

## Students' experiences of Bildung and education: Is it in accordance with Norway's curriculum policy?

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This qualitative study examined how a selected sample of 15 to 16 year-old Norwegian pupils experience Bildung (all-around development) and education in their schooling, and how those experiences are in coherence with the intended curriculum policy goals as stated in the latest Norwegian curriculum reform. Wolfgang Klafki's operationalisation of Bildung into dimensions of self-determination, co-determination and solidarity were used to examine pupils' experiences regarding Bildung. Further, to compare the pupils' experiences with the intentions of the curriculum policy Gert Biesta's concepts of qualification, socialisation and subjectification were applied. The main findings indicate that students are concerned with Bildung in terms of co-determination, but to a lesser extent with self-determination and solidarity. The pupils are preoccupied with school subjects and that subjects should have a specific functionality for them. The research showed that it is the domain of qualification and socialisation that concerns the students the most, while they are less concerned with the domain of subjectification. It is concluded that in light of the study findings, there seems to be a lack of coherence between the intended education policy goals as stated in the Norwegian core curriculum and the formal school experiences of pupils.

### Introduction

One of the goals of school education in Norway is to prepare pupils for their future lives. The core curriculum specifies that pupils are to master their lives, contribute to society and become democratic citizens (Kunn-skapsdepartementet, 2017). "The school's mission is the education and all-round development (Bildung) of all pupils" (Kunn-skapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 9). This dual mission of formal education has been a philosophy in Norway for a long time (Imsen, 2016). The educational mission concerns specific subjects: to gain knowledge, competences, and skills regarding a specific school subject. The mission of Bildung, as labelled in the Norwegian core curriculum, is addressed as follows: "Primary and secondary education and training is an important part of a lifelong process which has the individual's all-round development, intellectual freedom, independence, responsibility and compassion for others as its goal" (Kunn-skapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 9). Clearly, both the educational mission and the Bildung mission are relevant and equally desirable policy goals for the Norwegian education system.

However, there seems to have been a readjusted focus on knowledge and education over the last decade(s) which might be related to the influence from OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) on educational policy in Norway (Hovdenak & Stray, 2015), and Norway's integration of the concept of competence into school

subjects (Tahirsylaj, 2023). This influence is, among others, based on the theory of human capital, the most important capital in modern society according to the OECD (1996). “Human capital refers to the knowledge, information, ideas, skills and health of individuals” (Becker, 2006, p. 292). The OECD has claimed that “Knowledge is now the driver of productivity and economic growth [...]”, and it is crucial to develop good practices for a knowledge-based economy in the modern OECD countries (OECD, 1996, p. 3). In other words, human capital seems to be a decisive factor for the economic growth in a country, and knowledge and competence are viewed as the key to increased human capital.

If the Norwegian government grounds its educational policy on the human capital perspective, one can ask if the two missions of education and Bildung have equal value in the Norwegian school. One of the main aims of our study has been to look more closely at whether the two missions of formal education in Norway are equally pursued in school practice. To address this issue, we have taken the perspective of pupils and investigated their experiences regarding knowledge, education and Bildung with the following main research question: “Which experiences and opinions do pupils in 10th grade in the Norwegian education context have concerning education and Bildung at school, and how does this resonate with the intentions of educational policy as stated in the Norwegian core curriculum? To aid the investigation concerning Bildung, we used Klafki’s (1998) operationalisation of Bildung into self-determination, co-determination and solidarity. Furthermore, to investigate the educational part we focused on pupils’ experiences regarding school subjects. Lastly, to aid in analysing what part of formal education concerns pupils the most we used the concepts of qualification, socialisation and subjectification (Biesta, 2009), which address domains of purpose of schooling.

The structure of the article is as follows: first, the concepts of Bildung and education are defined and clarified in relation to the corresponding terms ‘danning’ and ‘utdanning’ in Norwegian as part of an extended elaboration of the adopted theoretical framing. This is followed by a literature review and an overview of the educational policy in Norway today, methodological considerations, main findings, discussion and conclusions.

