2012), it was interesting to look at the graphs to consider the extent to which answers differed across the schools, enriching the overall picture of student participation, and also gaining insight into the accessibility of the survey for students. These graphs are included in Appendix B. The survey was not designed to measure a particular concept, and so testing consistency between items was not appropriate.

The interview data were coded in order to capture the significant recurring themes (Boyatzis, 1998) and surprising findings were identified (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). When compared with the survey data, it became possible to identify eleven key categories of findings in data set A (listed in Figure 11). Figure 11 shows which key categories were identified in which part of the data, and how the categories connect with RQ1-3 and the overarching question in this thesis. Although the somewhat simplistic linearity of the diagram belies the complexity of the research processes, it provides an overview of how the data sets converge and diverge. On the left of the diagram are the methods used to collect the data. Adjacent to these are the list of key themes identified in the data

(SP is an acronym for student participation), which inform responses to the research questions and the overarching question. Following the orange arrows to the right of Figure 11 shows that the survey in data set A enabled findings related to defining student participation, describing the frequency and extent of student participation practices, giving opinions about student participation, giving examples of challenges and also wishes related to student participation. The focus groups and interviews contained findings in all eleven categories. Overall, the findings from the survey in data set A were of less significance than the focus groups and interviews. The survey served its purpose of providing an overview of student participation in several schools, enriching my knowledge of the schools' contexts and enabled more children than would otherwise have been possible to give their opinions, thus enhancing the validity of the findings, however, its overall contribution was to confirm the difficulties with understanding student participation in schools. It would have been interesting to include follow-up discussions in the schools based on the results, facilitating for students to reflect on the data and potentially leading to greater contextual understandings.

Comparisons and connections with survey findings, existing theory and prior experiences were essential to the abductive process, offering opportunities for reflections and the production of new ideas. In particular, the consideration of data set A in relation to a recent publication (Dehlin & Jones, 2021) was important. In this publication we explored existing literature on student participation and learning communities, viewed in the light of our own experiences of working with schools, to arrive at four archetypes of student participation which formed the foundation for the model presented in Paper 2 and further developed in this thesis (Figure 13). The original model was a representation (rather than a categorisation) of different types of student participation which were described in the literature and was intended to help schools to make sense of the concept and practices. The empirical findings were compared with the archetypes, both in terms of convergence and dissonance, revealing rich descriptions of them in practice. The model was revisited with the findings in mind. The archetypes became multi-dimensional, thus leading to the renaming of the model as a topography in Paper 2. This 'back and forth' process in which pre-existing theories informed and were informed by the findings enabled a claim to 'theoretical robustness' (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 175). The abductive process of reflecting on the relationships between the data and existing theories (shown in Figure 10) enabled enhanced validity of the research as well as the continuous refinement of suggestions for practice.

4.4.2 Data Set B: Data Analysis

In data set B, whilst it was possible to draw on theories relating to learning in schools in the selection of the topics for the survey, school closures and home-schooling on a national scale had no precedent and few other studies existed. Although the same theoretical and experiential foundation could be applied to the questions relating to student participation in data set B, the comprehensive nature of the surveys, as well as the as yet under-explored phenomenon of home-schooling meant that an abductive approach was more challenging.

As in the survey in data set A, it was not appropriate to compare alignment between questions although it was possible to explore alignment across schools. The quantitative data in the surveys was analysed in various ways to provide different perspectives:

- Frequency analysis of responses from students, teachers, parents within each school to allow for comparison between groups
- Comparative analysis of responses from different groups across the participating schools to enable understandings of, for example, how parents within the municipality described the experience of home-schooling
- Comparative analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data from within the surveys

The comments in the survey were treated as qualitative data, and key themes were identified following an initial coding process, which enabled the identification of patterns as well as the more unexpected experiences. In Figure 11, the purple arrows leading from 'Data Set B: Survey' show how the findings related to the key categories of 'describing frequency and intent of student participation, giving examples of and opinions about student participation and its challenges and expressing wishes for future practices.

4.4.3 Combining Findings

In this study both data sets were integrated to develop ideas which answer the research questions and the overarching question. This integration, argue Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), is essential to mixed methods. Figure 11 illustrates this. For example, it can be seen in the diagram that both the survey and interviews in data set A led to findings about how student participation is defined, data sets A and B enabled understandings of wishes for student participation practices. Perhaps most importantly, Figure 11 demonstrates that although the two data sets were collected at different times and with somewhat differing research aims, there is convergence in the key themes identified, thus indicating validity in the data corpus in terms of the research questions.

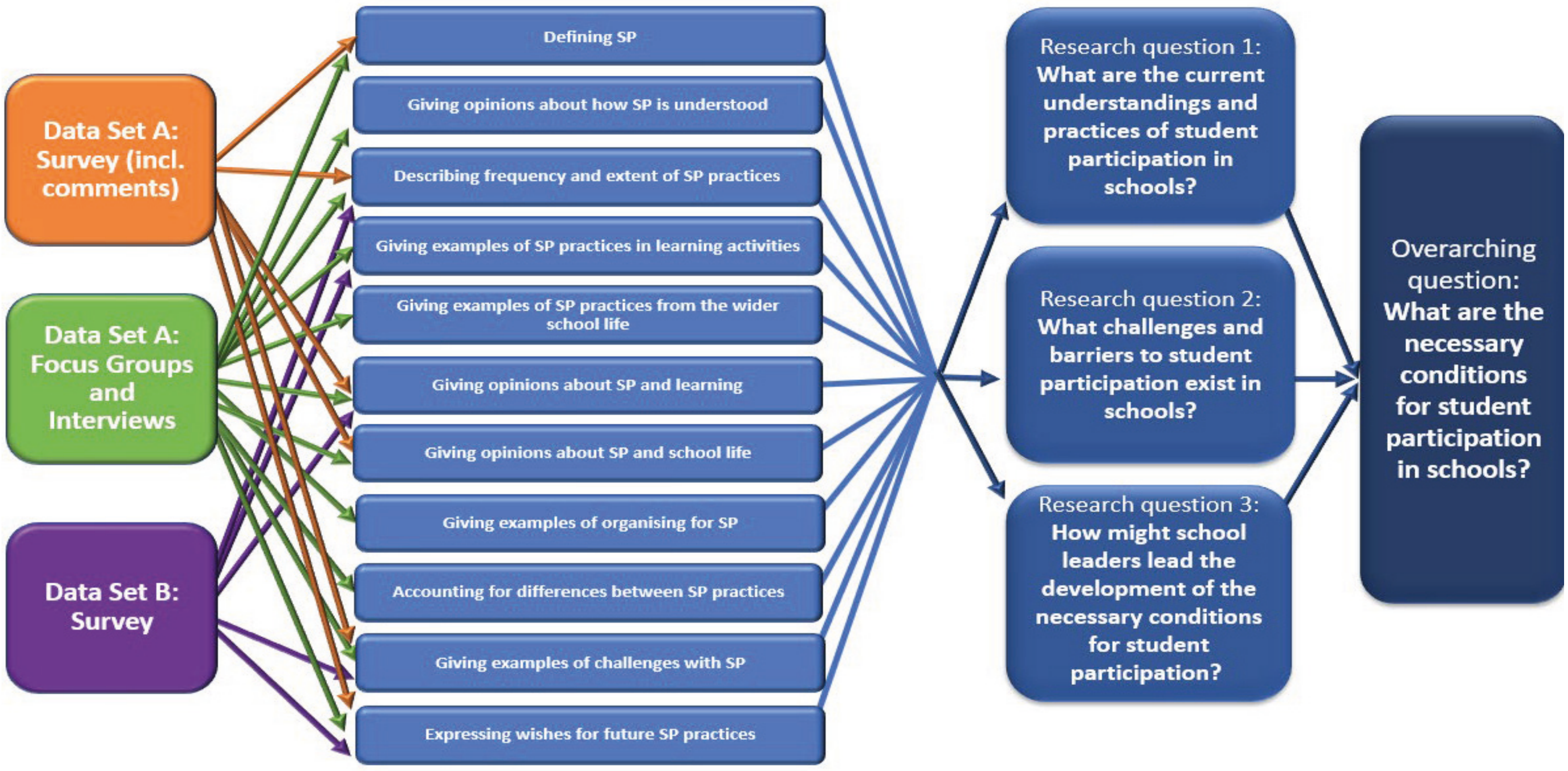
Data Set A: Survey (incl. comments)
Data Set A: Focus Groups and Interviews
Data Set B: Survey
Defining SP
Giving opinions about how SP is understood
Describing frequency and extent of SP practices
Giving examples of SP practices in learning activities
Giving examples of SP practices from the wider school life
Giving opinions about SP and learning
Giving opinions about SP and school life
Giving examples of organising for SP
Accounting for differences between SP practices
Giving examples of challenges with SP
Expressing wishes for future SP practices
Research question 1: What are the current understandings and practices of student participation in schools?
Research question 2: What challenges and barriers to student participation exist in schools?
Research question 3: How might school leaders lead the development of the necessary conditions for student participation?
Overarching question: What are the necessary conditions for student participation in schools?

Figure 11: Using the findings to answer the research questions

4.5 Triangulation

Guba and Lincoln (2005, p. 205) write that ‘no one would argue that a single method - or collection of methods - is the royal road to ultimate knowledge’. Greene (2007) summarises the advantage of mixed methods as being ‘generative and open, seeking richer, deeper, better understanding of important facets of our infinitely complex social world’. Mixed methods, say Hibberts and Johnson (2012, p. 137) allow for increased validity, because they offer opportunities to draw from a wider range of data in order to produce meta-inferences. The application of mixed methods in this study does not bring ‘reality’ any closer, but rather enables a richer and more complex data set. Although Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 18) advocate grounded theory, their description of the interactions between quantitative and qualitative illuminates: ‘not quantitative to test qualitative, but both used as supplements, as mutual verification and…as different forms of data on the same subject’. This ‘mutual verification’ (also understood as triangulation) is far from simple. Originally a geometrical term, triangulation involves the use of known information about one side of a triangle to calculate the other two sides as well as the size of the space within. The calculations of successive triangles can be thus used in surveying landscapes (Malpas, 2015). Triangulation implies accuracy through convergence and was originally utilised in quantitative research in the 1960s (Greene, 2007). Bush (2012, p. 85) suggests that mixed methods is ‘methodological triangulation’ because different methods are used to explore the same issue, allowing for ‘cross-checking’ (ibid., p. 84). Greene (2007) cites triangulation as a time-honoured reason for choosing mixed methods. However, triangulation in mixed methods cannot be achieved simply by combining the ‘right’ methods in certain ways; this seems rather too close to Biesta’s (2010) criticism of research being reduced to simply choosing the right tools for the job. How triangulation is understood is essential to understanding its purpose in research. Andrzejewski et al. (2019) warn against too much emphasis on triangulation of data ‘which point to the same conclusions’, suggesting that this search for convergence can obscure more interesting variances in findings, described by Greene (2007, p. 100) as ‘empirical puzzles’.

Instead of relying on a variety of methods to ensure validity, triangulation according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) can be understood by looking at what researchers *do* with the data produced, how connections and comparisons are made in order to provide rich understandings of phenomena. Malpas (2015) agrees, emphasising the processual and dialogic nature of triangulation and its connections with topographical understandings, which he defines as the ‘dynamic…character of a place’ (ibid., p. 7). Never complete and entirely dependent on relationality, triangulation enables more vibrant and dynamic understandings of phenomena, allowing for the construction of topographies which depict interrelationships and depth whilst also being a tool for navigation.

Rather than seeking to systematically compare schools, amounts, or groups, the continuing search for understandings of a dynamic 'big picture' and its relevance to practice which spurs reflexivity and validity. It is this eclectic understanding of triangulation that forms part of the rationale for mixed methods in this study. Objective understandings are not sought: the intention is to capture, reflect and illustrate the complexity of student participation which requires a dynamic and reflexive approach to research.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical requirements for the research was essential. Approval was sought and obtained from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (case number 989305), which is appointed by the University to assess all research projects. Confirmation of the approval is included in Appendix D. In the case of data set A, approval for the research was obtained from the municipalities in which the schools were located as well as from the principals of the schools involved. The survey was anonymous and voluntary. Respondents in the focus groups and individual interviews (children and adults) were volunteers, and their rights relating to data protection were explained in writing prior to the interviews and repeated verbally at the start of the interviews. The option to withdraw without consequence at any point during or after was also reiterated. Additional consent was sought from the parents of the children who were part of the focus groups and written information was provided about the research and data protection in advance. No respondent chose to withdraw. Collection and storage of data has been according to data protection law and the University's requirements. Schools and individual respondents have not been named, either during the analysis or in the reporting. In the case of data set B, consent was sought at the municipality level. The survey was anonymous and voluntary, and the links were forwarded first to the schools directly from the municipality, and then was distributed to teachers, students and parents by the schools' leadership. Although the survey was anonymous, during analysis the data were encrypted to ensure security. In both studies, the data were accessed only by the co-authors of papers 2 and 3 and by me.

In addition to adhering to the ethical requirements of the National Research Ethics Committee in Norway and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, research involving children requires particular consideration. This will now be discussed further.

4.6.1 Children as respondents

A wide range of methodological issues, challenges and considerations arise when including children in educational research. These include ethics, power, language and communication, how children are viewed and positioned within society as well as practical considerations of gaining access. Many of these can be found in the wider field of educational research although they are 'experienced in unique ways' (Barker & Weller, 2003, p. 222) when the research involves children. Indeed, as Greene and Hill (2005, p. 18) argue, these challenges render the understanding of children's experiences by researchers 'in many ways an impossible task'. Lumby (2012, p. 237) describes that children are often left out of research in schools, due to notions that they are immature, not competent to judge, overly suggestible as well as the ethical challenges of consent. In this study, the inclusion of children was fundamental, and therefore these challenges must be tackled. As Cook (2011, p. 316) explains, 'to exclude the voices of those whose lived experience in relation to the issue or practice being researched challenges our notions of the moral, the fair, and the just'.

