

Struggles of Governance and Autonomy in the Field of *Kulturskole*

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Abstract

The Norwegian extracurricular schools of music and performing arts, *kulturskolen*, largely govern themselves. In contrast to other types of law obliged schools, *kulturskolen* receives no clear signals from either state levels, or municipality/county municipality levels, but rather are left to informal steering mechanisms on individual or collective levels. This leads to a wide diversity of what disciplines that are offered, what collaborations that are conducted, what aims, intentions, profiles, and competences that are managed, and thus to very different conditions for what the pupils might learn and experience. This article is a theoretical discussion of this finding, investigating diverse forms of conduct that are identified on (i) state, (ii) community, and (iii) individual school level. The article particularly looks at the identified steering mechanisms, with Michel Foucault's thoughts of governmentality and power/knowledge as its basis. This discussion on how the *kulturskole* regulates itself is a contribution to the body of research about *kulturskole*, cultural policy, and about extracurricular arts education in the *kulturskole* that aims to be "for all."

Keywords: *kulturskole; cultural policy; youth and children; arts education; governmentality*

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Introduction

In this article, we make use of Foucault's (1991) term governmentality to discuss tensions and struggles of autonomy and governance in the field of Norwegian public extracurricular schools of music and performing arts, *kulturskole*,¹ i.e., how the *kulturskoler's* desire and tradition for autonomy are combined with state and regional governance, and the tensions and struggles these attempts produce. The point of

¹ From this point forward, for pragmatic reasons and because any English term of this type of school is debated in the Nordic countries (Björk et al., 2018), we will use the Norwegian term *kulturskole* [pl. *kulturskoler*].

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departure for this analysis is one specific finding in the report *Kultur + skole = sant* [Culture + School = True] (Berge et al., 2019),² namely that Norwegian *kulturskoler* largely themselves. The concluding sections of the report states:

There are high political expectations for the role of the kulturskole in society, and it has become common to include the kulturskole as a central part of what the white paper *Kulturutredningen* from 2014 (NOU 2013: 4) describes as the national “cultural foundation”. However, the high expectations are not supported by formal guidelines in the kulturskole policy. Apart from a short and non-binding legal text in the Education Act, there are no institutional frameworks such as national guidelines for kulturskolen, nor are there any explicit central requirements as to which activities are expected. This gives the municipality complete freedom to develop the offer as they wish and adapt it to local conditions. (NOU 2013: 4, p. 178)

This finding highlights the difference between *kulturskoler* and other school-kinds in Norway, as the latter are strictly regulated by statutory demands for teacher competence, curriculum, content, and aims (Education Act, 2021).

The Norwegian *kulturskoler* offer extracurricular education in music and other arts subject for children and youth.³ At state policy level, The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the *kulturskole*. The municipalities are the owners and are responsible for the schools, and the individual school’s teachers and leaders have great freedom in choosing what disciplines to offer, and how to organize their teaching, select content and teaching approaches. A result of this is that what a *kulturskole* is, what disciplines it offers, who the teachers and pupils collaborate with (e.g., health care organizations, professional or leisure arts organizations, festivals, museums, etc.) might be quite diverse (see e.g., Bjørnsen, 2012a; Emstad & Angelo, 2021). Subsequently, this leads to quite different expectations for teacher competence, content, and organization of the teaching activities, and then to quite diverse possibilities for what the pupils might learn and not. The organization *Norsk kulturskoleråd* [The Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts], owned by and representing 95 percent of all Norwegian municipalities, has a significant and unique position in this field, and have through decades had a key role in the development of the *kulturskoler*. For example, through crafting and leading the implementation of two not-statutory curriculums for the *kulturskole* (Norsk kulturskoleråd, 2003, 2016), which have been widely taken into use.

The concern of governance and policy – policing, when sticking to a Foucauldian conceptual framework – is a main issue in the body of research concerning Nordic *kulturskoler*. Often, such concerns are connected to a series of tensions that characterize this field. One example is the tension between the *kulturskoler*’s desire to be universally relevant and accessible, and the fact that, on a national level, only 13% of

² Commissioned by *The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training* in 2019.