## Theoretical framework

To begin with, this study investigated the terms that entail the dual mission of the educational system of Norway: Bildung and education (or ‘danning’ and ‘utdanning’). The term education (‘utdanning’) is defined as “Education, a common name for all learning of skills and knowledge. In everyday language it refers to learning in primary and secondary school, high school and universities” (Henriksen, 2017). The term ‘*danning*’ relates to the upbringing and all-round development of pupils, and its translation to English is difficult according to Gundem and Hopmann (1998): “It suffices to mention the word «Bildung» in German, «bildning» in Swedish, and «danning» in Norwegian. No term in English conveys the meaning of this concept ...” (p. 2). We have chosen to use education for ‘utdanning’ that refers to the learning of knowledge and skills mainly at an educational institution. To discuss the mission regarding ‘danning’ we will use the term Bildung, which

is an established and theoretically grounded term that is used as a synonym for 'danning' in the English version of the latest Norwegian core curriculum.

Klafki (1998) used three terms to operationalise Bildung, namely 'self-determination, co-determination and solidarity' (p. 313). Self-determination concerns how each individual in society "... is to be enabled to make independent, responsible decisions about her or his individual relationships and interpretations of an interpersonal, vocational, ethical or religious nature" (p. 314). It entails that everyone has and should achieve "... freedom, emancipation, autonomy, responsibility, and independence" (Klafki, 2000). Self-determination is about being able to draw one's own conclusions, to become an independent human being, to make oneself better and to develop morality. Co-determination contains the responsibility and every individual's right to contribute in society to develop culture, politics, economy and socialization (Klafki, 1998). In turn, solidarity concerns that self-determination and co-determination is only justified with a consciousness that all human beings have equal rights and that one strives to help those who do not have the possibility to execute self-determination and co-determination (Klafki, 1998). In Klafki's perspective on the theory of Bildung these three concepts must be seen together. Any one of them is not a goal without the others. He also specified that Bildung happens through the investigation of content that does not come from oneself, and that it is through the educational process with all the unique situations one experiences that Bildung happens (Klafki, 2000).

According to the Norwegian education policy one of the purposes of schools is to provide education and Bildung. Biesta (2015) has theorised another way to look at schools' purpose, arguing that the schools' purpose consists of three domains: qualification, socialisation, and subjectification. Qualification concerns the acquisition of knowledge and skills: to get knowledge regarding specific subjects, or skills for life that is to come after schooling (Biesta, 2015). Socialisation deals with learning about traditions, culture, religions, and professionalism, i.e., about different ways of being and acting (Biesta, 2015). Subjectification, in turn, entails how the educational process affects the pupils as people. Pupils are individuals with their own opinions, will, initiative, and responsibility (Biesta, 2015). Furthermore, he stated that school should work in relation to these domains; teachers should have different purposes in each of the domains and should be conscious of what they wish to achieve (Biesta, 2015). Throughout our article, we use these three domains of purpose to analyse the interviews and investigate which domain pupils find themselves in at school. In addition to using the theoretical framework to understand the interviews, we also looked into previous research related to education and Bildung.

## **Literature review**

Although research on the student perspective regarding the topic of education and Bildung is scarce, some surveys and research have been conducted. Bakken (2020) found that around half of all pupils find school stressful often or very often, and 30% find it stressful from time to time. In addition, Eriksen (2021) discovered that the self-worth of

pupils seems to be dependent on their achievement at school. Bildung and self-determination concerns being able to make independent choices (Klafki, 2000; Tahirsylaj & Werler, 2021). A survey executed 2020/2021 found that pupils experienced being allowed to partake in decisions concerning rules in the classroom and concerning evaluation (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020-2021). However, Tahirsylaj and Werler (2021) found that self-determination in the adult population is much lower in Norway compared to other European countries.

Regarding school subjects and Bildung, Bø and Hovdenak (2011a) found that pupils saw themselves as citizens of the world, in addition to considering being knowledgeable as important for contributing to society. Hovdenak and Bø (2010) found additionally that pupils think knowledge is important to get a job and a good life, and Dæhlen et al. (2011) showed that pupils find grades important. Furthermore, Hovdenak and Stray (2015) discovered that pupils think subjects should have a functional utility for them. Additionally, Bø and Hovdenak (2011b) found that educational and personal support is important for good learning, and another survey showed that 86% of pupils felt that teachers cared about them (Bakken, 2020). Regarding teachers' experiences of what is happening at schools, Briseid and Haraldstad (2019) concluded that teachers experienced having to focus more on the educational part of schooling compared to Bildung.