Punch (2002, p. 328) proposes that 'research conducted at school should take into account that children may feel pressure to give 'correct' answers to research questions'. This may create challenges for educational researchers who hope to gain access to children's 'real' opinions. Whilst it is important for researchers to explore methods which reduce power constraints for child participants, it would be naïve to expect power to be eliminated from interactions. This study, for example, addresses power by inviting students to participate in an anonymous survey, thus sharing their views without concerns about identification. The children participating in the focus group discussions are subject to a complex web of norms, expectations and rules, both within the group and as part of their school. Christensen (2004) points out that power is inherent in research as well as fluid, moving between researcher and informants and among informants. She advocates that rather than trying to diminish power in the research process, it should be taken account of. In this study, power is an important theme in the consideration of how students participate and cannot be ignored. In this research, the ways in which students coped with the experience of the surveys and focus groups was worthy of reflection. The quality of their reflections and insights only reinforced my pre-existing conviction of the importance of including them.

Researchers might wish to design their own selection process for participants, but this is seldom possible. The legal and ethical framework determines the process through which researchers gain access to children, usually through gatekeepers (school principals and parents), as was the case for this study, where permission was obtained from school leaders at municipality level, school principals and parents. Student respondents in the focus groups, albeit volunteers, were organised and presented by teachers or leaders in the schools. This is potentially problematic because schools may select students according to the views they wish to present, and/or according to perceived abilities to participate in focus group interviews (Damiani, 2016). Potentially, the 'best' students may be selected by schools, limiting the range of student perspectives. As explained above, the schools involved in data set A were genuinely interested in the opportunity to develop student participation practices, and therefore allowing the schools to have ownership in organising the data collection was intentional. In several cases schools sought to recruit diverse groups of teachers and students. The inclusion of the surveys further facilitated the collection of a wide range of opinions.

4.7 Considering Limitations

It would be difficult to argue for the existence of the perfect tool for data collection or analysis, or that one approach allows for precisely the hoped-for answers to the research questions. Indeed, because methods are selected in advance of data collection, and it is not usual that the same research contexts can be revisited using other methods (or that contexts are static!), it is impossible to know whether the use of other approaches would have yielded 'better' data. Although the methods selected support and encourage reflexivity which allows for adaptations to be made during this research process, in the end, one must work within the structures and constraints of the project.

Timing has been a significant contextual element of this study. 2020 was a year of global pandemic, presenting both opportunities and limitations. In data set B, researching home-schooling was a chance not to be missed, even though the range of methods from which to select was narrow due to practical considerations associated with lockdowns. It was also important to work quickly, to collect experiences before they were forgotten when schools reopened. The pandemic also impacted the collection of data set A as school visits were impossible during a significant part of 2020 and because schools were under extreme pressure to meet infection prevention requirements. Timmermans and Tavory (2012) argue that part of working abductively involves being able to return to the research phenomena following a consideration of existing theory. Unfortunately, multiple visits to schools or spending extended time periods in schools were not possible.

That the research has been carried out in Norway, which as explained above provides rather particular conditions in which to study student participation, might be considered a limitation in terms of transferability. Yet it is the uniqueness of the Norwegian context which presents an opportunity for broader reflection elsewhere. For example, what has contributed to the creation of Norway's extensive framework of requirements for participation, both in schools and elsewhere in society, and how does this framework influence practice? Furthermore, why, despite the existence of requirements and long-standing traditions of participation in Norway, is it challenging in practice? This research indicates that these conditions are insufficient on their own, raising the question: what kind of participation is necessary to bring about learning, and what conditions are necessary to create this kind of participation? These considerations are of value in every context where learning is important.

4.8 Summary

Fundamental to this study is an appreciation of the complexity of school life, the multifarious experiences of student participation described by the members of school communities, and the ways in which these are constructed through their shifting interactions and interrelationships. With this in mind, capturing and understanding these experiences and understandings within different school communities is far from simple. Applying critical pragmatism has provided this study with a way forward by encouraging a critical examination of the research contexts and the stance of both researcher and respondent, whilst also ensuring a focus on the creation of theory applicable in practice. Mixed methods are highly compatible with these objectives. An abductive approach to analysis has enabled the data to be examined in light of existing theories, with the intention of developing new theories. As Timmermans and Tavory (2012, p. 173) explain 'in-depth knowledge of multiple theorizations is thus necessary…to stimulate insights about innovative or original theoretical contributions'. The contributions of the papers in this study are now explored in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 The Papers

5.1 Paper 1: *Redefining student voice: applying the lens of critical pragmatism*

Jones, M-A. & Hall, V.J. (2021): Redefining student voice: applying the lens of critical pragmatism, Oxford Review of Education, https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2021.2003190

(Published online 30.11.2021)

In this paper the existing uses and understandings of the concept of student voice as presented in the literature are explored. The genealogy of the concept of student voice during the past thirty years is traced, incorporating its prevalence in policy and practice accelerated by both the ratification of the UNCRC in 1990 and an emphasis on accountability in schools, including how student voice has been positioned within various discourses, emancipatory, democratic and consumerist, among others. The tensions of student voice as a concept are discussed, specifically its dichotomous associations with accountability on one hand and emancipatory ideals on the other. Two important models (Hart, 1992 and Fielding, 2011) are examined. How these understandings and positioning of student voice have impacted on practice is considered, providing responses to research questions RQ1 and RQ2. Both idealistic and tokenistic approaches are described as well as the challenges practitioners face due to diverse understandings and complex power issues.

Critical pragmatism, it is argued here, can help to find a way through the tensions and confusion associated with the practice of student voice, thus enabling the addressing of research question RQ3. Combining critical thinking with an emphasis on what works in practice, critical pragmatism invites contextual sensitivity and reflexive inquiry. It is suggested that critical pragmatism invites questions about what works for whom, at what time, in which context and why, as well as encouraging an awareness of power. Not for power to be overcome, but rather how an alternative understanding of power as immanent can encourage more nuanced practices connected with student voice. This mitigates against any unquestioning wholesale implementation of student voice.

Through a focus on dialogue and co-creation, it is argued in Paper 1 that student voice can enable teachers to be critically reflexive, thinking less about ‘best practice’ and more about learning together with students in imperfect but potentially transformative ways. The paper suggests a different approach to the practice of student voice in schools; as interwoven with practice. It invites schools to reject student voice as a tool for improvement or as a tokenistic nod towards democratic education and urges them to adopt student voice practices which acknowledge and challenge existing power structures. The paper also suggests a need for empirical research, to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and barriers experienced by teachers and students relating to student voice. Likewise the paper explores practices which might exemplify students and teachers as active, co-creating members of learning communities, thus highlighting the potential for student voice to become about everyone's learning. Paper 2 illustrates how student voice, when integral to everyday interactions rather than 'implemented', can become a foundation for the critical reflexivity that is essential for learning and partnership.

5.2 Paper 2: *Exploring student participation in Norwegian schools*

Jones, M. A., & Dehlin, E. (under review). *Exploring student participation in Norwegian schools***.** Submitted to the Scandinavian Journal of Education.

This paper builds on pragmatist theory explored in Paper 1 and presents findings from data set A, which suggest diverse and confusing understandings and practices of student participation within and across the seven schools involved in the research. Students, teachers and school leaders were generally enthusiastic about student participation, with some respondents talking positively about shared learning experiences. Examples given of adults and students creating projects together, learning through shared play and problem-solving through dialogue stood out. In contrast, questions to gauge the understanding of student participation were met with doubt from respondents and in two focus groups teachers queried the purpose of student participation. The adults were aware of their formal responsibilities to facilitate for students to participate, yet they were uncertain how to achieve a modus operandi. This was especially clear from the questions about leading for participation, respondents found it difficult to describe the intentions of leaders and leaders were worried about exposing teachers to risks.

It was clear that schools had not developed shared understandings of student participation; some school leaders described this as the most significant challenge to developing viable practice. There were signs of reticence, uncertainty and a lack of clarity among the adults, often connected to perceived barriers of time and organisation, but also concerns about student participation leading to chaos or threatening traditional power structures. Students also expressed mixed opinions:in the survey, for example, students were less enthusiastic about their ability to participate and their desire to participate than students in the focus groups. This could be explained in several ways, but two recurring themes emerged: uncertainty about what student participation is and experiences of frustration when they had been 'allowed' to participate. Students in one school said they had "given up" following attempts to be heard, and other students described not being listened to even if they were given the opportunity to have an opinion. These conflicting experiences can be seen both as an expression of confusion and as a product of contradictions among the legislative framework, values, expectations and the influence of accountability. Thus, they provide invaluable responses to RQ1 and RQ2 in this study.

Arguably, the most significant barrier identified was a lack of shared understanding about student participation. The paper proposes a model to assist schools in overcoming this: a topography of student participation. Using the findings, four different ways of expressing and practising student participation are presented:

- Student as ‘Own Master’
- Student as ‘Co-creator’
- Student as ‘Prince’ or ‘Princess’
- Student as ‘Generation Z’.

The intention is to provide schools with an uncomplicated focus for reflection and a starting point from which to develop shared perceptions through dialogue. Positioned upon axes of power (to and against) and relational (individual and social), the model allows for a consideration of how the various framings of student participation are expressions of different kinds of power and relational interactions.

The findings showed that student participation-as-co-creation was experienced by respondents as the most authentic and positive form of participation and learning. Students, teachers and leaders animatedly described the motivation and (in some cases) joy they had experienced when collaborating with each other. This led to the suggestion that participation is best understood as co-creation, inviting considerations of what this means for the roles of adults and students, implicating a need for redefinitions. In particular, Paper 2 argues that for student participation to become about learning, inclusivity and collectivity, it requires that student and adults are positioned both as subjects in their own lives and as partners with each other. A consideration of what it might mean to lead through co-creation and collaboration is invited, where the focus is on interactions. In this way, it is suggested, Norwegian schools will be closer to providing democratic education which is required by the updated national curriculum and fundamental to Norwegian society. These conclusions support responses to RQ3 and the overarching question, implying both the actions of school leaders and the conditions needed for student participation to develop.

The responses of Norwegian schools to the particular challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic as experienced by students, teachers, parents and school leaders is explored in Paper 3.

5.3 Paper 3: *Learning from the COVID-19 home-schooling experience: Listening to pupils, parents/carers and teachers*

Bubb, S., & Jones, M.-A. (2020). Learning from the COVID-19 home-schooling experience: Listening to pupils, parents/carers and teachers. *Improving Schools*, *23*(3), 209-222. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1365480220958797

Paper 3 presents data collected during school closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic in April 2020. The situation presented a rare opportunity to explore learning and participation during a time of crisis and therefore this paper offers a unique contribution to the thesis. It presents the experiences of students alongside other members of school communities, allowing for valuable comparisons. Students reported that they experienced:

- more participation than during normal school
- more choice and freedom in learning activities
- more power by organising their own schedules
- greater liberty to join in discussions.

These findings indicate that questions need to be asked about the structures which both constrain and enable student participation, as well as providing responses to RQ1 and the overarching question about conditions for student participation. Potentially, home-schooling allowed for a redefining of roles for teachers and students: students experienced more responsibility for their learning which for many resulted in more and better learning. Reflections about the impact of changed circumstances on student participation provide answers to RQ2: for example, what happens when barriers related to structure and time are removed? RQ3 is addressed both through the responses of school leaders about their wishes to build on the experiences of home-schooling, but also by reflecting upon the organisational structures and practices which both constrain and enable student participation.

Paper 3 has received considerable attention internationally. At the time of writing, in the year since its publication, it has been cited almost 170 times by researchers around the world and viewed/downloaded more than 75,000 times, as well as being used in UK and EU policy documents. Using the responses of 2000 students, parents, teachers and school leaders from all eight schools in a Norwegian municipality, it demonstrates that rather than home-schooling being experienced as negative and detrimental to students' learning, the situation provided opportunities for creative learning activities, more meaningful assessment and greater flexibility and involvement for students. Teachers, parents and students described improved student motivation and were overwhelmingly positive about gains made in learning during the period. Clearly, all members of the school community were part of making the home-schooling experience a success. School leaders reported that they were keen to build on these gains, and it is argued that schools had a kick-start to important aspects of the new Norwegian national curriculum (explored further in Jones & Bubb, 2020b), especially those which link the joy of learning to participation, creativity and being active in learning processes. The findings suggest that much can be taken forward from these experiences and that school leaders intended to do so. In particular, the connections between participation and more learning in the research suggest that schools critically consider how to enable more flexible approaches to learning in which children are given more opportunities to be active in their own learning: making informed choices, planning activities and problem-solving.

5.4 Overall Contribution of the Papers

Taken together, the papers present a strong case for student participation as an integral and invaluable part of learning and school life, both during normal circumstances and during a time of crisis. Figure 12 presents an overview of the findings in all three papers (SV/P is an abbreviation of student/voice participation), which collectively provide answers to the research question and the overarching question. There is clear agreement among the papers.

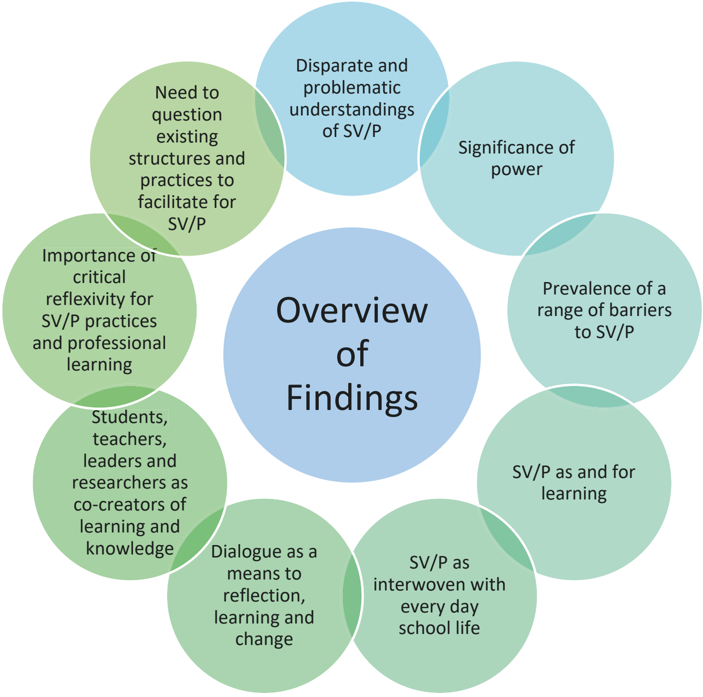
Overview of Findings
Disparate and problematic understandings of SV/P
Significance of power
Prevalence of a range of barriers to SV/P
SV/P as and for learning
SV/P as interwoven with every day school life
Dialogue as a means to reflection, learning and change
Students, teachers, leaders and researchers as co-creators of learning and knowledge
Importance of critical reflexivity for SV/P practices and professional learning
Need to question existing structures and practices to facilitate for SV/P

Figure 12: An Overview of the Findings

By tracing the development of student voice, Paper 1 draws attention to challenges with the concept and rejecting it as defined in current discourses. Paper 2 reveals how these difficulties impact practice, showing how disparate understandings of student participation create uncertainties and barriers. Paper 3 raises questions about why, if such obstacles are prevalent, did students experience greater participation in a time of crisis? Acting as a magnifying glass on home-schooling in one municipality, the findings in Paper 3 imply much about life during normal schooling, thus inviting critical reflections on the traditional organisational practices of schools and an exploration of 'what if?' school structures were transformed. Providing a number of recommendations centred around a critically pragmatist perspective, Paper 1 emphasises critical reflexivity, awareness of power and dialogue, suggesting how things might be different. The findings in Paper 2 enrich these recommendations, allowing insight into manifestations of power as well as positive examples of participation, leading to conclusions about the necessary conditions for participation. In Paper 2, learning was experienced by adults and students when participation was understood and practiced as co-creation, inviting consideration of implications for school leaders and for schools as organisations. Paper 1 also suggests ways in which schools might create the conditions for student voice, proposing that it should become integral to students' and teachers' learning. Papers 2 and 3 demonstrate the richness of Norway as a research context. The discussion of these matters is taken further in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 Discussion

This chapter explains the contribution of this study both through a consideration of how it addresses the research questions and how it contributes to the field of educational research in a wider sense. In Chapter 1, an overarching question was posed: What are the necessary conditions for student participation in schools? This was addressed through three research questions:

RQ1: What are the current understandings and practices of student participation in schools?