³ For a more comprehensive contextualization of the Norwegian *kulturskole* from an international perspective, please see Rønningen (2017).

its target group are actual users (Berge et al., 2019). Certainly, there is not necessarily any contradiction between a high societal relevance and a relatively low participation rate; many elite schools are regarded highly relevant despite low student numbers. Still, to the public *kulturskoler*, the relevance aspect relates to the fact that both these schools and the authorities have as a principal goal to remain relevant and attractive to *all* children and youth, not only a small percentage (Bjørnsen, 2012a).

A second example, related to the first, is the tension between these school's dual aim to be relevant both to talents and to recreational participants (Stabell & Jordhus-Lier, 2017). Thirdly, there is a tension between the paternalism that characterizes not only *kulturskoler*, but the concept of schooling as such, and the user's freedom of choice. I.e., between the educational desire to teach traditional genres and values, while at the same time staying relevant to a target group that constantly changes its interests and desires. Here, a correlated tension also persists between different coding and the decoding of professional identities (Angelo & Kalsnes, 2014), and between a static supply side with permanently employed teachers and a dynamic demand side with an ever-changing community of pupils. Since all these tensions are frequently addressed in cultural policy strategies, they are playing out within a larger discourse of governance, including on a local, regional, and national level. Today, the running of *kulturskoler* is the responsibility of the local municipality authorities. Nevertheless, according to the report (Berge et al., 2019), local politicians and administrations pay relatively little interest to the *kulturskoler*. Consequently, the *kulturskoler* hold a high degree of autonomy, and are free to nurture a distinct local character. Hence, the *kulturskole* field is one of great diversity with numerous local models and approaches, something that has been pointed out several times in previous research literature (Bjørnsen, 2012a).

In short, governance in the field of *kulturskoler* is an intricate and complex puzzle. Investigating this puzzle, we have leaned on the following research questions: (1) *How can we understand governance in the kulturskole field with the concept of governmentality?* (2) *What implications on state, community, and individual school level does it have that the kulturskole governs itself?*

The aim of analyzing this research questions through Foucault's thoughts on governmentality (Dean, 2009; Foucault, 2001), is to unfold the power/knowledge-connections and the steering rationalities that seem to conduct the field of *kulturskole* on (i) *state*, (ii) *community*, and (iii) *individual* school levels. Such connections and rationalities might for example impact how individuals and groups identify themselves, their work and expertise, and what *kulturskole* is and should be.

In the following, we first will give a brief overview of the status of the research-based knowledge on *kulturskole* and use of Foucault's theoretical framework in cultural policy research, followed by a description of how we understand and use Foucault's term governmentality. Further, we will describe the methodology, data material and the specific finding this article's analyses rest on, before we finally turn to the analysis chapter.

Governmentality as a lens

The research portfolio on *kulturskole*, moreover, is dominated by music education scholars (Rønningen et al., 2019). In this portfolio, as well as in music education research, Foucauldian discourse theory is a common approach in a Nordic context (Rolle et al., 2017). For example, in examination music teachers practices and negotiations of professional identity and expertise (Angelo et al., 2019, 2021; Jordhus-Lier, 2018; Karlsen & Nielsen, 2021; Nerland, 2003; Schei, 2007), in examining collaborations between *kulturskole* and compulsory school (Ellefsen, 2017; Ellefsen & Karlsen, 2019; Emstad & Angelo, 2017; Westby, 2017; Øyen & Ulrichsen, 2021), and in examining the admission test in higher music education (Lindgren et al., 2021; Sandberg-Jurström et al., 2021). In addition, discourse analysis is widely used in studies of general cultural policy and governance (Bjørnsen, 2009, 2012b; Pyykkönen, 2012; Pyykkönen & Stavrum, 2018; Røyseng, 2007; Tröndle & Rhomberg, 2011). Despite this, a noticeable research gap is identifiable, both in terms of research-based knowledge about governance within the *kulturskole* field, and the use of Foucauldian theory to analyze governance here. Discourse- and governmentality-oriented approaches are beneficial to identify and examine how participation in any power/knowledge community are facilitated and might stimulate certain actions and ways of thinking. For example, as in this article, to examine the perceptions of autonomy and governance that can be identified in the *kulturskole* field and how these might guide the stakeholders' practices.