## **Educational policy in Norway**

Since 2001 Norwegian schools have been restructured by a new national curriculum called 'The knowledge promotion reform' (Imsen et al., 2017). There has been an increased focus on knowledge, evaluation, goals, and testing; we participate in PISA tests made by OECD to measure pupils' competences and we have integrated our own national tests in schools (Hovdenak & Stray, 2015). According to Hovdenak and Stray (2015) human capital might be one of the causes for the changes introduced in the Norwegian educational policies over the last few decades. The idea of human capital has had a major influence, including being recognised and rewarded with a Nobel prize in economics for Gary Becker in 1992 (Nobel Media AB, 2021). Human capital concerns increasing the competence, skills, and health of each individual (Becker, 1962). Investing in human capital relates to becoming a better version of oneself, which in turn will be economically beneficial for society (Becker, 1962).

One of the observations made by Shultz (1961, p.1) concerning human capital was that many individuals choose to invest in themselves during leisure time, through self-education or through formal education. "By investing in themselves, people can enlarge the range of choices available to them. It is one way free men can enhance their welfare" (Schultz, 1961, p. 2). This indicates that when individuals invest in themselves, it may lead to their own economic growth, in addition to society's economic growth. As mentioned earlier, the OECD is one of the organisations that adopted and applied human capital perspective in its work. One of OECD's publications states that "Education is the key factor in forming human capital" (Keeley, 2007, p.3). The Norwegian educational policy is influenced by the OECD, and Hovdenak and Stray (2015) suggested that this influence

might be one of the reasons why they have seen an increase in focus on education and a reduced focus on Bildung. Despite the international education trends having a strong influence on curriculum policy in Norway, it still maintains the focus on a dual mission of schooling towards education and Bildung, and Bildung remains a central educational policy goal in the Norwegian education (Tahirsylaj, 2023).

## **Method**

This study has investigated the experiences Norwegian pupils have regarding Bildung and education at school. We have taken a constructivist worldview and had therefore to listen and try to learn from what the pupils told us (Crotty, 1998). Because we intended to research the pupils' experiences, we conducted a phenomenological study using qualitative interviews as the main research method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interviews were executed in mid-Norway in the third largest city of Norway, Trondheim. The school is located in the suburbs of the city and consists of approximately 500 pupils. We chose to interview pupils in the 10th grade, the last year of secondary school before starting high school, being 15 to 16 years old. We used semi-structured focus group interviews. The interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed in Norwegian, but translated into English for quotation purposes. An interview guide (Appendix 1) was made as an aid, but the interviews were executed informally by moving back and forth without a specific order in the questions as suggested by Christoffersen and Johannesen (2018). Eder and Fingerson (2011) stated that the use of focus groups in interviews of young pupils can be advantageous to create a natural context as well as to minimise the power dynamics that can appear between an adult and a younger individual. Another advantage with focus groups is the need to defend their statements in front of their fellow pupils, in addition to building the discussion on the statements that appear (Eder & Fingerson, 2011). Because of this interview context, one can gain rich data material with a range of experiences and opinions that can come forth in comparison with individual interviews (Eder & Fingerson, 2011).

The research was executed in spring 2021 at a secondary school in 10th grade which consisted of three classes. We interviewed three focus groups: one group of five pupils from each of the three classes, ending with a total of 15 pupils in the sample. We chose to do three interviews to be able to make comparisons between the three, as recommended by Barbour (2007). Over 50 pupils volunteered to do the interview. Maxwell (2012) stated that it is valuable to make a random selection when there are more volunteers than one can interview, to avoid researcher's preferred selection on participants. We chose to make a random selection, but to use the dimension boy/girl to maintain diversity in the sample. Maxwell (2012) also argued that one should capture the heterogeneity of the population by seeking a range of interview participants, not only 'typical members'. To avoid applying too many criteria of heterogeneity, we asked the teachers from each class to consider whether our random selection comprised a diverse set of pupils. We also asked the teachers to not provide specific information about the pupils, to avoid creating a stereotypical image, as Maxwell (2012) warned about. We started all the interviews spending time talking with them, to tell them about us, to inform them properly about

what was going to happen, and what would happen with the material, as recommended when interviewing younger individuals (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Dalen, 2011).