RQ2: What challenges and barriers to student participation exist in schools?

RQ3: How might school leaders lead the development of student participation practices?

RQ1 offers an opportunity for sense-making within a complex topic. RQ2 allows for an exploration of difficulties with student participation. RQ3 invites interpretation of the findings to enable the development of theory about leading schools. Chapter 6 is structured according to the research questions, concluding with a discussion of how the study addresses the overarching question.

6.1 What are the current understandings and practices of student participation in schools?

The literature review in Chapter 3 shows that both student voice and student participation is variously framed by researchers according to different agendas. Accountability, compliance, emancipation, partnership and dialogue are all part of understanding the genealogy of student voice/participation but are uneasy bedfellows. The often-conflicting framings of student voice/participation lead to difficulties for practitioners. Although student participation is the preferred and seemingly more nuanced concept, it remains elusive. In Paper 1 we argue that for teachers and leaders to feel positive about student participation, they first need to understand it. We have previously described how researchers can work together in partnerships with schools to develop meaningful understandings of student participation (Jones & Hall, 2021), and this thesis further advocates for this. Findings from data set A show diverse and rather confusing understandings of student participation among students and adults. Several teachers and leaders talked about needing to create shared understandings as a first step. Data set B presented in Paper 3 contributes in two ways, first by revealing student participation practices during the pandemic, and second by indicating positive associations between student participation and learning among teachers, students and parents. Collectively the papers demonstrate a need for the topography of student participation (Figure 13) presented in this thesis. The primary intention of the model is to demonstrate that there are different ways of understanding and creating student participation. The axes can assist understanding the particularities of each type in terms of its associations with power and collectiveness, as well as aiding comparison. In particular, the power axis is rooted in the discussions in Chapter 2 of productive and processual power as related to subject-ness, the ‘power to’ participate positively as well as the expressions of power revealed in the findings from data set A.

Figure 13 is developed from the model presented in Paper 2 as well as an earlier publication (Dehlin & Jones, 2021), which showed four differing types of student participation. Inspired by Weberian ideal types (Weber, 1903/1947), the topography suggests four kinds of student participation for use as an impetus and a framework for discussion by schools, potentially enabling the development of a contextually situated shared understanding. Strandbakken (2017) highlights Weber’s insistence that ideal types are not normative, but ‘intended as ‘an intellectual space filled with meanings’ (ibid, p. 60) and Weber himself writes about understanding, expressing and constructing, not ‘a description of reality’ (Weber, 1947). The topography has been a work-in-progress, indicated by Figure 1 in Chapter 1. We initially constructed the types of student participation using existing theories of participation and research on student voice/participation combined with professional experiences of supporting Norwegian schools with the new national curriculum (see Dehlin & Jones, 2021). At this early stage, the model was not described as a topography, rather, the intention of the model was to support schools to find a way through theories of student participation, to provide a language to describe their understandings and practices. Greene (2007) suggests the creation of a matrix as a way of representing relationships and interpretations identified during analysis. In the writing of Paper 2, the model was enhanced using findings from data set A; descriptions of understandings, examples, concerns and wishes affirmed the choices of the types and expanded descriptions. In keeping with an abductive approach, we used the model as a means to understand the findings, to ‘reframe empirical findings in contrast to existing theories’ (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 174), and the findings to develop the model; we expected to see examples of the types but were also prepared to be surprised. Taking account of these experiences of participation relayed in the empirical data, it felt more appropriate to describe the model as a topography; a ‘meta-inference’ (Collins et al., 2012, p. 857; Greene, 2007) of the mixed data resulting from the abductive process of moving between theory and empirical data. ‘Topography’ suggests relationality and multidimensionality (Malpas, 2012), enabling different perspectives on a concept which depend on where one’s standpoint is as well as different emphases and contours. Findings from data set A suggest that in some schools, certain understandings and practices of student participation are more prevalent and recognisable than others, for example. Paper 2 argues that participation as co-creation is more desirable, albeit seemingly rarer in schools. The topography is ‘a mapping of the territory’ (Malpas, 2014, p. 30) of student participation, providing a productive rather than restrictive ‘boundedness’ (ibid., p. 29) in which schools can make sense of the concept by locating themselves. Using the topography to take a ‘bird’s-eye-view’ schools may consider the varied ways in which student participation is emphasised practised and understood in their contexts. ‘Standing’ within one quadrant, schools can explore their position in relation to others, enabling critical awareness of their context. Not to be confused with topology, which, although also potentially useful in this thesis, is more evocative of the elastic natures of relations within space and time (Ratner, 2020).

Figure 13 presented in this chapter is a modified version of the model in Paper 2, developed here from a meta-interpretation of the integrated data sets A and B in relation to RQ1 and 2. Following further review, the shorthand types have become proactive, emphasising actions, intentions and experiences of participation. In addition, the labelling of quadrant or mode B as ‘learning co-creatively’ highlights the interdependence of participation (when understood as co-creation) and learning. The new topography of student participation topography lessens any potential for children to be categorised and it helps demonstrate the relationality of participation; rather than children arriving in the classroom pre-formed as ‘princes’ or ‘princesses’, the topography allows consideration of how differing forms of participation are fostered through the actions of all involved. For instance, how do adults frame participation negatively as ‘getting my own way’, so generating that perception among the children? Or, more positively, what happened during home school to bring about new experiences of participation?

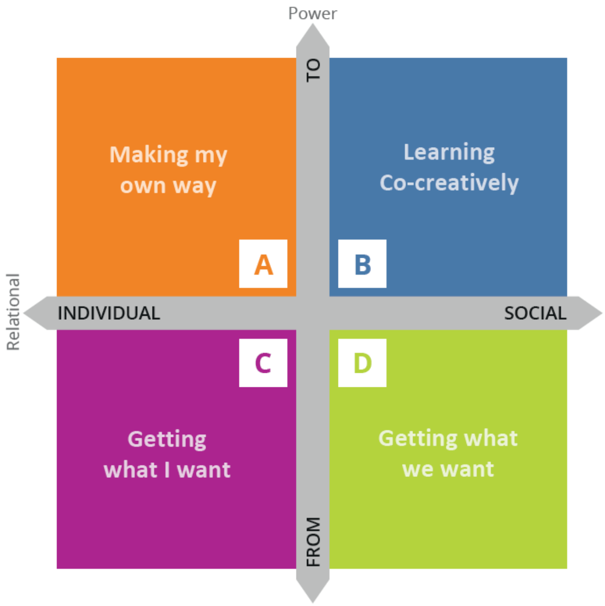

Figure 13: A topography of student participation

The topography is not a reflection of any given 'realities', nor does it present an aspirational hierarchy of participation. Existing research presented in Chapter 3 above, identifies experiences of all four modes of participation in schools. Likewise, all four modes describe participation as more than just turning up so there are positive intentions evident in each. In mode A, 'Making my own way' was demonstrated through accounts of students in data set A seeing no point or even disadvantages to working with others, preferring to have control over their own learning and viewing teachers as deliverers of the necessary information. In data set B, where collaborative learning was more challenging due to the pandemic, mode A was reinforced by descriptions of students enjoying organising their own learning, undisturbed by classmates and teachers' interferences. This went beyond simply getting one's own way (which is represented by mode C), rather, students seemed to relish the freedom to make choices which benefited their learning. Mode C, 'Getting what I want' represents perhaps the most prevalent and frustrating form of participation. Adults and students talked about ways in which 'either/or' options were given relating to levels of difficulty or choosing between types of activity which had more to do with personal preference than learning. A worry for adults were students wanting to have their own way in a threatening demonstration of power which potentially eroded established authority, leading to chaos. The title of this thesis: ***'We hope it isn't about them deciding everything!'***, a quotation from a teacher in data set A, articulates this concern. For students, classmates who shouted the loudest and were heard most often by teachers are also represented by mode C. Some student council interactions described by respondents illustrated mode D, ‘Getting what we want’, especially those where students felt compelled to campaign for or against adults’ decisions because they felt subjugated or ignored. These ‘us against them’ positions were far from community-building.

In contrast, mode B, ‘Learning co-creatively’, was exemplified by project work, adults and students co-designing learning activities and solving problems in partnership. Such opportunities were described by respondents in data set A as occurring mainly in the classroom, whereas in data set B, the unusual situation of home-schooling apparently led to the redefining of where and how learning took place, creating opportunities for students to learn co-creatively with others (e.g. parents) in alternative arenas. More creativity, better feedback and increased feelings of participation for students were reported by respondents, perhaps due to the removal of traditional structures and the organising of new ways of communicating between teachers and students. ‘Freed’ from the constraints of the classroom and school structures students had more opportunities to define their own learning experiences and teachers were willing to try different activities. The findings encapsulated by mode B are consistent with social constructionist and pragmatist framings of ‘participation-as-and-for-learning’ discussed earlier in this thesis: the co-creation of knowledge through shared experiences which is underpinned by reflexive inquiry and facilitated through dialogue.

As a précis of various understandings and practices, the topography offers an opportunity for schools to work with the difficulties and opportunities of student participation as well as providing ‘answers’ to RQ1 and 2. As already explained, the difficulties of understanding student participation are a significant barrier to developing student participation practices. There are a good many more challenges, discussed below in relation to RQ2.

6.2 What challenges and barriers to student participation exist in schools?

The literature review in Chapter 3 revealed a range of challenges along a spectrum from potentially threatening radicalism at one end and tokenistic practices for compliance at the other. Fostered by the overuse of accountability measures and the so-called empowerment of children, adults fear a disruption of necessary control and predictability. Feelings of urgency and lost learning contribute to ‘participation-as-and-for-learning’ being forgotten in the drive to raise test results. Concerns like the one in the title of this thesis pervaded among teachers and leaders in data set A. Findings from data set A demonstrate that mixed and confused understandings of student participation lead to practice which is dominated by confusion and pervasive issues of control, power and fear on one hand, and laissez-faire attitudes on the other. Although there exists an appreciation and a will to enable students to participate among leaders and teachers, driven both by requirements in the new curriculum in Norway as well as societal expectations, there is a general feeling of uncertainty about what to do. Students are keen to participate at the same time as appreciating the challenges experienced by teachers. Students were rather united in their experiences: despite adults raising doubts about students' maturity and readiness for participation, there was little difference in the examples of participation (or lack thereof) given by the students; themes of frustration and futility recurred, regardless of the students' ages. Leaders demonstrate empathy with teachers' confusion and students' frustration but had little to say about their role in shaping a culture and modus operandi for student participation.

In Paper 1, we draw attention to the potential risks of student voice for teachers, pointing to literature which reveals teachers feeling threatened by students gaining too much power (e.g. Nelson, 2018) and concerns about loss of control over the learning if students are allowed to have a say, relating particularly to students' perceived ability to participate (e.g. Biddle & Mitra, 2015). In data set A, these concerns are echoed by teachers and leaders, who express worries about getting through the curriculum, meeting diverse expectations and the erosion of their position as professionals. Perryman and Calvert (2020, p. 18) describe the pressures of being a teacher due to a 'target accountability culture' and a subsequent perceived 'need to perform'. Although Norway has a lesser degree of accountability than several other Western countries (Hutch, 2013), teachers in one school in this study talked about feeling judged by their students and expressed a fear of failure. In another school, teachers wondered about the political motivations of the prominence of student participation in the updated Norwegian national curriculum (Udir, 2018), perceiving that their professional identity was being undermined by an agenda to increase students' motivation and improve results. Leaders were also concerned about the emotional impact on teachers of students having more of a say, and how participation might present practical challenges in classrooms, leading to further frustration for teachers.

The comments written by students in data set B revealed much about the challenges of student participation. Their descriptions of home-schooling contained feelings of freedom from the normality of teacher-led activities and mundane textbook exercises. They wanted teachers to try new things more often, indicating convergence with data set A in respondents described teachers' reluctance for open, less predictable activities. Students' hopes for more collaborative and investigative activities and more regular opportunities to design their own methods and daily routines suggest that under normal circumstances such experiences are limited. Although the findings say less about the reasons why adults are not able or willing to facilitate for student participation, they suggest school cultures which are characterised by teacher direction and conventional teacher-student roles, consistent with both the findings in the literature and findings in data set A. The apprehensions and hierarchies of control are connected to understandings of power as finite and transferrable: adults are concerned about how a perceived emancipation of students may erode their professional status and fundamentally, their ability to do their job. Students seek a greater portion of the power, feeling monitored and restricted. The topography of student participation (Figure 13) depicts ‘power to’; rather than students and adults seeking uncomfortably to share power, power is created through their interrelationships: they co-create the power to learn together as subjects.