Foucault's concept of *governmentality* (Dean, 2009; Foucault, 2001; Rose, 2006) concerns the mentality that guides conceptions, and how individuals and social groups steer themselves to or from specific ways of acting, thinking and judging. These thoughts are intertwined with Foucault's ideas on power and knowledge, which emphasize that power is constituted through dominating forms of knowledge and understanding, and thus that there exist subtle "rules" that everyone is supposed to follow to be authorized and accepted into any power/knowledge community. In this article, such a community might be the individual *kulturskole*, individual disciplines from where each teacher has his/her background, the integrated partnerships within any *kulturskole* (e.g., compulsory school, wind bands, health care or the professional field of arts), and the municipality. Following Foucault, individual participation in any power/knowledge community is authorized through incorporating specific perceptions, aims, and ways of using language, and therefore power operates to facilitate and stimulate certain actions, ways of thinking, and constitutes certain types of knowledge to be true. Governmentality is seen to merge the subtle techniques and mechanisms that regulate and mold individuals and groups through "technologies of the self" and "technologies of the market" (Foucault, 1994, 2001, 2002), with the intentional visible and monitored power of the government. Reading a field through the lens of governmentality thus offers to examine how power might display in subtle mechanisms that merge outer, direct, and visible steering with inner steering, such as self-discipline, ownership, and autonomy (Dean, 2009). In reading *our* findings on

governance and autonomy through this concept, our aim is to identify and deepen firstly what steering mechanisms that seem to regulate the Norwegian *kulturskole* on state, community, and individual school levels, and secondly how effectively this governmentality might manifest itself in observable patterns of actions and articulation in these multiple levels of the field of *kulturskole*.

In the following, based on the empirical finding in Berge et al. (2019), that the *kulturskole* lacks governance, we will thus display and discuss the perceptions and practices of governmentality in the Norwegian *kulturskole* discourse, and point to the mechanisms and impacts of these. The analysis is structured into three parts concerning (1) the state level and national level, (2) the local and regional political, administrative, and sociocultural sphere municipality level, and (3) the local school level *kulturskole* itself. Since they have different governance profiles, policy is both reinforced and interacted through conflicts of interests and strategic partnerships. Before the analysis, we will describe the data material that the specific finding is based on.

Data and analysis

As stated in the introduction, this article is a spin-off from the report *Kultur + skole = sant* (Berge et al., 2019). The report, that was commissioned by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, broadly outlined the *kulturskole* as a part of the directorate's preparation for a governmental white paper on culture for children and youths. The empirical material that the report builds on, consists of predominately qualitative data collected in a case study that included ten *kulturskoler* throughout Norway. The study, which was carried out in 2018 and 2019, contained observation and interviews with a total of 134 *kulturskole* pupils aged 15–19, teachers and principals, as well as municipal employees and partners of the ten *kulturskoler*. This material was supplemented with qualitative interviews with key informants in The Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts, the Arts Council Norway, the National Center for Art and Culture in Education, and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. Furthermore, the material is based on three nationwide surveys, one for principals at all the country's *kulturskoler*, with a total of 245 responses, one for department heads responsible for *kulturskoler* in all municipalities, with a total of 229 responses, and one for students and parents at *kulturskoler* in 18 selected municipalities, with a total of 1,384 responses.