## Analysis and main findings

The analysis and main findings are presented and explained in the following section with different topics in each paragraph. Corresponding quotations are designated with fictional names and referred to in each paragraph. Each quotation is not necessarily related to others even though they may represent the same topic.

Pupils in this study described their Norwegian school as a free and liberal school that teaches what one needs to learn, in addition to being a school that takes care of those with special needs (Lars). It can be challenging in the sense of having to use leisure time to study, but also fun spending time with friends. The purpose of schooling is to prepare for adult life, including getting a formal education, working and “to drive the world forward”, but also to be social and make friends (Ole, Bente, Ann). That the Norwegian school takes care of those with special needs may relate to solidarity (Klafki, 1998), because it concerns contributing to those who need help executing self-determination and co-determination. Taking the responsibility and choice of studying on their own time can relate to self-determination. The pupils expressed that education and work are important, and that they spend time studying, which is about qualification. Being social relates to socialisation. And finally, taking the responsibility of studying in their own time, may refer to subjectification. The pupils find themselves in all three domains.

- Lars: I would say, in Norway for example, the school is quite free, you can wear what you want. You learn what you need. So, it is quite a good school in Norway really.
- Ole: Make us ready for adult life perhaps? Make us ready to work.
- Bente: Make friendships, be with others. There are good things with being together, it can be fun [...].
- Ann: I think it is you know, to get an education, to you know, get ready for live, the adult life, and help into the future, drive the world forward.

To investigate their opinions and experiences with formal school education we talked about school subjects. Several pupils stated that English and social science were important and useful to be able to communicate, and to be aware of what is happening in the world (Nina, Svein). Others stated that English was important for being qualified for work. It was mentioned that if the teachers were able to explain why a subject or topic was important, it would be experienced as useful. If they experienced something as important it would make the subject useful, like economics in mathematics (Ann). There were many comments concerning specific topics they did not understand why they learned; asking “How will I use this in the future?” (Ole). The pupils were concerned with and had strong opinions on which subjects are important and which are not.

- Nina: ... If you for example, are going out into the world, you will meet people that don't speak your language. Then, in a way, you have English to communicate with.

- Svein: Mathematics, English and social sciences are specific you know. Because they are things that you most likely will have use for. And Norwegian as well, because you must read your whole life, but specially poem analyses [dejected about poem analysis in Norwegian] .... And natural science .... But especially social sciences, if you consider that the school is supposed to, supposed to teach you to become a good democratic citizen, and since the democracy require a well-informed population, you can also look at social science in that way. That you learn to think critically.
- Ann: And if they (the teachers) you know, tell us pretty thoroughly how we can use this in the future for example, why it is important and stuff, then it is...yeah...
- Ole: Yeah, it is like that. I get that you should have a general basis of knowledge in some stuff, but some things become a bit like «what do I need this for really?» If I'm not going to specialise you know, but that I chose at high school... So it is a bit like, some things are meaningless you know.

In our interpretation, pupils experienced school subjects as important if they could understand how and why they are useful for them now and in the future, which Hovdenak and Stray (2015) also suggested. As this concerns specific school subjects, these views mainly concern the domain of qualification (Biesta, 2009). We argue that the pupils seem to be mostly occupied with the educational part of learning within school subjects, although being connected to the world also relates to co-determination and Bildung. In some schools of Norway there are also other activities conducted by other non-school actors that are not specifically related to any school subjects.

The Norwegian organisation MOT (meaning courage in Norwegian) is one such actor and works to prevent societal challenges by having different activities and classes at school (MOT Norge, n.d). Their goal is to "... strengthen the quality of life, self-worth and courage for young individuals, and to make them better equipped to make their own choices, stand up for their own values and take care of those who are different and excluded" (MOT, Norge, n.d). These activities, that the pupils name "MOT" were experienced as fun and a nice 'rest' from school subjects, and some stated that it concerns learning about life, how to behave and to be critical (Kristin, Geir). Most of them, however, did not experience learning from these activities, and they found it a waste of time (Svein).