The challenges described so far in answer to RQ2 suggest considerable implications for the work of school leaders. These are discussed below, in addressing RQ3.

6.3 How might school leaders lead the development of student participation practices?

The school leaders in data set A saw connections between participation and better learning; they valued students’ ideas and saw links between teachers’ learning and participation. The leaders in data set B were keen to continue the momentum of change after the pandemic. However, despite positivity, understandings were unclear and leaders’ concern with student participation outside the formalities of student councils was almost non-existent. As such, they were part of reinforcing and creating challenges and barriers. If leaders themselves lack a clear understanding of why and how to lead for student participation, it seems unlikely that practices will develop.

Shapiro (2003) describes increasing complexity for school leaders as they tackle the demands and expectations placed on schools in an apparently increasingly unsafe and uncertain world. Riley (2017, p. 139) points to how schools in the United Kingdom are required to manage ‘an uncertain and fast-moving policy environment’ related to building tolerance in the face of extremism and intolerance, whilst Shapiro (2003) writes about the fears of schools in the United States about violent attacks. Combined with the ever-present pressures related to efficiency, effectiveness and the ‘terrors of performativity’ (Ball, 2003, p. 215), it is perhaps unsurprising that in a ‘quest for security’ (Shapiro, 2003, p. 258) the search continues for the ‘Holy Grail’ of leadership (Pye, 2005, p. 31). It would be tempting to address the ambiguities and frustrations expressed by leaders, teachers and students in the findings from data set A and the intentions of the leaders in data set B with a new model of leadership designed to meet challenges, produce action and provide certainty.

There seems, however, to be potential in viewing unpredictability as opportunity instead of a source of stress to be mitigated for. In our own research on school leaders during the Covid-19 pandemic in Norway (Jones et al., 2021), we found that some schools developed like never before. School leaders were able to harness their skills of improvisation and critical reflexivity honed under 'normal' circumstances to restructure and redesign, creating conditions for teachers to experiment and collaborate in new ways. Findings from data set B corroborates these findings. Although the data from school leaders in data set B is somewhat limited, it reveals the desires of school leaders to further develop student participation practices. The question that this thesis asks is how? Choosing to respond to Gronn's (2003, p. 285) call for 'intellectual modesty, and for a much more measured and parsimonious approach to leadership' than specific leadership styles, this study proposes that leading be primarily seen in terms of relationality and interactions. Maintaining attention on processes which are 'fluid, interactive and reciprocal' (Møller et al., 2007, p. 81) rather than the achievement of specific goals might be seen as inefficient and ambiguous, yet it is the processes of development through reflexivity that are connected with 'participation-as-and-for-learning', not the achievement of targets. Tulowitzski (2012) describes how principals' workdays typically consist of dealing with tasks perceived as urgent and consequently having little time for school development. This dilemma underpins the tokenistic, add on approaches to student participation described in the literature review as well as time pressures mentioned by teachers and leaders in data set A: if participation is viewed as a defined activity which must be squeezed in between other demands then it is unlikely to have any meaningful connection with learning.

When leaders see schools as communities and their role as part of co-constructing, as inquiring, as producing knowledge, as reflecting together with everyone else then 'leadership by numbers' (Heffernan, 2016, p. 379) fades in significance. Discussions of power sharing and the empowerment of others become obsolete; rather, power is understood to be produced through interactions, as well as being a productive element in the creation of knowledge. Leaders who see their own learning as dependent on others in the community see their actions as contributing to, but not defining others' learning processes. It then becomes possible to focus on the processes of leading and learning through interactions; not by leaders seeking agreement, but by taking a 'complexity perspective' (Close & Raynor, 2010, p. 220) which is guided by purpose, not goals. For leaders to develop student participation practices, they need to participate and learn together with others, modelling yes, but also organising for others to understand and experience participating, co-creating and reflecting. It is less about leaders working to achieve collective consensus, being rather about the practice of Deweyan democracy understood as diversity and criticality, what Louis (2003, p. 105) describes as 'the ability to engage in civilised but semi-permanent disagreement'. Instead of seeking to smooth over ‘paradox, dilemma and debate’ (Close & Raynor, 2010, p. 222), already part of the everyday life of schools, leaders can recognise them as moments for critical reflexivity. It is hard to say whether practising leading in these ways is more challenging than trying to adopt a leadership style. Whilst there is no recipe to follow and no guarantee of ‘results’, perhaps it is a more authentic recognition of the working lives of school leaders which acknowledges their subject-ness (Biesta, 2022), allowing them to lead schools in multiple and contextually sensitive ways.

As a whole, these answers to research questions RQs 1, 2 and 3 provide the means to address the overarching question, which will be discussed in the following section.

6.4 What are the necessary conditions for student participation in schools?

The literature presented in Chapter 3 provided an array of examples of how adults and students could create the conditions in schools necessary for student participation. Inclusive, respectful school cultures, maintained through dialogic communication and mutual respect for each other’s contributions are essential. Adults and students are equal participants in the creation and maintenance of such cultures, the everyday ways in which they relate to each other are important. Experiences of fear, retribution, excessive control and rigidity are significant barriers to ‘participation-as-and-for-learning’ and attempts to utilise student participation as a tool for admonishment or motivation are damaging. Leaders need to be critically aware of the structures and practices they organise for, aiming to avoid associations of student participation with compliance. Literature and findings presented in this study indicate the need for ‘ordinariness’: ‘participation-as-and-for-learning’ cannot be a one-off event; it needs to become part of the myriad of interactions within schools. The findings in this study suggest that participation feels genuine for students and teachers when it is integral to learning; not as an after-thought or an add-on.

Although adults and students have equal roles in the development of conditions for student participation, prevailing structures within schools afford adults (especially teachers and leaders) specific responsibilities. The significance of leaders has been discussed above, but teachers risk being continually positioned as objects unless they are also able to see their own participation as essential to learning and act accordingly. Critically reflecting on the structures and routines they feel confined by but which they also help to preserve, thinking about ways to facilitate and participate in dialogue with students which strengthen their professionalism, inviting multiplicity rather than seeking conformity for themselves and their students are all potential ways forward for teachers. More research would be beneficial.

These suggestions will remain alien, however, if schools and researchers are not clear about the purpose of student participation. It must not be to serve adults' agendas. Understanding student participation as inseparable from learning, the core purpose of schooling, indicates a framing of 'participation-as-and-for-learning', rather than participation for compliance and improved results. An important guiding principle for schools wishing to develop their student voice practice is to maintain focus on the *purpose* of student participation and how their decisions and actions bring about or hinder intentions. *Purpose* for Dewey (1938) is about significance rather than end points or targets to be checked off. This is an important point, given the reductionist reification of student participation previously discussed (Hall, 2017). Giving shape and meaning to the continuous interactions and endeavours, purposes 'direct the activities' (ibid., p. 67) rather than being something to be achieved (Dewey, 1922). Furthermore, purposes cannot be decided upon by an individual. In *Experience and Education* (1938) Dewey is clear about 'the importance of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct the activities', warning against an overemphasis on the 'teacher's purpose' (ibid, p. 71) and suggesting that purposes be developed 'through reciprocal give-and-take' (ibid. p. 72).

'Participation-as-and-for-learning' is not a new concept; indeed, it could be described as Deweyan. What this thesis has shown, however, is that neither research nor practice is sufficiently aware of its significance as a guiding principle in schools. Therefore, an understanding of 'participation-as-and-for-learning' as the purpose of participation is an essential condition, hence its position at the centre of Figure 14: *Actions for Participation*, which will now be explained.

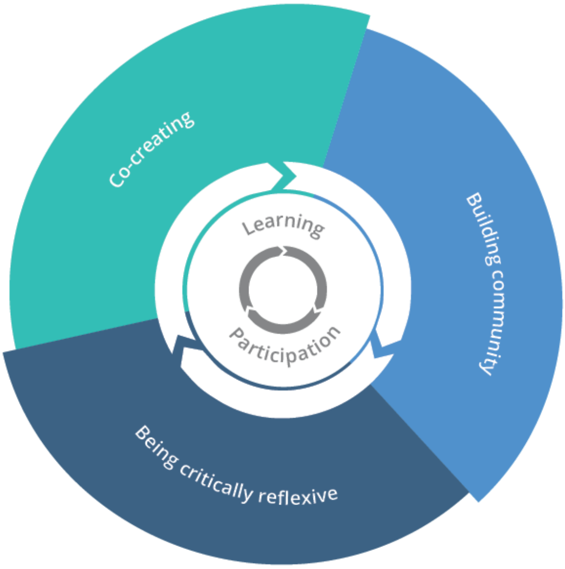

Figure 14: Actions for Participation

Figure 14 is primarily intended as a visual representation of the key points of this thesis and has two important functions. It has been developed as a meta-consideration of the findings from the literature and the research. First, it summarises the actions necessary to create the conditions for student participation discussed in this thesis, thus addressing the overarching question. Second, it defines and describes the concept and practices of student participation when understood as symbiotic with learning: ‘participation-as-and-for-learning’. In this sense, it may be a useful contribution to research as it emphasises and explains this definition, potentially serving to clarify but also inviting to further research. Building on Figure 13, Figure 14 might be helpful for schools wishing to identify what can be done to support the development of participation practices. It is recognised that, as with all such models, Figure 14 is a simplification of a great variety of complex practices and understandings, but there are some important nuances. Note the title of Figure 14. The removal of ‘student’ is deliberate, it is not accidental that ‘participation’ rather than ‘student participation’ is used. Arguably, an over-emphasis on *student* participation serves to demarcate boundaries and inequalities instead of encouraging inclusion. ‘Participation-as-and-for-learning’ is for all and is dependent on the involvement of all. Thus, the actions are intended for students and adults alike, they cannot be performed by one group without the other, nor by individuals isolated from each other.

At the centre of Figure 14 are ‘learning’ and ‘participation’, connected by arrows. These arrows indicate the essentiality and mutuality of the actions of learning and participation which Dewey described in 1916 and which has been discussed throughout this thesis. Around and integrated with this centre are three overlapping circles: ‘Building community’, ‘Being critically reflexive’ and ‘Inviting co-creativity’. These circles represent elements of ‘participation-as-and-for-learning’ and actions for the creation of necessary conditions for it. The use of verbs is intentional, emphasising the need for children and adults in schools to consciously *act*. The actions are overlapping and continuous, indicating process and interdependency.

‘Building community’ requires an appreciation of interrelations, a commitment to inclusivity, diversity and responsiveness to evolving needs of the community, enabling schools to consciously reflect and develop democratic societal values. Communities can be places ‘where knowledge is explored in all its complexity’ (Larson, 2000, p. 311), allowing for the collaborative creation of knowledge and understanding. In everyday practice this describes the ways in which everyone is involved, valued and respected as equally significant in spaces throughout schools, which may include meetings, classrooms, corridors, playgrounds, parent committees. Being conscious about the shared purpose of building community can provide a new guiding principle for the ways in which students and adults interact: organising, inquiring, reflecting and problem-solving together. For leaders in schools, this may involve building and maintaining consciousness about community-building as a joint venture, ideally in the myriad of everyday activities in schools, rather than community-building being seen as a special and occasional activity.

‘Being critically reflexive’ enables a continual critical awareness of structures, norms and practices in schools, questioning how and why they exist and daring to make potentially radical changes in order to build community through co-creation. This is vital for school communities to be responsive to the dynamic needs of the people within them. Leaders have a responsibility to ask important questions that enable reflection rather than seeking quick fixes. An example of this is leaders and teachers examining routines which are intended to help families to ‘fit in’ to a school’s existing structures, thinking about how the school community can evolve to respond to their needs, viewing diversity as an asset which enriches the community rather than a hurdle to overcome. Another example is opportunities being created (perhaps necessarily initiated by leaders) to enable teachers and students to evaluate classroom practices together, using experiences to develop new ideas.

‘Co-creating’ is an essential part of building community and being reflexive as it describes the myriad ways in which members of school communities work together to create and re-create experiences, meanings and knowledge. Listening, engaging in dialogue, questioning, exploring ideas together, being willing to try new practices are all examples of co-creating in action which help to build community through reflexivity. Teachers and students can work together on projects in the classroom and school leaders, teachers and students can collaborate on school improvement projects. Rather than schools looking externally for ‘answers’ to how they can improve learning, students and adults can co-create knowledge about contextually appropriate practices.

Figure 14 encapsulates the social constructionist relationality of participation-as-and-for-learning, whilst also providing actions for all which contribute to the creation of necessary conditions, and which are rooted in pragmatist traditions. Recommendations, suggestions for future research and conclusions are presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

Participation in schools is not a notion to be 'made time for' or merely 'implemented'. Participation is an essential, integral component of school life.

Without the active and continual involvement of students as subjects, together with adults, learning is reduced to a process by which empty young minds are filled for the purpose of passing tests. This study has emphasised the essential relationship between participation and learning, which although described by Dewey more than a century ago, seems largely unrecognised in schools. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated the importance of widening the concept of participation to include students, teachers and leaders as they co-create learning interdependently through a myriad of interactions. Schools can be much more than places for the moulding and equipping of children for job markets. Developing schools as communities which resonate as, and prepare for, democratic societies characterised by diversity, inclusivity and reflexivity is both an outcome of and the conditions necessary for participation. This may be the way in which schools are able to adapt and meet the considerable challenges of our world.

In Norway, the latest national curriculum (Udir, 2018) aims to develop learners for an ever-changing world: children and adults are positioned as active participants in their own learning and that of others. This presents a unique and timely opportunity for a reframing of roles and rethinking of practice. As schools grapple with the fundamental changes outlined in the curriculum, the contributions made by this study become increasingly pertinent within a national context. More widely, this study has relevance for all schools exploring ways to become places in which leaders, teachers and students can grow and learn together as subjects in their own lives. The proposals of this thesis are listed below.

1. Student voice as a concept has become too problematic and should be refurbished within the broader, more encompassing understandings of student participation.
2. Schools should develop an understanding of 'participation-as-and-for-learning' and foster it as a guiding principle for everyday practice. Tools such as the topography of student participation and the Actions for Participation model presented herein can aid this development.
3. Participation should extend beyond the experiences of students to include all members of the school community. This will almost certainly involve a rethinking of roles. Instead of seeking control and predictability, teachers and leaders can experience the excitement and motivation of co-creating with each other and their students. Leaders should be encouraged to see themselves as participants alongside students and teachers, rather than being defined

> by specific leadership styles. This is not to erode the importance of the professional activities of teachers and leaders, but rather to emphasise ‘participation-as-and-for-learning’, for creating meaning and new opportunities for all.