The interview data was transcribed and manually coded. In this article, the material that is analyzed is that referring to codes such as *governance*, *power*, and *governmentality*. In turn, this material was analyzed making use of discourse theory and analysis (cf., Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Findings

As stated in the introduction, this article analyses one specific finding in the report *Kultur + skole = sant* (Berge et al., 2019); Norwegian *kulturskoler* largely govern themselves. One of the most striking findings of the research was the lack of both

governmental incentives and practice in terms of governing of *kulturskoler*. The guidance of these schools from the state level is weak, due to a vague law, few norms and plans, and a pulverization of responsibility between two ministries (Education and Culture), where Education holds the formal and/but Culture the symbolic responsibility. Locally, the municipalities, who owns the *kulturskoler*, also fail to guide these schools properly. This is due to a lack of binding plans and an often relatively low commitment from local politicians. This combination of lack of governance on both national and local level, results in very few guidelines for what a *kulturskole* can and should be, e.g., in terms of parameters like size, content, cost, target groups, communication practices, and ambitions. The consequence is mainly twofold: firstly, it leaves the *kulturskole* with a lot of freedom. Secondly, it opens for some/many *kulturskoler* to underperform on several important parameters. While the autonomous position leaves a great room for nurturing local distinctiveness and character, at the same time it facilitates for neglect. However, the data material does not indicate that neglect is the common result, something that indicate that some sort of governance is in place. In the following, we discuss how this form of governance, read through a Foucauldian lens, conducts thinking and practice through “technologies of the self.”

State level governmentality

From the first in 1989, in a series of governmental white paper reports mentioning the *kulturskole*,⁴ the school form’s position entered national policymaking and implementation in new and different ways; they were now made part of numerous official education and cultural policy plans and strategies. This gray literature increasingly aimed at stating, both directly and indirectly, aims and procedures for the *kulturskoler*. Consequently, the field also matured in terms of seeing preliminary, precatory norms for teacher requirements, participation and activities. Despite this maturity, the *kulturskoler* have never had a common framework in the form of a national curriculum. The closest they have come to that is the optional framework produced by The Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts. This framework is now guiding a large majority of Norwegian municipals’ policy, but is still far from an overarching national plan.

On the *state* level, this indicates a governmentality of *disclaiming liability*. In the Norwegian cultural policy model, in which the degree of cultural policy hands-on mentality is strong (Mangset & Hylland, 2017), this finding is a surprise. For example, the Ministry of Culture’s or the Arts Council’s remaining portfolio of measures aimed at children and youth is carefully planned and monitored through policy papers and strategies, cf. *Den kulturelle skolesekken* [The cultural rucksack] (Breivik & Christophersen, 2013), and *Kunstløftet* [the Kunstløftet program] (Haugsevje et al., 2015). In the empirical material, we find that the state’s power, operationalized

⁴ See e.g., Kunnskapsdepartementet (2019; 2007; Meld. St. 39 (2002–2003)), Kulturskoleutvalget (2010), Kulturdepartementet (NOU 2013: 4).

through two ministries and two associated directorates, to a very little degree formulates regulations, responsibility, and intentions for the governmentally sanctioned *kulturskole*. This lack of conduct manifests itself in the “slipping” of the *kulturskole* between the Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Culture, allowing these ministries, at the same time, to dismiss and attract the *kulturskole*. On the one hand, The Ministry of Education decorates itself with a school type that specializes in the arts, while on the other hand neglecting the *kulturskole* as a proper educational system since it is not statutory. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Culture decorates itself with a school type that focuses on arts and culture, but simultaneously neglecting the *kulturskole* as a system for proper art/artistic processes, since it is a kind of formalized schooling. The governmentality of disclaiming liability also includes disclaiming responsibility, according to Foucault (2001). And thus, this (not)-steering contributes to blur out who is responsible for the resources, practices and aims conducted in and through the *kulturskole*.

The mentality of steering is mediated through double-folded discourses that on the one hand (a) normalize the *kulturskole* as a regular public school type, whereas on the other hand (b) leaving the *kulturskole* to govern itself. The latter is dissimilar to all other public schools in Norway, which are steered by the state. For example, the *kulturskole* is almost invisible in public, national gray literature, policy documents and allocation letters, including in the portfolios of both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture. For example, this includes the Ministry of Education’s annual budget proposals and letters of assignment to universities and centers, The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training’s website, and recent, seminal white papers, like Meld. St. 8 (2018–2019) *The Power of Culture*. The Education Act, which also regulates the *kulturskole*, is very general and obligates neither *what* these schools should offer or contain in terms of activities or pedagogical models, *who* should serve the school (e.g., teachers, artists or craftsmen), nor *where and how* the teachers should be trained. Moreover, the Act text concerning the *kulturskole* is descriptive for the discourse, in all its scarce style, and deserve to be included as an illustration:

All municipalities, either alone or in collaboration with other municipalities, must provide courses in music and other cultural activities for children and young people, organized in association with the school system and local cultural life. (The Education Act, 2021, Section 13–6)

The disclaiming liability steering the mentality outsources strategic development, choices, and responsibilities for functions such as competence, development and research to external agents, leaving a large amount of room for influence from interests that are not necessarily part of any governmental control regime. The most prominent example is the NGO the Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts, an organization owned by Norwegian municipalities, and dedicated to performing a forceful impact on the development of *kulturskoler’s* curriculums and

framework.⁵ The conduct of *kulturskolen* on the state-level is then strategically orchestrated as an obliged, but not conducted, national school type to operationalize, form and develop. This makes it crucial to examine how leaders, communities, teachers and pupils engage, speak and enact in and about *kulturskole* to see what, in terms of Foucault (1999, 2001) leads the conduct of conduct.

Community level governmentality

A peculiar feature of *kulturskoler* is their diversity. From the national perspective, there are large differences between the different schools and municipalities (Bjørnsen, 2012a), for example in terms of participation, popularity and placing of *kulturskole* in the municipal structure. In some municipalities, often in sparsely populated areas, participation rates are considerably higher than the national average of 13%. Some schools have long waiting lists for their activities, whereas others have none such lists. The only participation rate that seems to be relatively stable is the fact that considerably more girls than boys attend *kulturskoler*. Local differences also include school fees, the number of disciplines and the activities offered. As there is no national norm regulating it, what the pupils' parents pay in admission fee varies quite a lot from school to school. In 2018, the most expensive fee was twice the national median price, while the cheapest was only 17% of the median price.⁶ In general, the fee level is a function of the municipalities' *kulturskole* budget posting, which again correlates nearly, but not entirely, with the overall municipality economy (Håkonsen & Løyland, 2012). When it comes to activities offered, the same picture of local differences appears. In general, *kulturskoler* in cities have a quite extensive range of activities to offer, while schools in smaller places/municipalities have fewer activities to offer. This is perhaps no surprise, but at the same time, interestingly, quite a few schools (and municipalities) break out of the trend by offering a larger or smaller range of activities than the size of the municipality's population would indicate (Håkonsen & Løyland, 2012). Consequently, with regard to both economy and population, the municipality and *kulturskoler* have on average, high and low achievers.

How the *kulturskole* is placed within the municipal structure, for example as part of *education, culture* or *health*, is diverse in the municipalities in Norway. This coincides with the ambiguity on state/ministry level, and provides different frames for negotiations, budgets, and responsibilities. These frames and the institutions they include (e.g., kindergartens and schools / football and museums / health services and care centers) is likely to conduct different understandings of the *kulturskole's* tasks and responsibilities. In Foucauldian terms, this sectorization can work as a "power machine" (Foucault, 1999) that conducts different norms and rules, authorize/un-authorize arguments and self-understanding. Self-understandings of the *kulturskole* as part of

⁵ See e.g., <https://www.kulturskoleradet.no/om-oss/historien/the-history-in-english>

⁶ In 2018, the national median fee was 3,000 NOK (approximately 300 EURO) per year.

“education,” “culture,” or “health care” might further conduct self-surveillance and control and internalize discipline to maintain social hierarchies.

Another aspect of the local diversity situation, is the way *kulturskoler* adapt to local social-cultural conditions, something that has been important from the start (Bjørnsen, 2012a). In places with long brass band or amateur theater traditions, a reputed jazz festival, or a thriving local folklore tradition, the *kulturskole* will almost certainly reflect this. As a result, today’s dance does not necessarily mean ballet, but could just as well mean folk dance or street dance, if those hold local relevance, just as arts and crafts can mean maintaining local wood carving traditions.