- Kristin: It is perhaps to make us more conscious of how to behave towards others, and maybe not to learn anything related to subjects, but just that we ought to know a bit more about how to behave towards others maybe.
- Geir: I don't know if I've had so much use of it personally, but it is interesting to listen to, it is different in a way, I think the classes are funny.
- Svein: No, MOT, I don't think I've gotten so much out of it, it seems more like a waste of time really, I am not quite sure why it is at school, but now it is here. It doesn't really have a clear purpose, we talk about things, yes, so maybe you learn to think critically, but it is, you think critically about yourself, and choices you make, but at the same time, I would say that comes natural on its own, but that MOT does not really have anything to do with it.

This gives an indication that the pupils find the domain of subjectification not as important at school. To further investigate that domain in addition to the Bildung perspective, we asked them about personal development.

Personal development can relate to the domain of subjectification, and to self-determination and Bildung (Biesta, 2020; Briseid, 2008; Klafki, 1998). When asked about what type of person they wanted to be, and what it meant to be a good person, most of them expressed that you get a long way if you are kind and considerate (Lars, Nina). They thought that personal development is something that happens ‘on its own’ and is not something that one has the focus on at school (Randi, Inger). In one group it was highlighted that there is no time to consider this at school, as the educational part takes up all their time.

- Lars: I feel that when you get older you start respecting people more and more. I don’t know, just be kind towards others. Have fun, that is important, and then life goes as it comes. You know. What happens, happens.
- Nina: You get pretty far if you are a thoughtful and kind person, and in a way... Yeah, that is quite, yeah, a lot.
- Randi: I feel like school is teaching very little about it.
- Inger: We haven’t really gotten the time to think about it at school, we think about it more like this «what is that I really want?», like, you think about it more on your spare time... We do not really get an insight into how adult life is. It is not like, this you do there, and that you do like this if you are a hairdresser, it is not like, yeah.

These results indicate that the pupils had not given personal development a lot of thought, and that it was not important in relation to formal education. It seemed as if they regarded the domain of subjectification and the self-determination perspective of little value, and that it is the domain of qualification that is important when you are at school. They were also asked if they had goals for the future. Several of the pupils focused on education and work, while others wanted to travel and to be free (Liv, Lars, Nina).

- Liv: I am going to get..., I don’t have any unusual goals, but I am going to get an education and a job at least.
- Lars: And then I would like to travel over the world and see new cultures and try new food and stuff.
- Nina: I want that too, I don’t want to just sit and work you know, I want in a way, you have to remember to take care of yourself and not just sit and work, you know.

This shows that it is not only the domain of qualification that is important. Bildung also concerns making individual choices, and we therefore looked further into the experiences the pupils had concerning their participation at school. Bildung and self-determination include the ability to make independent choices (Briseid, 2008; Klafki, 1998). The findings revealed that the pupils were given opportunities to execute self-determination through making choices to some degree (Liv, Nina). However, the pupils expressed a wish to have more influence. Some suggested that they would learn better; others that it would increase



their interest if they could participate in making decisions in school related matters. It also frequently happened that they were given the option to choose, but in the end the teacher made the final choice. They expressed frustration concerning the student council, a place where they are supposed to have an influence, but they experienced not having any (Svein).

- Liv: Sometimes, sometimes we get to choose to have multiple choice or other type of tests. Then we can take part in choosing. Normally then, we end up with multiple choice.
- Nina: But again, it depends... on the teachers and the subject we're having ... In Norwegian for example, the teacher might say for example like «Would you like to work with that?», «Should we do this?», «How do you want the test go?» But in social science for example, then it is not even a question.
- Svein: I think the student council should have more power. .... The student council does not have any real power, that makes people less invested in it. .... We have influence on the student council, but that the student council should have the power to make changes at school.

This may indicate that pupils are given some choices to make, but that the choices they get are of low value to them, and it is as if they are not given any real choice. The results show that pupils do want to develop themselves in the direction of making individual choices, but they experience being overruled in the cases where they are given the options. This can also relate to the next topic: the pupils experienced that teachers did not have enough time for them.

On their own accord, the pupils talked about how they have a lot of feelings and opinions concerning subjects, learning and personal challenges that are not attended to by teachers. They expressed how school can be stressful, that they must spend a lot of time on subjects, and that they constantly must show what they have learned (Bente). Others would like more evaluations and more feedback from teachers. Regardless of the problem they all seemed to have experiences that talking about it to teachers would not help (Geir). The pupils were understanding of the challenges that teachers face, but they are still frustrated because they are not given the guidance they need (Kristin).