This study is not intended as a definitive, stand-alone study containing a universally applicable operating manual for student participation. It is an introduction to student participation in the unique context of Norway; there is much more to be understood.

Indeed, in the spirit of Deweyan inquiry, the ‘solutions’ and models presented here offer opportunities for intelligent action and further investigation. This thesis is also an invitation for further research both within Norway and elsewhere. Its value includes the exploration of a unique and fascinating context for student participation, a context in which the structures and cultures already exist but challenges remain.

The topic is vital and dynamic. Experiences and understandings of student participation in schools are being shaped continuously. Perhaps fortuitously, the Covid pandemic unearthed an entirely new avenue for research, centred around home-schooling, which was captured in data set B. The wide circulation of Paper 3 indicates an appetite for the topic. This thesis provides tools, ideas and suggestions for how schools might proceed, and it is earnestly hoped that schools make them their own, creating shared understandings and practices through critical reflexivity.

The findings of this study are a snapshot. They reveal complexity, divergence, exciting potential for change as well as frustrations. Taken at another time, in other schools, the snapshot may offer different, equally valid perspectives. Future research in participation in schools may benefit from having more focus on the experiences and interactions of school leaders. Perhaps expanding the range of methods employed to include, for example, observations, or action research in partnership with schools could enable further development of the practices recommended in this study.

This thesis presents ideas which are relevant in a range of educational contexts as well as, arguably, other types of organisations. The intention is to provide stimulus for critically reflexive discussions about participation. It is in the spirit of what Biesta et al (2019, p. 3) describe as ‘problem-posing’ rather than ‘problem-solving’. The provision of instructions lacking contextual sensitivity or critical awareness would contradict social constructionism and critical pragmatism.

Finally, this study can be a springboard for the development of alternative discourses in which leaders, teachers and students are subjects rather than recipients of research findings, policy documents or curricula. Students, teachers and leaders have differing but equally active and vital roles in facilitating each other’s learning and co-creating knowledge, enabling conditions in which they are not as one student in this study described, “part of the audience”, but participating and learning together as equal and integral members of everyday school life.

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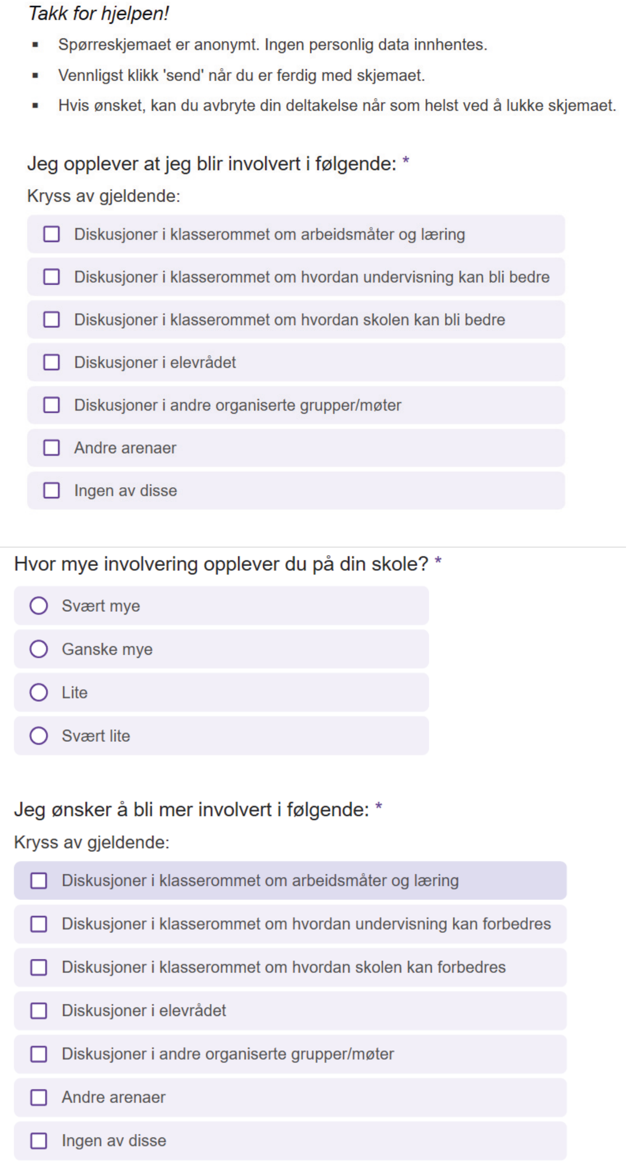
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Data set A survey questions and interview guides



Takk for hjelpen!

- Spørreskjemaet er anonymt. Ingen personlig data innhentes.
- Vennligst klikk 'send' når du er ferdig med skjemaet.
- Hvis ønsket, kan du avbryte din deltakelse når som helst ved å lukke skjemaet.

Jeg opplever at jeg blir involvert i følgende: *

Kryss av gjeldende:

☐ Diskusjoner i klasserommet om arbeidsmåter og læring
☐ Diskusjoner i klasserommet om hvordan undervisning kan bli bedre
☐ Diskusjoner i klasserommet om hvordan skolen kan bli bedre
☐ Diskusjoner i elevrådet
☐ Diskusjoner i andre organiserte grupper/møter
☐ Andre arenaer
☐ Ingen av disse

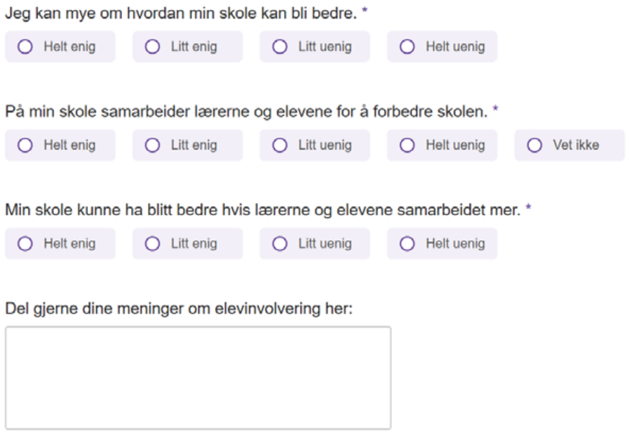
Hvor mye involvering opplever du på din skole? *

○ Svært mye
○ Ganske mye
○ Lite
○ Svært lite

Jeg ønsker å bli mer involvert i følgende: *

Kryss av gjeldende:

☐ Diskusjoner i klasserommet om arbeidsmåter og læring
☐ Diskusjoner i klasserommet om hvordan undervisning kan forbedres
☐ Diskusjoner i klasserommet om hvordan skolen kan forbedres
☐ Diskusjoner i elevrådet
☐ Diskusjoner i andre organiserte grupper/møter
☐ Andre arenaer
☐ Ingen av disse



Jeg kan mye om hvordan min skole kan bli bedre. *

○ Helt enig ○ Litt enig ○ Litt uenig ○ Helt uenig

På min skole samarbeider lærerne og elevene for å forbedre skolen. *

○ Helt enig ○ Litt enig ○ Litt uenig ○ Helt uenig ○ Vet ikke

Min skole kunne ha blitt bedre hvis lærerne og elevene samarbeidet mer. *

○ Helt enig ○ Litt enig ○ Litt uenig ○ Helt uenig

Del gjerne dine meninger om elevinvolvering her:

INTERVIEW GUIDE (School Leader)

The interview will be semi-structured

Introduction

The interview will begin with introductions, followed by an assurance of ethical considerations, a clarification of interview protocol (including that they are free to omit questions, to interrupt, to ask for clarification) and gratitude for participation.

There will then be a short explanation of the purpose of the research as a whole and the purpose of the interview.

Questions may be re-ordered or omitted depending on the outcome of discussions. The term 'Student Voice' may be replaced with 'student involvement' depending on the outcome of discussions.

Main Body

Topic	**Possible Questions**	**Possible Follow-Up Questions**
School improvement	What school improvement measures are you currently working with in your school? Can you describe a school improvement measure which has been particularly effective in your school?	Which measure has been the main focus and why? Why do you think this particular measure was effective?
Leading school improvement	How would you describe attitudes to school improvement measures in your school? As a school leader, what factors enable school improvement measures to be effective?	What reasons are there for these attitudes? How do you as a leader work to ensure that school improvement measures are effective?
Student Voice/Involving students	How does your school involve students in decision making? What do you understand by the term 'Student Voice'?	What examples can you give? How do you think 'Student Voice' is understood within your school community?

	How would you describe attitudes among staff and students to Student Voice in your school? What kinds of positive or challenging experiences have you had relating to using Student Voice in your school?	What reasons are there for these attitudes? If there were challenges, how did you resolve them?
Student Voice and school improvement	What is your opinion about/experience of a connection between Student Voice and school improvement? What is your opinion about/experience of involving students in school improvement work?	What examples do you know of where Student Voice/involving students could be used to enable school improvement?

Conclusion

The interview will be concluded by thanking the participant again for agreeing to take part.

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE (TEACHERS AND STUDENTS)

Introduction

The focus group will begin with introductions, followed by an assurance of ethical considerations, a clarification of focus group protocol (including an explanation of the researcher's role as facilitator, that they are free to opt out of certain discussions, to ask for clarification, to listen and respond to each other, to take turns when contributing) and gratitude for participation.

There will then be a short explanation of the purpose of the research as a whole and the purpose of the focus group by the researcher.

Main Body

The focus group participants will be asked to respond to a sequence of statements (the order of which may be altered/one or more may be omitted depending on the outcome of discussions), which are intended to elicit opinions of agreement/disagreement and thus facilitate discussion:

1. *Involving students in school improvement work (making schools better) is unnecessary in schools as school leaders and teachers know what is best for everyone in the school*
2. *Involving students in school improvement work (making schools better) can be challenging for schools as school leaders and teachers may hear students' opinions which are negative or controversial*
3. *Involving students in school improvement work (making schools better) is a waste of time because even though students get asked their opinion, nothing is done about their feedback*
4. *Involving students in school improvement work (making schools better) could be really powerful as a way of bringing about better schools*
5. *Involving students in school improvement work (making schools better) is really important in helping students prepare to be part of a democratic society*
6. *Involving students in school improvement work (making schools better) isn't properly representative as only the brightest and best-behaved students are asked for their opinion*

Conclusion

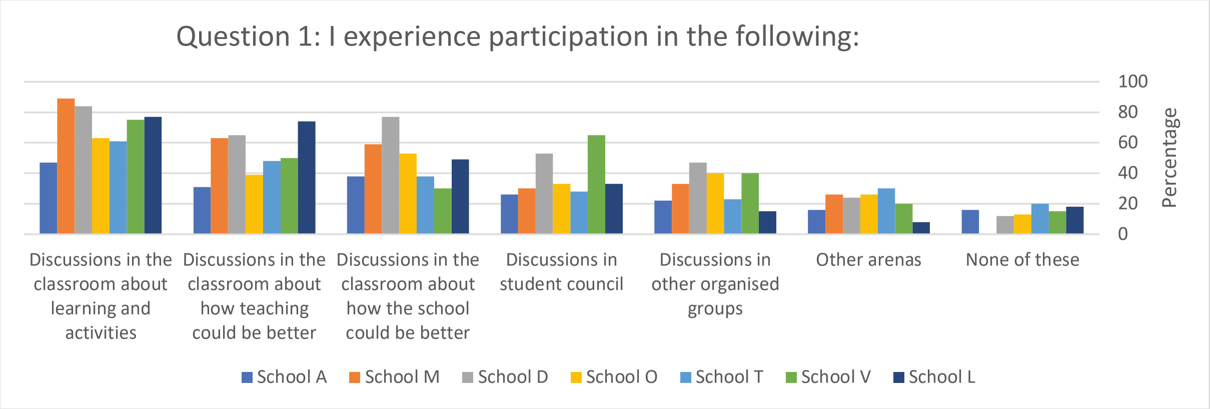
The focus group will be concluded by thanking the participants again for agreeing to take part.