On this *community* level, this indicates a governmentality of local and regional *socio-cultural relationships*, what we call a *community-led governmentality*. Also on this level, the ties to the formal bodies of government are weaker than expected. Even though funding for the *kulturskole* sector comes from the local government, conditions and expectations, following these funds are few and often loosely articulated. As noted above, consequently, there are considerable variations within municipalities, in which the *kulturskole* is positioned within the municipal organization (e.g., within education or within culture), what type of teachers are employed, what activities and subjects the *kulturskole* offers, and with whom the *kulturskole* enters strategic partnerships and cooperation. For instance, the latter can include educational actors, such as the compulsory school, the kindergarten and high schools, local and regional cultural sector agents, such as festivals, theaters, wind bands, big bands, opera or libraries, as well as local health sector agents, such as nursery centers and immigration services, or even churches and church musicians.

Our analysis therefore indicates that the local variations open a space where the ties between the *kulturskoler* and the local voluntary culture sector constitute the most powerful governance to the schools, and as previously noted often local or regional sociocultural factors to a large degree determine the way that both the schools see themselves and the local municipality sees their *kulturskoler*. To some extent, it therefore seems as if the autonomous and free identity of the individual school has also become the common denominator of a common identity on a national level, a common identity of diversity or not having *one* identity, so to say. In turn, this makes a big difference in terms of governmentality. Most prominently, such governmentality is colored by a conviction that the *kulturskole* forms (holds and works to) a great moral and symbolic power about “being good” (Røyseng, 2007; Stavrum, 2013).

Hence, the *kulturskole*’s societal mandate in these municipalities seems to be to develop strong morals and ethics in individuals and communities into, e.g., to build community and a sense of togetherness. This pulls the *kulturskole* in a local direction, reproducing traditional ways of educating the pupils, with traditional and local values about what it is to be a good citizen and a good human. Whereas the *kulturskole* can keep a high degree of popularity among the local users, this conduct might also

prevent innovation, participation from new groups and development. Leading the *kulturskole* is largely mediated through an understanding of this field as tightly connected to the community. Standards of good thinking and good practices are local and related to local values, language and accepted truths about what knowledge is, who has it, and how it is taught.

One example where local cooperation and strategic partnerships, and thus governmentality through the municipal *public* sector, seem to have developed into a concrete manifestation, is the concept of local *kulturskole* “resource centers.” This concept indicates the idea that the *kulturskole* contributes as an external asset or resource to areas other than cultural education within municipal society. In several municipalities, the *kulturskole* has a well-developed collaboration with the elementary school, kindergarten, out-of-school-hours care (SFO), and high schools. In some cases, it takes on the role of a local community development actor in an even wider sense. Here, the credo of benefitting for the common good is at its peak, although such centers require intense financial and human resources, which in many cases take away the focus from the *kulturskole*’s primary function of teaching/educating.

Finally, on the municipality level, the empirical material suggests that what strategic partnerships the *kulturskole* seeks is influenced, but not determined by its position within the municipal organization. Being part of a department of culture makes it slightly more likely to orientate towards cultural partnerships, while a position within, e.g., a childhood department in a school, makes an orientation towards such agents likely. However, more important are mechanisms related to individual relations and networks, and not least to the background and interests of the *kulturskole* leader (or principal). The community-led governmentality, involving relationships between specific local contexts and key individuals, such as leaders/principals, teachers, pupils and parents, makes it crucial to examine the *self-technologies* that operate on individual levels in and around the *kulturskole*.

Individual school level governmentality

On an *individual school* level, the empirical material suggests that the *kulturskole* is led by the *governmentalities that conduct every individual’s speaking, acting and thinking*. This means that leaders, teachers, parents, and pupils all might be more or less influential and engaged within the physical and conceptual framework of the actual *kulturskole*. Here, with leaders we mean principals, school leaders, headmasters and local municipal administration leaders, influential school band conductors, leaders of theaters, festivals, compulsory schools – or in other organizations that the *kulturskole* strongly collaborated with – and is influenced by.