The pupils had different opinions and experiences regarding education, but in all groups they had some solutions to the problems. Several suggested that the schools should have more teachers or smaller classes. They would like school to be more personal, and more adjusted to the level of each individual.

- Bente: Yes, or, you don't want to show that, ok, I struggle ... but, you feel like no one will understand, and then it becomes a bit like, you hold it inside, and during the day you try to be happy and pleased, but during the night it becomes a bit like, I have to do this, I have to do that, I need help for this. Yeah, it is just like that, and then the next day you have to go to school.
- Bente: Yeah, 'cause you have to raise your hand, you have to be active in class. If not then yeah, you do not show that you are good at oral participation... and if you show extra, then you show initiative, and then it is even better, so if you do not

manage that you will get worse grades. And if you do not ask questions your grade gets reduced.

Geir: Yes, or, for example, if the pupils do not, if they think like, there is no point telling it to the teacher, because the teacher won't listen to it anyway. Then it is better for someone else to hear it then.

Kristin: Yeah, that is what makes it so difficult, everyone thinks differently, everyone does things differently, everything is different for everyone, and that is also very difficult for the teacher to adjust everything for everyone. That is the problem.

Most of the pupils wanted to master the domain of qualification, but they needed help and to not be forced to always follow the class. The analysis indicates that pupils do experience being in the three domains of qualification, socialisation, and subjectification. The pupils get to practice and to have thoughts regarding self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity.

## Discussion and conclusions

In the following discussion we will relate the pupils' experiences with the concepts of *Bildung*, the domains of purposes of schooling in addition to comparing it with previous research.

With regards to self-determination, several interesting findings emerged. One of them concerns that the pupils find school stressful and challenging, which has also been demonstrated by Bakken (2020). This can relate to a feeling of responsibility to learn what is taught at school and to do the tasks that are given to them. It can indicate an attempt for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, which can be connected to self-determination. This experience of stress can also relate to the fact that the self-worth of pupils is dependent on their achievements at school (Eriksen, 2021). One can ask if the stress comes from not being aware of the responsibility they take, and if they are conscious of why they wish to thrive at school. Have they taken an independent choice based on moral, reason and responsibility grounds that are the essence of self-determination? Or have they taken the choice of trying to perform at school without knowing why? Does the stress come from the fact that the responsibility is too big for them, when the focus on achievements, the perspective of schooling, that is so prevalent at school?

Making choices is an important part of self-determination (Klafki, 1998), and the results show that pupils get to take part in some decisions at school, which is supported by the findings in the survey made by Utdanningsdirektoratet (2020-2021). However, the pupils in this study found that they had little influence on the school student council, in contrast to the student survey that found that teachers gave them time to work on this. The pupils in this study do express a desire to participate in decisions, hence wanting to make independent choices.

To look towards the future entails setting goals and making different choices. The findings show that some pupils have clear goals and dreams they would like to have happen, while

others find the future stressful. Taking important choices where they themselves had to evaluate the choices they made was challenging. It might be the ability to critically evaluate, reflect upon, and morally consider what choices to make, that is challenging. Perhaps the pupils have not been exposed to making enough important choices, and maybe they have not been guided in reflecting upon how to make these choices; there may be a need for pupils to practice and execute self-determination to a greater extent in school.

Some pupils state that one gets a long way by being kind and thoughtful and that self-development happens on its own. It can be considered that what occupies the thoughts of pupils in this study is more related to education, to prepare for the working life and adulthood. Our findings indicate that pupils may not use that much time considering why they are at school, and why they work with it, other than the fact that they should have an education and prepare for working and adult life. This is supported by the observation that pupils did not find the MOT activities as a place to learn and grow.

In other words, self-determination seems to be something that pupils are not conscious of, or that is not important for them at school. They wish to make more choices and execute more independence and gain more responsibility. One has to evaluate, however, if the pupils really execute independent choices, if they are not aware of the bases for choosing. It can be argued that the pupils in this study to a small degree execute and practice self-determination at school. That accords with the discovery of low values of self-determination in the adult population in Norway (Tahirsylaj & Werler, 2021).