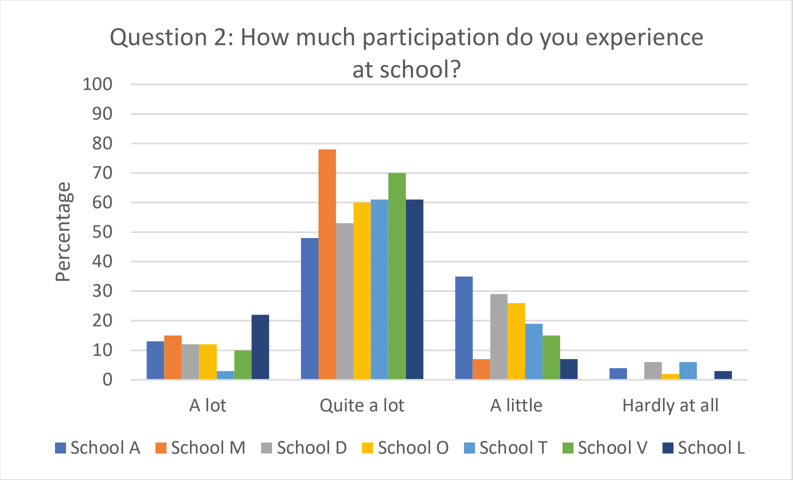
APPENDIX B

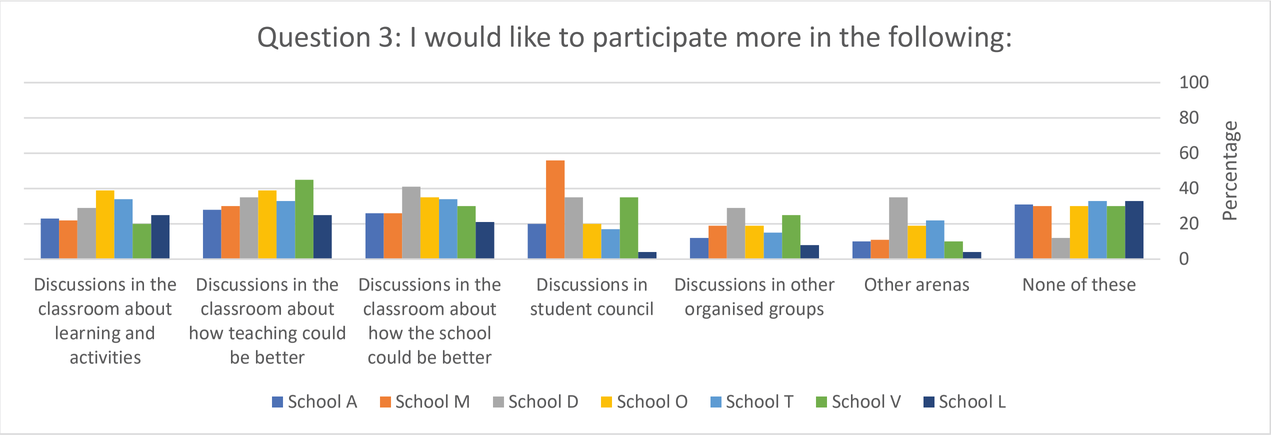
Data set A survey results

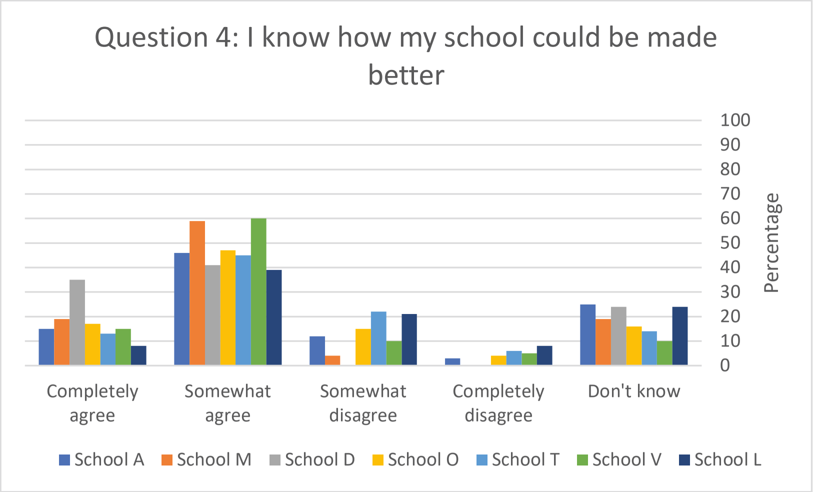
Appendix

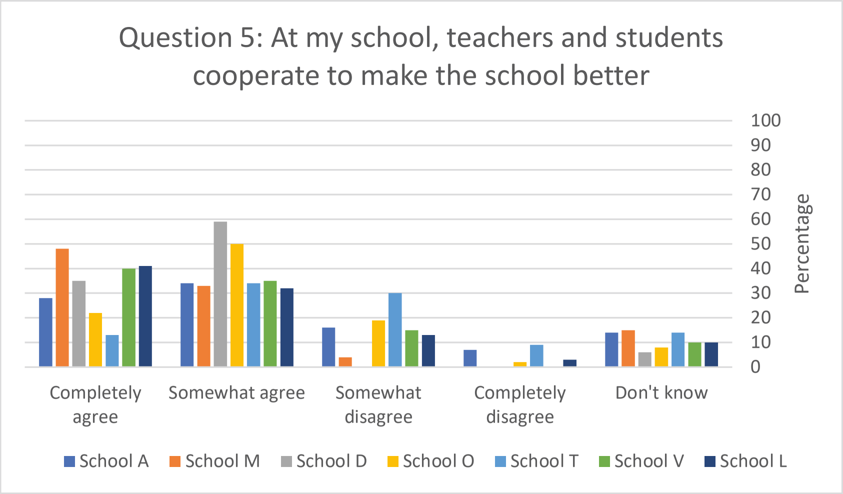
Data set A: Graphs showing answers by question from all schools

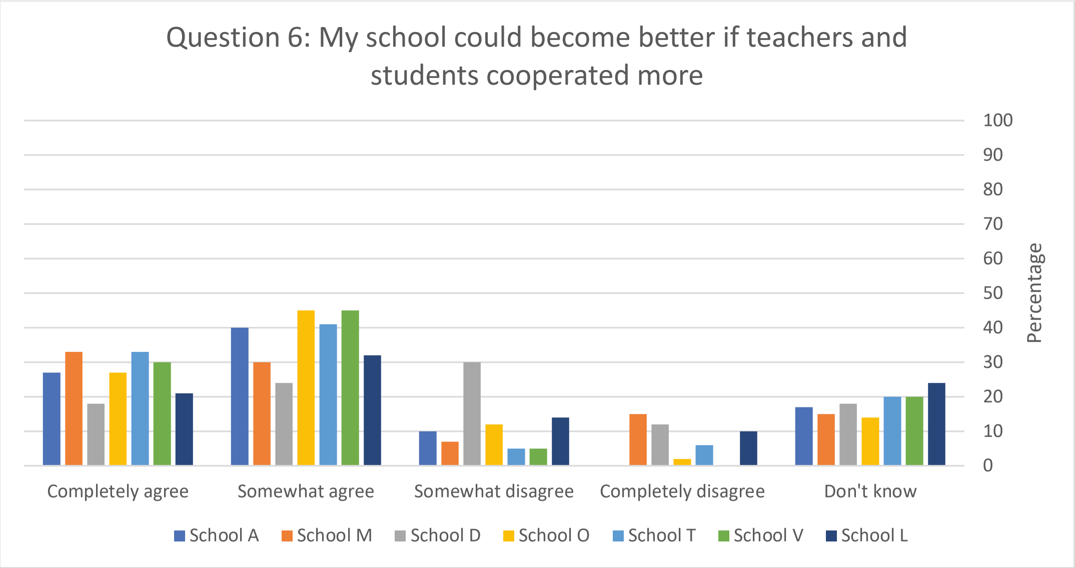

Question 1: I experience participation in the following:


Question 2: How much participation do you experience at school?


Question 3: I would like to participate more in the following:


Question 4: I know how my school could be made better


Question 5: At my school, teachers and students cooperate to make the school better


Question 6: My school could become better if teachers and students cooperated more
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Percentage
Completely agree
Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree
Completely disagree
Don't know
School A
School M
School D
School O
School T
School V
School L

APPENDIX C

Data set B survey questions

Data set B Survey Questions

1.-4. Students

Which school do you go to?
Which year group do you belong to?
I have become better at using the iPad/computer when doing schoolwork
I've had more exciting/interesting learning activities during home-school than normal
I've become better at working independently during home-school
I've learned a lot of new things during home-school
What was the best/most difficult aspect of home-schooling? (choice of 5 options)

5.-10. Students

Which school do you go to?
Which year group do you belong to?
I have become better at using the iPad/computer when doing schoolwork
I've had more exciting/interesting learning activities during home-school than normal
I've become better at working independently during home-school
I have experienced more opportunities to decide about my own learning than usual
I've learned a lot of new things during home-school
I got good help from adults during home-school
I've done more work during home-school than normal school
I've participated in digital groupwork
Feedback from teachers has helped me more than usual
What was the best/most difficult aspect of home-schooling? (choice of 5 options)
What should schools learn from home-schooling? (free text)

Teachers

Which school do you work at?
Which year group do you work in?
I have become better at using digital tools during home-school
I have planned more creative learning activities than usual
Students have become more independent in their learning during home-school
I have given more useful feedback to students than usual
Students have learned more at home-school
I have adapted for vulnerable children
Students were dependent on help at home during home-school
I've planned digital groupwork
I have a better relationship with parents than before
Parents are more able to help their children with school work than before.
What should schools learn from home-schooling? (free text)

Parents

Which school does your child go to?
Which year group does your child belong to?
My child has become better at using digital tools during home-school
My child has had more creative learning activities than usual

I think my child has become more independent in their learning during home-school
I think my child has learned more during home-school
I have developed a better relationship to the teachers during home-school
I have gained more insight into my children's learning
My child was dependent on help at home during home-school
My child has done more work during home-school
My child has co-operated digitally with other children during home-school
Feedback from the teachers has helped my child to learn more
I am more able to help my child with schoolwork because of home-school
What should schools learn from home-schooling? (free text)

School leaders

How much do you think home-schooling will influence the development of schools in the future?
Do you think that schools are more prepared for the new curriculum as a result of home-schooling?
What do you think about student and parent involvement in school development in the future?
Digital development in school: digital meetings, digital tools in feedback and differentiation, improving digital competence (selection of options which leaders could indicate whether they have already established it, starting to develop it, thinking about it, not going to start)
Development of teaching: more creative activities, inquiry-based learning, outdoor education, focus on calm learning environments, flexible learning methods, student participation (selection of options which leaders could indicate whether they have already established it, starting to develop it, thinking about it, not going to start)
Development of home-school cooperation: more flexible homework, more communication with home, use of digital tools to enable parents to have insight (selection of options which leaders could indicate whether they have already established it, starting to develop it, thinking about it, not going to start)
Other reflections about home-school (free text)

APPENDIX D

Consent from Norwegian Centre for Research Data

(the title of the PhD project has been altered since approval)

Vurdering

Referansenummer

989305

Prosjekttittel

Student Voice: a key to school improvement? A comparative study between Norway and England.

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap (SU) / Institutt for lærerutdanning

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Mari-Ana Jones, mari.a.jones@ntnu.no, tlf: 98051254

Type prosjekt

Forskerprosjekt

Prosjektperiode

01.01.2019 - 31.12.2022

Vurdering (1)

06.06.2019 - Vurdert

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 05.06.2019, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

NOTIFY CHANGES
If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the information registered in the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION
The project will be processing general categories of personal data until 31.12.2022.

LEGAL BASIS
The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn. The legal basis for processing personal data is therefore consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a).

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA

NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS

Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: transparency (art. 12), information (art. 13), access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19), data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data.

NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES

NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

SelectSurvey is a data processor for the project. NSD presupposes that the processing of personal data by a data processor meets the requirements under the General Data Protection Regulation arts. 28 and 29.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT

NSD will follow up the progress of the project underway (every other year) and at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded/is being carried out in accordance with what is documented.

Good luck with the project!

Contact person at NSD: Jørgen Wincentsen

Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)

Oxford Review of Education

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Redefining student voice: applying the lens of critical pragmatism

Mari-Ana Jones & Valerie Hall

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Exploring student participation in Norwegian schools

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Learning from the COVID-19 home-schooling experience: Listening to pupils, parents/carers and teachers

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Abstract

In Spring 2020, schools in many countries had to close in response to the COVID-19 virus pandemic and move to remote teaching. This paper explores the views of pupils, parents/carers and teachers of 'home-school' in one Norwegian municipality, gathered through parallel online surveys in April 2020 during the peak of the COVID-19 lockdown period. It finds that adaptation happened very quickly and that home-school was well received by pupils and parents. There was more creative learning, better progress, more useful feedback and greater student independence. School leaders reported that they wanted to implement changes based on the experience of remote learning enforced by the lockdown, so that the crisis has become an opportunity for grassroots innovation.

Keywords

COVID-19, home-schooling, school improvement, student voice

Education during the school lockdown in Spring 2020

In Spring 2020, schools in many countries faced unprecedented challenges resulting from the COVID-19 virus pandemic. School closures at short notice created severe disruption, and head-teachers had to mobilise staff to teach remotely with little preparation or training time. Concern about the impact on pupil progress was widespread, with fears that home-schooling would widen the attainment gap between children from poor homes and those from more affluent backgrounds. Research (Cullinane & Montacute, 2020) found that children from the poorest families were the least likely to have access to the devices needed and internet access at home.

School leaders were faced with the task of handling crisis situations beyond any existing scope of their role. They had to be a source of support to parents, governors, staff and their senior

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leadership teams, and were put in the position of making decisions, and giving advice and guidance, even when they had limited information and solutions were in any case unclear. The change that the pandemic caused has affected and impaired the systems and processes that school leaders are accustomed to use in order to lead and manage organisational performance, and it has created barriers to existing mechanisms for providing moral, social, personal and professional support and motivation (Alevizou, 2020) to their staff. Many teachers voiced concerns about the pressure that had been placed upon them (Comanducci, 2020). They were concerned about difficulties caused by their unfamiliarity with how to deliver high quality teaching and learning remotely, without the immediate verbal and non-verbal feedback that the classroom offers.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)'s rapid evidence assessment on remote learning (2020), albeit largely based on other (non-pandemic) situations, concluded that:

- Teaching quality is more important than how lessons are delivered
- Ensuring access to technology is key, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
- Peer interactions can provide motivation and improve learning outcomes
- Supporting pupils to work independently can improve learning outcomes
- Different approaches to remote learning suit different tasks and types of content

The sudden shift from classroom-based to remote learning had a significant effect on the uses of educational technology in schooling (Patel et al., 2020), requiring swift adaptation by teachers and pupils to the features of the digital platforms thrust upon them (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020; Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020). National and local education systems with a technology focus established home learning and virtual learning environments quickly. Those who already utilised digital learning platforms had fewer barriers to remote education compared with schools that had formerly made little use of technology or where pupils did not have devices and the internet at home (Petrie et al., 2020). Research in England (NFER, 2020) concluded that schools which had already established a virtual learning environment had higher student engagement levels than those without, especially for disadvantaged children.

Pupils should be co-participants in their own education (Bourke & Loveridge, 2018). Democracy and participation are among the core principles in the 2020 Norwegian national curriculum, which states that 'children should experience that they are listened to in the daily life of school, that they have real influence and that they can affect that which concerns them' (UDIR, 2019). Research on student participation (Jones & Bubb, 2020) found that teachers found it hard to involve pupils fully, particularly in issues impacting on school improvement. Research for the OECD found that 'an increase in the autonomy of pupils to manage their own learning' was an unexpected benefit of home-school (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020, p. 18).

Research in Norway, as in many places, found positives in the crisis. Gudmundsdottir and Hathaway (2020, p. 244) reported teachers being positive and 'willing to go the extra mile'. A national survey (Federici & Vika, 2020) found that the majority of teachers reported that they had been able to continue providing teaching and learning, that they had good contact with pupils and parents, and that 85% of municipalities reported that they had been able to continue to provide a good and safe learning environment. A survey of primary school teachers (Larsen, 2020) showed that 73% had more time to plan lessons. To our knowledge, there has not been other research in Norway which has involved all the different stakeholders at the same time during the home-school period and has sought the views of pupils of all ages, including the youngest. It is this gap that our research aims to fill.