As already described, the *kulturskole* faces numerous expectations on how to operate, what services they should offer, and to whom. Such expectations also exist and hold a constituting agency within the *kulturskole* itself. The expectations are related to questions about what a *kulturskole* can – or should – be, what the target groups for different *kulturskole* activities are, and what reasons the *kulturskole* pupils have for

attending. A main finding in our study on the school level is that the vision embodied in the *Rammeplan for kulturskolen* [Framework for the kulturskole] (Norsk kulturskoleråd, 2016), namely a *kulturskole* for “everyone”, is clearly present in our informants’ consciousness. Furthermore, they say that the *kulturskole* should be a place for children and young people to have equal opportunities for both fellowship and artistic expression and mastering. According to our informants, and in line with the framework mentioned above, a *kulturskole* for everyone comprises three groups: (1) children and young people who need or want a leisure activity; (2) those who want to learn an instrument or in other ways would like any kind of artistic development; and (3) especially interested or ambitious children and young people considering a professional artistic career. Having intentions to include these three target groups is not necessarily seen as contradictory. This is based on an understanding that the *kulturskole* can function as a pool consisting of a wide range of different children interested in arts and culture, which in turn will generate artist talents not necessarily intended to pursue an artistic career.

The informants in the school level in our material are concerned and aware of the challenges to meet both national curriculum goals and visions, while maintaining good professional services. This tension is also reflected in the *kulturskole* teachers’ professional identities, i.e., in what way they define themselves as professionals. In turn, this is linked to social and cultural conceptions of the teacher’s role and the tasks, choice of goals, content and working methods associated with this role. Whether teachers primarily perceive themselves as artists, or foremost as teacher, specialist or generalist, affects the degree to which they are most concerned with the aesthetic development and skills of the pupils, or by social inclusion, diversity, breadth, and formation. This implies that *kulturskoler* must navigate in a field of tensions – for instance between different ideologies of art and ideologies/views of educational perspectives, and between specialists and generalists. To help manage and lead this navigation is one of the *kulturskole* headmasters’ main tasks. This navigation can be understood in line with Foucault’s concept of “Technologies of the Self,” which he explains as a mentality that

permit[s] individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection and immortality. (Foucault, 1994, p. 18)

To summarize, on the school level, the governmentality of the *kulturskole* embraces the individual teacher as a self-authorized professional. The discussion reveals how knowledge discourses and the local *kulturskole* relations produce certain subject positions for the *kulturskole* teachers and leaders to take on. This positioning influences, but does not necessarily determine, what mentality of conduct is produced in the different contexts. This results in the individual practitioners and individual schools holding themselves responsible for updates and holds the state without liability.

Conclusionary reflections

In this article, we have asked: (1) *How can we understand governance in the kulturskole field with the concept of governmentality?* (2) *What implications on state-, community- and individual school level does it have that the kulturskole governs itself?*

On the community level, we have identified perceptions that suggest the *kulturskole* as an autonomous, self-authorized professional school, where considerations on content, teaching designs and assessments are individual/coincidental and local. This leads to irreproachable epistemic trajectories, in which self-authorized actors on all levels configure a field of knowledge that *commonly* restricts steering and belonging. Individuals, institutions and the state all avoid committing to *any* sector. Could this be because the *kulturskole* would otherwise have to attune its interest and mandate in one specific direction? On a state level, this implies that the *kulturskole* is hard to place in one ministry. Instead, practitioners, e.g., with the Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts in a leading position, are flexible and adaptable/adjustable to all the different governmentalities that constitute the field. This logic of understanding seems important to understand for the coming processes of anchoring the *kulturskole* politically. The governmentality of *disclaiming liability* seems to be the norm that operates unequivocally, and that normalizes the *kulturskole* to appear as naturally “independent” and “impossible” or “not desired” to be formally regulated. A compelling allodial governmentality seems to colonize the field. Since this norm is also assumed an internalized part of the field’s mentality, political maneuvering would appear superfluous.