Related to co-determination, the pupils emphasised that school is to prepare them for life which involves getting an education, work and driving the world forward. They found English and social science important for connecting forward to the world, which was also noted by Bø and Hovdenak (2011a). In addition, it relates to pupils wanting to be knowledgeable in order to contribute to society (Bø & Hovdenak, 2011a). Regarding solidarity, it became known that the pupils thought the Norwegian school is taking care of those with special needs. They also discussed the fact that everyone has the possibility to learn, although some need more time than others. They stated that it is necessary to have more teachers or smaller classes to help and aid those who need it. These results show that the domain of qualification and Bildung can be highly related. However, it is mainly through co-determination and solidarity.

The pupils are concerned with the educational perspective of formal education. They state that subjects should have a functional utility for them, which is also stated by Hovdenak and Stray (2015). Several pupils say they constantly need to show their knowledge, which they find frustrating and stressful. They also mention that grades are important for high school and for the future, which was also found by Hovdenak and Bø (2010) and Dæhlen et al. (2011). These results indicate that pupils are mostly focused on education and their results. One can question if this happens because teachers have little time to give both educational and personal support to the pupils, something that Bø and Hovdenak (2011b) found to be important for attaining good learning. This contrasts to the survey that showed that most pupils find that teachers care about them. On the other hand, it does

not mean that the teachers have enough time to listen and give the support that the pupils in this study felt was lacking.

The domains of qualification, socialisation and subjectification are all important. This research demonstrates that it is the domain of qualification that dominates. It is important for the pupils that subjects have a certain utility for them. Grades are important and they are concerned with becoming qualified for something in the future. This impression has also been found amongst teachers who experience having to focus more on the educational part (Briseid & Haraldstad, 2019). The domain of socialization is important for the pupils. Spending time with their friends and classmates is something of high value to them. The pupils also felt like they had a responsibility as being part of a community in the world, as also demonstrated by Bø and Hovdenak (2011a). The domain of subjectification was not a domain of specific importance related to formal education in this study. Our analysis indicates that the pupils wish to get more options to make choices, although they do not seem to be conscious of the grounds on which they are to make those decisions.

Pupils are more concerned with education than *Bildung*, but we question whether they are conscious and aware of that preoccupation. Grades and being educated are experienced as important, and they do not have time, space nor a wish to consider the aspect of *Bildung* at school. There has been an increased focus on knowledge based on recommendations drawn from a human capital perspective. We question, however, if this term has been misunderstood. The theory drawn from human capital does not suggest focusing on knowledge to increase human capital, but rather to invest in oneself. This can be strongly related to *Bildung*, and to the fact that pupils might have the need to practise and reflect upon the independent choices that they make in the present, and that they will make in the future. Perhaps, in going back to *Bildung*, pupils would be less stressed, and have healthier self-worth not dependent on school achievements. Maybe highlighting *Bildung* in school practice and school subjects, the coherence between experiences and the goals of the education system would match better.

Pupils in the 10th grade in Norway do experience that education and *Bildung* are important. The findings indicate that pupils find *Bildung* through co-determination to be important. School subjects such as English and social sciences are highlighted because we live in a globalised society and pupils want knowledge of what is happening in the world and to have the ability to communicate outside of Norway. Self-determination and solidarity are not expressed as important to the same degree as co-determination. To develop oneself as a person, personal qualities and the ability to make independent choices based on morality and reason do not seem to be a concern of high priority for pupils at school. Education is on the other hand important and is something that occupies the pupils to a great degree. School is to prepare them for life through school subjects that should have a direct functional utility for them. If we compare this with the purpose of school as outlined here by Biesta (2015), it seems as the pupils are more concerned with the domains of qualification and socialisation at school, and to a lesser degree concerned with subjectification. Education is experienced as more important than *Bildung*.