There is a potential for good things to be achieved in response to the pandemic. As Schleicher suggests, 'it is about looking seriously and dispassionately at good practice in our own countries and elsewhere to become knowledgeable about what works' (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020, p. 5). It is in this spirit that we share research about home-school that was conducted in Norway and contributes something particularly interesting: rather than seeing home-school as a deficit model, our research considers what can be learned and taken forward.

Context

The research took place in a municipality in the Norwegian fjords, which has eight schools: five primary (*barneskole* for pupils aged 6 to 12), one lower secondary (*ungdomsskole* for pupils aged 12 to 16) and two all-through schools. As part of the national lockdown response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, schools in Norway were closed to all but keyworkers' children from 13 March, with pupils in Grades 1 to 4 returning from 27 April and Grades 5 to 10 from 11 May 2020 (year-groups are referred to as Grades 1 to 10, corresponding respectively to ages 6 to 16). This early return was possible because infection levels were low by international standards.

Norway, per capita, is one of the richest countries in the world. It is the second highest spender on school education in the OECD (2020), but it is only middle ranking in PISA tables (OECD, 2018). This is not to suggest that Norwegian schools are inadequate by international standards; many would argue that PISA does not reflect the breadth and qualities of the Norwegian curriculum and education system. However, achievement in the municipality where the research took place hovers at or just below average in Norway's national tests and examinations. In general, Norway's schools were better equipped with technology than many other countries: 93% of Norwegian pupils attended 'digitalised schools' compared with the EU average of 35% (European Commission, 2019).

The research was initiated by Sara Bubb, who had supported school development in the municipality as a freelance consultant from London for several years to help them raise student achievement. She had conducted a survey of all pupils in Grades 3 to 10 at the start of the academic year (September 2019), which showed that many of their views about school were negative: just over half disliked lessons in most subjects, finding them boring, text-book driven, slow-paced and teacher-dominated. To address this, she helped the schools implement some project-based learning. Evaluations showed that pupils liked this: they felt more engaged when learning outdoors, working in a cross-curricular way, and doing real-world and purposeful activities – all widely valued in the new Norwegian national curriculum to be implemented from August 2020, which placed an increased emphasis on creativity, participation and student voice.

However, the fear was that the progress in more creative teaching that had been made between September and March would be halted by the move to remote learning. It was in this context that the suggestion of rapidly conducted research that gathered opinions from pupils, parents/carers and teachers found strong support. The survey proposal was agreed, funded and links sent out by the municipality: the data were owned by Sara Bubb and the views expressed in this paper are exclusively those of the authors. Mari-Ana Jones collaborated on the research. An English and Norwegian speaker based at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, she was able to appreciate the subtleties of the survey comments and brought understanding of the policy context.

Methodology

The aim of the research was to find how parents, teachers and pupils (1st–10th Grade, ages 6–16) in a Norwegian municipality experienced home-school and what, if anything, they wanted to continue with after schools reopened. Our research questions were therefore:

- How did pupils, parents/carers and teachers experience home-schooling?
- What did school leaders plan to change as a result of the home-schooling experience?

Key areas that related to ongoing work in the municipality were probed by asking participants to respond to statements with agreement ratings using a four-point Likert scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'; each had space for optional comments. The areas were digital learning; creative learning; pupil participation; progress; achievement; feedback; groupwork; parent-teacher relationships; and parents' ability to help children.

The approach was to involve as many individuals as possible, rather than to select any sample (Fowler, 2009). It was important to gather views of all the key stakeholders within the schools to see the how their views compared and related to each other so we designed four surveys: one for parents, one for teachers and two for pupils. We considered it important to give all year groups the opportunity to participate. Younger children might be considered too immature to answer a digital survey (Lumby, 2012), but we were keen to include their views, particularly as one might imagine that they would be worst affected by the move to remote learning. To limit the demands on the younger ones, we designed a shorter survey for pupils in Grades 1 to 4, with eight questions. There were 14 questions for pupils in Grades 5 to 10, teachers and parents.

Much thought was put into survey construction (Stoop et al., 2010). The questionnaires were designed to be easy and quick to complete in Norwegian, to help maximise the response rate. A key intention was to produce data which could be compared between groups so analogous statements were tailored as appropriate for each of the different groups. For instance, pupils in Grades 1 to 4 were asked how much they agreed with the statement, *I've become better at using an iPad/computer when I'm doing schoolwork;* and those in Grades 5 to 10, *I've become better at using digital tools when I'm doing schoolwork*. Parents/carers were asked how much they agreed with the statement, *My child/children have become better at using digital tools.* Teachers were asked to say how much they agreed with the statement, *I have become more adept at using digital tools during home-schooling*. In each case, a four-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 'totally agree' to 'totally disagree'. Furthermore, respondents were given the option to comment on each statement, and many took the opportunity to do so. Teachers, parents and pupils in Grade 5 to 10 were also asked one open question, which was 'What lessons can schools learn from the experience of home-school?'.

Ethical issues were carefully considered and addressed. We were particularly sensitive to making demands at a time when people were anxious about the Covid-19 virus and the lockdown. Although the number of cases and deaths in Norway was comparatively small, at the end of April the impact in the UK and neighbouring Sweden was devastating. Adults were under new pressures including the demands of working from home, while supervising their children's education. To ensure that all respondents felt comfortable in completing them, all surveys were anonymous and voluntary. The only demographic data asked for from pupils and parents/carers were the name of their school and year group; teachers were asked to identify the school they worked in and which of three broad age bands (Grades 1–4, 5–7 and 8–10) they taught.

The whole process met the requirements of the General Data Protection Requirements (GDPR). Sara Bubb sent links to anonymous online questionnaires to the municipality who then passed them via heads and teachers to all pupils, their parents/carers and teachers. The surveys were completed over 9 days from 22 April to 1 May 2020, while schools were closed to all but the children of keyworkers: that is, after a little over 1 month of home-school. After data cleaning there were 1,995 responses (see Table 1). Engagement with the questionnaires was impressive, and respondents demonstrated that they had a lot to share.

The data were analysed by question to evaluate the extent to which percentages in each group agreed or disagreed with each statement, and we analysed the comments to help us to understand

Table 1. Responses to the surveys.

Surveys	Number of respondents	Survey open	Response rate
Teachers	151	22 April–1 May 2020	76%
Parents	779, with 1,048 pupils	22 April–1 May 2020	64%
Pupils 6–9 years	320	22 April–1 May 2020	49%
Pupils 10–16 years	745	22 April–1 May 2020	69%
School leaders	15	15–19 June 2020	75%
Total	*2010*		

the reasons. Translation software was used, with its output reviewed by Mari-Ana Jones. We compared the analogous questions across groups and age ranges to see how the perspectives of pupils, parents/carers and teachers varied. The comments were analysed thematically within each grade on the Likert scales: this gave a deeper insight. For instance, we found that most of the respondents who disagreed that parent-teacher relations have improved had done so because they felt that relationships were already very good; that is, a superficial cause for concern was in fact a very high satisfaction rating.

The initial findings were explored in online meetings with the municipality and school leaders and summarised in a written report (Bubb & Jones, 2020). After the schools re-opened, we sought the views of school leaders about what changes they might make arising from the home-schooling experience. This was done through a survey, which was open within a short window of 15 to 19 June 2020, after pupils had been back at school for about a month. It was sent by the municipality to all those people with any leadership role in the eight schools; there were 15 responses. It gathered no demographic information such as the name of the respondent's school, to ensure anonymity for this small group of prominent local people.

Findings

Technology

The municipality had invested heavily in technology and all schools had already established some digital learning before the home-school period began. All pupils had a tablet or laptop, and were used to using them in lessons. Teachers had laptops and had received training and support in the use of digital resources. Microsoft *Teams* video-conferencing software had started to be used before the coronavirus crisis and proved to be a popular platform for online learning as well as for meetings.

Two-fifths of teachers and pupils agreed that they had become better at using digital tools during the home-school period. Those who did not agree commented that this was because they already had strong skills. The claimed improvement was greatest amongst the younger pupils: 88% of pupils in Grades 1 to 4 either agreed (35%) or strongly agreed (53%) that they had become better at using technology for learning. This aggregate total of 88% compared to 77% of pupils in Grades 5 to 10.

Similarly, 54% of teachers strongly agreed, and a further 26% agreed, that they had become better at using technology, with the biggest improvement coming from those who taught the youngest pupils. One teacher reflected on how challenging it had been at first:

> The start-up was really hard with high expectations and pressure from all sides. We were overwhelmed with suggestions for apps, links, websites, etc. That made me feel like I wasn't doing anything well enough and that everyone else was doing something much better and more modern.

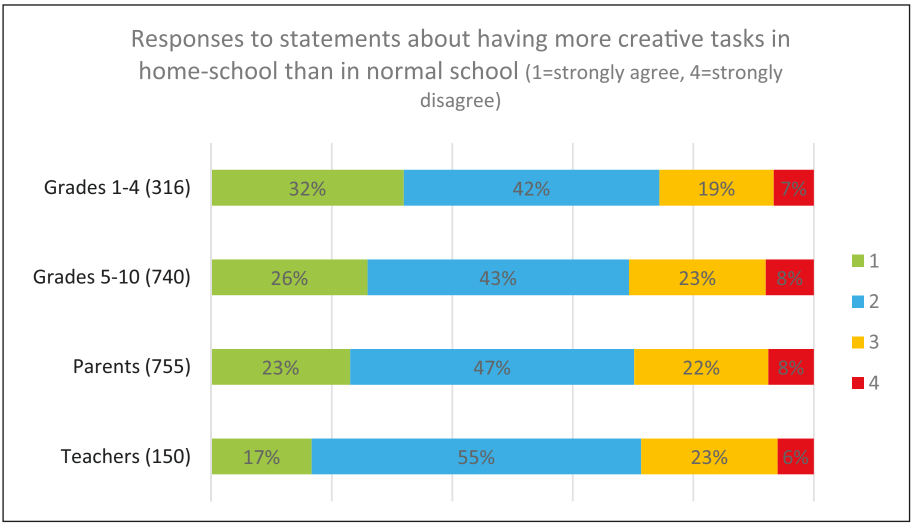

Figure 1. Responses from pupils, parents/carers and teachers about creative tasks in home-school.

There was support from advisers and technicians at the municipality, who organised extra equipment and fixed problems, so that by the time of the survey, pupils, parents/carers and teachers had experienced how digital solutions could facilitate everyday school life, such as daily online class meetings as well as one-to-one contact with pupils. Teachers and school leaders held meetings and training online, and this was considered to be an efficient use of time because there was no time spent in travelling.

School leaders completed a further survey in mid-June, 5 weeks after schools reopened, about their plans. All wanted to continue the progress made in using technology, and specifically to undertake the following:

- Digital meetings with staff, parents/carers and other agencies
- Use of digital tools in student feedback
- Use of digital tools for differentiation in teaching
- Increasing digital competence among teachers and pupils
- Using digital tools for vulnerable pupils and those who cannot attend school.

They were each at a different stage of implementing changes, with most saying that they had started making them, and some having already established them. As one leader said, ‘We use digital tools in every year group, but it’s important to think about when it’s useful and when other methods are more useful’.

Creative teaching

Given the emphasis in the municipality on improving teaching and motivating learners, we wanted to find out whether pupils had experienced any creative activities. As Figure 1 shows, about 70% of pupils agreed that more creative tasks had taken place at home-school than normal, with most enthusiasm being shown by the youngest pupils. Digital escape rooms, migratory bird photography and experiments in science were mentioned by pupils as some of the activities they enjoyed. One cross-curricular task was to go outside and mark out the dimensions of a Bronze Age longhouse (about 7 × 20 m), mark the fireplace in the middle, and share photographs of the results by uploading them. We were surprised that teachers were able to facilitate more creative tasks than usual during the home-schooling period. A teacher explained: ‘I have much more time to plan, create relevant tasks, and to provide feedback’. Less time was spent on class management.

Leaders agreed that in the future they wanted pupils to experience more creative and practical tasks within and across subjects; exploratory teaching methods and assignments; use of nature and outdoor areas; and more student involvement in ways of working. They were at different stages of implementing the changes for this: a third were already making more use of outdoor learning.

Feedback

We wanted to know about pupils’ experiences with feedback from their teachers: it was easy to assume that it might be severely limited without classroom contact. This was not borne out, however. Pupils in Grades 5 to 10 were asked to rate how much they agreed with the statement, ‘*Feedback from teachers has helped me more than ususal*’ in three subjects, Norwegian, English and Mathematics. Two-thirds agreed or strongly agreed that they received feedback in each subject that helped more than usual. Several said they felt teachers had more time for feedback.

Digital communication seemed to provide new opportunities for all pupils to be seen and heard. One student said, ‘teachers get to see how good all the pupils are, and not just those who always raise their hands in class’. Parents/carers were also positive about feedback from teachers, although many said that they found it hard to know how much was given normally. Just over half of the teachers also agreed that they gave more useful feedback than usual. One said ‘I have probably commented on more assignments per student than normal. I have probably also divided my attention more fairly between the pupils, as all pupils are now “shouting” equally loudly’.

Progress

We were interested in whether progress would be made by pupils during home-school, or whether they would be merely kept occupied, so we gave pupils the statement, ‘I’ve learned a lot of new things at home school to rate (1 = totally agree, 4 = totally disagree)’. The majority of pupils agreed or strongly agreed that they had: 79% of pupils in the 1st to 4th Grades and 65% of pupils in the 5th to 10th Grades. Some examples that they gave were ‘Getting better at reading in both Norwegian and English’, ‘I have learned to measure and cook good food’ and ‘Flowers, insects, getting better at reading’. However, 34% of pupils in Grades 5 to 10 and 21% in Grades 1 to 4 believed that they had not learned many new things, some saying that tasks were simple and repetitive.

We asked whether pupils did more schoolwork at home than they usually did at school: 62% of pupils in Grades 5 to 10 agreed that they had (Figure 2). Reasons given were that they could concentrate better at home. Some pupils said they received more work and were expected to complete it. Those who thought they had done less work said they were more motivated at school. Teachers thought that pupils’ work varied depending on parental support and monitoring. One said, ‘The difference between pupils’ learning outcomes has been greater than in normal school’.