Today in Norway, with no exceptions, running *kulturskoler* is the responsibility of municipalities. Here, the schools hold a high degree of autonomy, free to nurture a distinct local character. In sum, the *kulturskole* field is one of great diversity with numerous local models and approaches, for better and for worse. Seemingly, national government holds very few policy instruments of which they can use to govern this field. The entire policy foundation is found in one, short Education Act paragraph, instructing all Norwegian municipalities to have such a school, though with no guidelines or minimum requirements for its ambitions, design or content. In addition, there is an ambiguous and blurred national policy structure. Both the Ministry of Education, where the principal responsibility is placed, and its Directorate for Education and Training, maintain a low degree of governance towards these schools, instead outsourcing the responsibility for policymaking and implementation to an organization from the practice field, in particular, The Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts.

The fact that so much of the policy responsibility is given to local authorities and the schools themselves would indicate that local governments take a firm grip in the running of the schools. However, this is not the case. On the local and regional level, politicians and administration also pay relatively little attention to the music and performing arts school field, outside of ritual-like and lofty rhetoric at parties

and anniversaries. In combination, this results in a school form much left to itself in making long-term strategical plans about organization and content. This again leaves a lot of the responsibility of quality, relevance and ambition to the school leader, to municipality administration leadership or to the two in partnership. This freedom – or autonomy – is something the *kulturskole* thoroughly enjoys. Still, a main finding in the empirical material is that a significant portion of the schools desire a higher degree of governance signals from both local and national government. Our analyses indicate that this desire is well founded, as a lack of governance could reduce the field's ability to collectively resolve important problems like the ones related to inclusion and innovation.

A central tension in the main narrative about governance in *kulturskole* is the relationship between the state and the municipalities, concerning management and responsibility. The excessive municipal freedom and accountability for the *kulturskole* leads to a range of very different educational systems under this same umbrella. In a way, the *kulturskole* is *governed without any government*: citizens, private organizations, the community, and a range of partnerships (the third sector) are qualified for having the sovereignty, jurisdiction, expertise, and autonomy to deliver a public service. At the same time, these communities, organizations, and chains of partnerships become stakeholders and gatekeepers (Sørensen & Triantafillou, 2016).

By reading the main narrative through the lens of governmentality, we have aimed to get a grip on how the *kulturskole* governs and how it is governed on the state and municipal levels. The analysis also indicates that operating solely with the three distinct levels of governance described this far is too rigid. The idea is that while the governance of *kulturskole* takes place on all these levels simultaneously, the different levels also interact. Thus, there is a need for acknowledging how they both interact (influence each other mutually), and that there is a significant space for governance in between the levels. In this *intersection* between the three levels – the state, community and individual schools – we identify the relationship between the *kulturskole* in both a broad and a narrow sense that mirrors a classic tension in the cultural field, which is also central to national cultural policy. This broad-narrow dichotomy has been a pervasive historical feature of Norwegian cultural policy, particularly in cultural policy initiatives and schemes aimed at children – with an emphasis on art's intrinsic value, as well as the importance of art in a broader, social sense (Hylland & Haugsevje, 2019, pp. 31–32; Mangset & Hylland, 2017, pp. 59–61). For instance, the white paper Meld. St. 8 (2018–2019), *The Power of Culture*, on the one hand emphasizes that children and young people should participate in an art and cultural life that creates common references and builds social and cultural communities. On the other hand, it emphasizes that children and young people should be given the opportunity to realize their artistic talent. In other words, the aim, both for politicians and the *kulturskoler* themselves, is to facilitate both breadth and a focus on cultural participation. However, according to Jordhus-Lier (2018), this and other similar white papers

are characterized by an intention of breadth, while the *kulturskole*'s learning culture is characterized by specialization.

Our analyses of the empirical material indicate that the mentality in the field of *kulturskole* both presupposes and continues a thinking about governance as non-formalized. Individuals, institutions, municipalities, and management systems are constructed by such governmentality. Consequently, the *kulturskole* can actively deviate from state governance, which is why they so actively depart from regulation. This deviation is possible through the mentality being placed and further cultivated at the state, local, and school level. We have also pointed out what this mentality leads to: a desired outsider role, against which the *kulturskole* at the same time is fighting. If they win, or want to win, is thus uncertain.

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Struggles of Governance and Autonomy in the Field of Kulturskole

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