This gives an indication that the intentions of educational policy which states that the school has the dual mission to educate and provide opportunities for Bildung are not in full coherence with the experience of pupils. Education through school subjects contributes to pupils' Bildung indirectly as school subjects are the prerequisite for pupils to be able to make rational decisions regarding self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity. However, the pupils in our study experience that Bildung is not pursued deliberately and visibly as education is in their school practice in the Norwegian context. The reasons for the lack of coherence are challenging to address. One answer might be that the Norwegian educational policy is influenced by the OECD, as argued by numerous scholars, and which has made recommendations to focus on knowledge and the use of tests to evaluate competence within school subjects. The rationale for this recommendation was based on the economic theory of human capital. The challenge here lies in the fact that the theory of human capital was built upon an observation that some individuals chose to invest in themselves. We therefore ask the question if the focus on knowledge by educational policy really would increase the human capital of pupils, as this is not something that the pupils automatically choose themselves. Regardless of the reasons, the findings indicate a necessity for more research concerning the perceived low focus on Bildung in the Norwegian school, what are the causes, and what are the implications of prioritising education over Bildung for the present and future students and society in the Norwegian context.

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## Appendix 1: Interview guide

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About school	- How would you have described the Norwegian school to someone that has never been to Norway?
	- What do you like about school? Why?
	- What do you not like with school? Why?
	- What do you think is the point with school?

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About school subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What school subjects have been useful for you? Why?</li> <li>- Are there some school subjects you think have not been useful? Why?</li> <li>- Which subjects do you think one should have at school? Why?</li> <li>- Which school subjects do you work most at, and why? What about subjects did you the least effort into? (Who chooses this? Is it a conscious choice you make?)</li> </ul>
About other «activities» at school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have you had MOT “<i>Courage programme</i>” at your school? What have you learned there?</li> <li>- Have you had any other similar activities at school that does not concern subjects, but rather how we are as humans or about psychological health? What have you learned there? Was it useful? Why?</li> </ul>
About high school [VGS in Norwegian]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have you decided which direction you want to choose? How did you come to that conclusion?</li> <li>- Have you considered not going to high school?</li> <li>- What expectations do you have to the subjects at high school?</li> </ul>
The future	
About yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On what way would you describe yourself as a person? Have you had any experiences at school that have affected the person you are today?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Interviewer’s note: Here I do not want you to tell the name of the person you have talked to.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have you had conversations about what you want to do after high school? How was it?</li> <li>- Have you had conversations at school about what kind of person you are and what kind of person you want to be? How was that?</li> <li>- Have you had conversations at school about what you want to do in the future? What job you would want? How was that?</li> </ul>
About goals and plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you have (have you had) dreams about the future during your schooling? Like what?</li> <li>- Do you have (have you had) any goals for the future? What goals? How did you come to have these goals?</li> <li>- Do you have any plans for the future? Something you have decided to do? Have you talked with someone about this?</li> <li>- Do you have any plans about the future now? Have you talked with anyone about these plans? Family, friends, girlfriends/boyfriends, teachers? (Without mentioning names).</li> <li>- How do you see the future now, in for example 5/10 years? Work? Have you thought about this before?</li> <li>- Is talking about the future something you would like to do with an adult either at school or at home?</li> </ul>



About school and your personal development	<p>- When I say «personal development» what do you think of then?</p> <p><i>Interviewer's note: With personal development I mean that you consider how you want to be as a person, how you would like to improve at subjects for example, or at a sport, or something similar. It entails that YOU want to develop yourself in something YOU want. It concerns what kind of person YOU want to be – and how to do it.</i></p> <p>- Has the school contributed to your personal development? In what way?</p> <p>- Do you wish the school had used more or less time on personal development?</p> <p>- Imagine that you could have decided the content at school. Is there something you believe the secondary school should have done more to prepare the pupils on the lives you live now?</p> <p>- Do you feel ready for high school? In what ways has schooling until now prepared you for high school?</p> <p>- What do you think is important to learn to be prepared for life?</p> <p>- Do you think the school has prepared you for life? In what ways?</p>
About school and your participation	<p>- Do you think you get to participate in decisions at school? What sort of decisions then?</p> <p>- Do you get any responsibility at school? Is this something you would/would not like?</p> <p>- As a pupil at school, do you feel any responsibility? In terms of the social or educational part of school?</p>

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**Please cite as:** Stubhaug, M. & Tahirsylaj, A. (2024). Students' experiences of Bildung and education: Is it in accordance with Norway's curriculum policy? *Issues in Educational Research*, 34(1), 280-296. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier34/stubhaug.pdf>