As in many countries, there has been particular concern about vulnerable pupils during home-schooling (Andrew et al., 2020; Green, 2020; Outhwaite, 2020). In our survey, 90% of teachers considered that they had catered well for this group. One teacher wrote,

> We have done A LOT to adapt for the vulnerable. Some pupils have received video meetings several times a day. Teachers have been available to both pupils and guardians from 08.00-15.30 every day, and at times

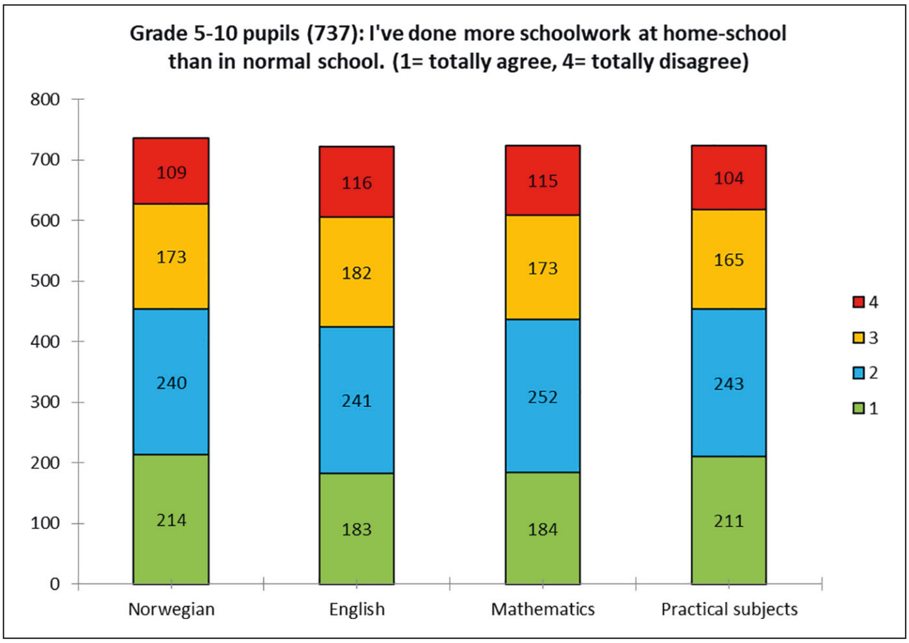

Figure 2. Pupils' views about whether they had done more work in home-school than normal.

> far beyond working hours. Children who have expressed too little follow-up at home have been contacted specifically every day. Children with multilingual homes have been contacted every day and have had all the information read as audio files.

Another said that vulnerable pupils 'have never received such close follow-up:-)'. Teachers spoke of having a great deal of contact with parents/carers, as well as with colleagues and relevant services. Parents/carers and teachers reported that many vulnerable pupils performed better at home than with the distractions of the classroom.

Pupil independence

In our research, 63% of pupils in Grades 5 to 10 said that they experienced more influence over their learning in home-school. The explanations from pupils included the suggestion that they had more choices in their ways of working and ordering assignments. They reported increased influence in how they organised their learning and the ways in which they solved tasks. However, one said, 'In gym we get to do what we want to do, so that's good, but we don't get to decide things in other subjects'.

There was consensus among the groups that pupils became more independent during home-school: 74% of teachers, 64% of parents, 71% of Grade 1 to 4 pupils and 78% of Grade 5 to 10 pupils agreed. They described experiencing a sense of ownership and increased motivation by taking responsibility for their own routines and their own learning. One said, 'I've been able to manage by figuring things out and fixing things'. Another said, 'Yes I have! There's no teacher hanging over your shoulder and telling you what you're going to do. When it's home-school, you decide quite a lot yourself. What you want to do and stuff and how much you put into it'. Comments from pupils who disagreed said that they had been independent even before home-school. A small

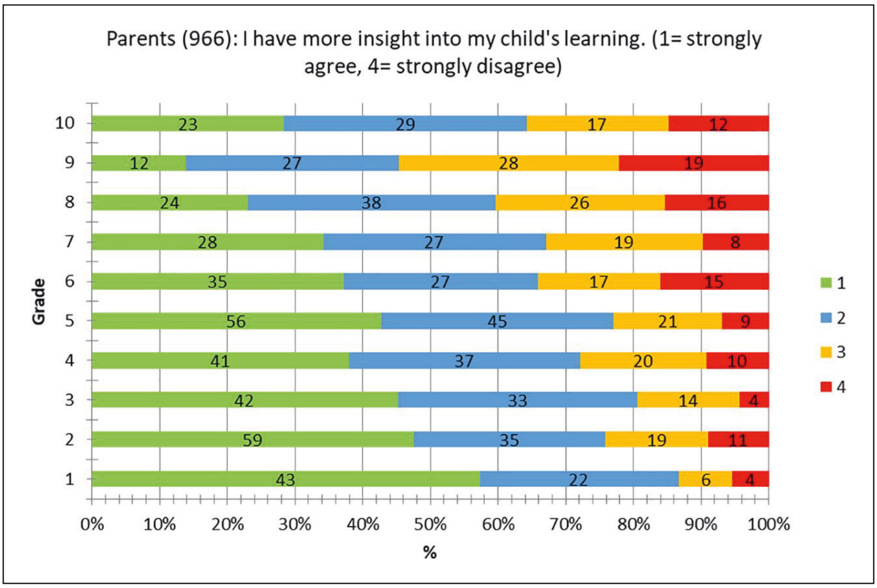

Figure 3. Parents' increased insight into their children's learning, by grade.

number of parents/carers commented however that their children had become overly dependent on them. Some teachers were particularly worried about this: one said, 'when I look at spelling and sentence structure, it's not the student's work'.

Parents

Parental involvement increased during home-school. They gained more knowledge about their children's learning, and they had opportunities to play a more important role than before. Two-thirds of parents/carers reported gaining more insight into their children's learning: as Figure 3 shows, this was across all year groups, although most positive with the younger pupils, with 87% of parents/carers with children in Grade 1 agreeing. It is interesting that 64% of parents/carers of the oldest pupils also agreed that they had more insight, when the pre-conception might be that Grade 10 pupils would be less inclined to involve their parents/carers in their learning. One said, 'as parents, we have been able to contribute insights, reflections and good discussions in the various subjects. And to some extent helped to achieve the best possible result on the submission tasks'. Another parent said, 'This is one of the things we've appreciated the most. Now we know so much more and it's awesome positive!' Over half felt that they were in a better position to help their children with schoolwork.

Comments suggested that parents/carers had good relationships with teachers already, but about half believed that this improved during home-schooling. This was particularly true of parents/carers with younger children. One said, 'Fantastic teachers in this class who are just a phone call away if we as guardians are wondering about something! Can't praise them enough! They are also always available to pupils via chat and video, and respond quickly to all inquiries'.

Teachers also thought relationships with parents/carers were better: 72% of the teachers of the younger pupils (Grade 1–4) agreed that they had improved, compared with 38% of the older ones (Grade 8–10). Many teachers said that relations were good already. One teacher wrote, 'I experience GREAT gain in that we have had a unique dialogue with guardians. They are much more engaged, showing more understanding of the child's challenges, ability to concentrate etc and some have actually realised the child masters much more than they had envisioned'. All the school leaders who responded to our survey planned to have more regular communication with parents/carers about pupils' learning and to use digital tools to do so.

Discussion

As we explained in the context section, the concern was that the progress in more creative teaching that had been made between September and March would be halted by the move to remote learning. However, the results show that this did not happen: indeed, there was an acceleration in the move to make learning more motivating for pupils.

Our research agreed with the EEF's rapid evidence assessment on remote learning (2020). The thorough work on the introduction of digital tools and training that the municipality had done prior to COVID-19 was crucial to the success of home-schooling, which found favour with pupils of all ages, parents and teachers. It cannot be said whether the new learning delivery mechanisms led to better or worse progress, but the most salient observation is the degree to which rapid adaptation to a comprehensive e-learning environment was possible. Following the lockdown, in June 2020 the Norwegian government announced increased funding for schools to continue developing digital competencies among teachers and pupils (Ministry of Education and Research (Norway), 2020). In contrast, school systems without such advanced digital technology policies have 'left many children without the tools they need to access and benefit from remote learning' (Turvey & Pachler, 2020).

Some unforeseen dividends arose. For example, some teachers reported a reduction in some aspects of their workload, enabling them to devote more attention to pupils; students felt they gained a fairer share of teacher attention; and feedback improved. Our research has differed from the EEF's in that it has shown the important part that parents/carers played and in giving them a deeper insight into their child's learning. With even better relationships with teachers, parents/carers are in a much stronger position to contribute to pupil learning. Many vocalised greater admiration for teachers and that can be a force for school improvement.

The schools studied had the foundations in place to manage this unusual situation, and perhaps even more importantly have the resources necessary to build on their positive experiences in the future. They were well-resourced; local government and education administrators were able to play a constructive part; and there was a high degree of digital literacy and good online infrastructure in the area. The technology was a vital foundation stone, but our research suggests that teachers raised their game during the home-schooling period. Many teachers planned creative activities that engaged pupils, and thus established a good starting point for the new Norwegian national curriculum, which refers to the 'joy of learning' created through the connection between creativity, learning and development (UDIR, 2019). Education was personalised in a way that it had not been in the classroom.

Teachers' feedback was seen as more useful during home-school than normal, which is an important but surprising finding given that one would assume there would be severe practical obstacles in setting up the necessary dialogue to constitute effective feedback. These pedagogically desirable interactions seemed to work better than ever, which was unexpected. Parents/carers made a considerable contribution to learning, not only by helping their children but also by being an additional audience for the teachers' feedback, which might have motivated the latter yet further. The survey responses from the school leaders about their future plans were overwhelmingly positive, indicating that they felt motivated to make lasting changes to continue to improve feedback to pupils and keep parents/carers better informed.

The considerable response rate, together with the detail provided in many of the comments, has provided rich insights into the experience. Whilst one reason for the high response rate may be because of Sara Bubb's role as a known outsider, the level of detail in the optional comments indicates that people had things to say and wanted to be heard. Completing the survey away from school may have contributed to pupils and teachers feeling freer to express their views (Qvortrup, 2017).

The research is original because it gathered the views of those involved in home-schooling within a municipality: school leaders, teachers, pupils and parents. Other research which has so far been carried out in Norway has had a broader focus, although arguably more superficial. A survey conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Education (Federici & Vika, 2020) targeted selected groups of teachers and school leaders from 200 schools across Norway. Research by Gudmundsdottir and Hathaway (2020) was of 574 teachers. Slettemeås and Storm-Mathisen (2020) surveyed a randomly selected cross-section of society about digital homelife during the pandemic. Roe et al. (2020) surveyed 4,500 parents.

Our research sought the views of pupils of all ages, from 6 to 16. Few other surveys in Norway included pupils at all. Nordahl (2020) surveyed students aged 10 to 16 in one county but only after they had returned to school (11–20 May). Von Soest et al. (2020) surveyed 12 to 16 year olds in the Oslo area during the home-school period, but this was about their quality of life, not their education. To our knowledge, there has not been other research in Norway which has included the youngest children, nor any which has involved all the different stakeholders at the same time during the home-school period.

In Norway's national student survey (UDIR, 2020) the category of *student democracy and participation* is among those receiving the lowest score in the municipality. It was therefore of particular interest to be able to study the views of pupils to a rapidly changed situation. Their many ideas for improving schools included video meetings, weekly schedules and opportunities for pupils unable to attend school to receive digital lessons. Pupils at every age reported that the best thing about home-school was being at home and organising their own day. However, 11% of those in Grades 5 to 10 said they were pleased to be away from teachers and 7% away from fellow pupils (the figures for the younger respondents was 4% and 2%, respectively). Although this is a minority, it is still of concern.

There are limitations to our research, however. It was conducted in a municipality that has just eight schools; although this may seem small, it is approximately the 100th largest in population out of the 356 municipalities in Norway. The research was based on surveys: interviews and focus groups would have enhanced our findings, but this would have been hard to justify at a time of stress with the spread of the virus across the world. As with any survey, one does not know how seriously respondents completed it or how they interpreted the statements. However, the quantity and quality of the comments suggest that the survey was clearly understood; people responded in earnest and sometimes with passion.

Conclusion

This study makes a distinct contribution to learning. It records the experiences of a unique period, from the separate perspectives of pupils, parents, teachers and school leaders in one municipality. Even though the municipality was well-equipped with digital communications infrastructure, it was still a shock for an entire schooling experience to be taken out of the existing physical infrastructure and delivered remotely using internet technology to a degree that was unprecedented for an entire school-age cohort across the whole of a municipality.

It shows how much can be gained from asking the views of pupils and parents, as well as teachers. There was much similarity in the views of the different groups. The differences were most pronounced where pupils considered that they had learned more and done more work at home than at school than the teachers thought. Both pupils and parents/carers were positive about teachers' efforts, both in setting creative tasks and in maintaining contact with pupils. As Moss et al. (2020) found, the COVID-19 crisis has underlined the vital role schools play in caring for children, as well as helping them learn.

There is also much to be taken further. How schools can build on improved digital skills, how learning activities can be organised, and how homework can be changed are all relevant considerations. Many pupils reported positive experiences with flexible school days when they organised their own daily routines, worked at their own pace and experienced independence. It will be interesting to explore how schools develop this in the future.

The pandemic has given an opportunity to rethink education and focus on the 'what, how, and where of learning' (Zhao, 2020), including the relationship between teachers and parents (Wrigley, 2020). It is a time for countries to learn from and help each other; to see what was achieved during remote schooling and listen to pupils and parents/carers to improve schools. The municipality studied in this paper is in a strong position to do this, not least because they have the evidence from research in a report (Bubb & Jones, 2020). Not all countries or localities may be able to emulate them, but those which do have the necessary resources should consider seriously and urgently how they might do so. Remote learning is an important part of our armoury against a pandemic or similar threats, but it requires preparation. Whether such preparation is a cost-effective investment at a time of economic challenges is a political decision, but concerns about feasibility of public acceptance by teachers, pupils and parents/carers should not be used as an excuse for failing to do so. The experience that we have recorded tells us that the changes required in a crisis can be made quickly and accelerate sustained school improvement.

The World Bank has emphasised the need for 'building back better' strategies, which include developing 'more equitable and resilient post-COVID education systems that enable children to learn continuously both in schools and at home' (Azevedo et al., 2020). The research explored in this paper has made a contribution to that endeavour.

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