

# **Narrative construction of teacher identity**

Gunn Elisabeth Søreide

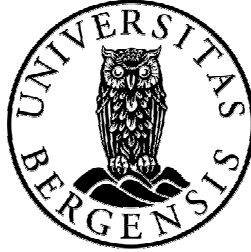
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Bergen, August 2007  
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## SUMMARY

There has been an overemphasis within narrative approaches to teacher identity to use autobiographical material and personal accounts from teachers or teacher students as material sources for analysis. Very few studies draw on alternative empirical sources as a point of departure to investigate the narrative construction of teacher identity. This thesis therefore investigates how teacher identity is narratively constructed by three significant actors within the Norwegian elementary school system. In addition to a) transcribed texts from interviews with female elementary school teachers the project draws on texts from two other sources: b) public school policy documents and c) written material from the Union of Education Norway. These three actors are perceived as three different, but equal sources of material that are explored in three separate studies that constitute the core of this thesis.

Public narratives about teachers are the unit of analysis in this thesis. The material is analysed within a theoretical and methodological framework inspired by a combination of poststructuralist, discursive and narrative approaches to identity and research. This framework has generated five analytical concepts that are divided in two main categories. The first category is called “narrative resources” and refers to the ‘*what*’ of identity construction, in my case, *subject positions* and *constructions of identities*. The second category is called “narrative editing” and refers to the different ways storytellers draw on and combine the narrative resources, or the ‘*how*’ of identity construction. This thesis focuses on three such editing techniques, namely; *positioning*, *narrative plots* and *counter narratives*.

The identity construction of “*The teacher as pupil centred, caring and including*” is identified as especially paramount in all the three studies. Consequently discussions centre on how this teacher identity has gained such a prominent position. These findings are firstly interpreted as an indication that the three sources of material are inscribed in and informed by the same powerful Scandinavian educational discourse on individualisation. Secondly the thesis claim that this identity constructions also might gain prominence because it represent what is perceived as a necessary adjustment or alternative to certain teacher identities, educational values and conceptions of learning and childhood. Finally the thesis show how this teacher identity is constituted in a web of multidimensional dichotomies, and how it is the *sum* of these that contribute to the constitution, fixation and dominance of the teacher as pupil-centred, inclusive and caring in the public narratives.

The project illuminates how analysis of narratives and statements can give insight in to some of the forces that move within educational discourses. The three studies underscore how

complex and multifaceted the narrative construction of teacher identity can be and consequently provide an understanding of elementary school teachers that goes beyond the most obvious cultural stereotypes. The thesis shows that to get a conception of *why* teachers are positioned within certain identities, it is vital to understand *how* they come to be positioned in such a way.



## LIST OF PAPERS

### **Paper I:**

Søreide, G. E. (2006) “Narrative Construction of Teacher Identity: Positioning and Negotiation”

*Teachers and Teaching: Theory and practice*

Vol. 12, no. 5, pp. 527– 547

### **Paper II:**

Søreide, G. E. (2007) “The Public Face of Teacher Identity: Narrative Construction of Teacher Identity in Public Policy Documents”.

*Journal of Education Policy*

Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 129–146

### **Paper III:**

Søreide, G. E. “Teacher union and teacher identity”.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	
Summary	1
List of papers	3
<b>1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Introduction	7
1.2 Teachers and teaching as a field of inquiry – from skills to narratives	9
1.2.1 Teacher skills, behaviour and attitudes	9
1.2.2 Teacher thinking and the teacher in context	10
1.2.3 “The narrative turn” in research on teachers and teaching	11
1.3 Approaches to research on teacher identity	13
1.4 Dominant approaches and some challenges within research on narrative and discursive construction of teacher identity	14
1.4.1 Autobiographical narratives and teacher identity	15
1.4.2 Discursive and poststructuralist approaches to teacher identity	17
1.4.3 Popular culture and the narrative construction of teacher identity	18
<b>2 AIMS AND THE RESEARCH QUESTION</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1 General aims	19
2.2 Research question	21
<b>3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 Identity	23
3.1.1 Changing conceptions of identity	23
3.1.2 Teacher identity / professional identity	25
3.2 Discourse and teacher identity	25
3.2.1 Discourse	26
3.2.2 Discourse, language and identity	27
3.2.3 Discourse and identity resources	27
3.3 Narrative and teacher identity	28
3.3.1 Public narratives	29
3.3.2 Narrative	30
3.4 Narrative and discursive construction of teacher identity	31
3.5 Analytical concepts	32
3.5.1 Narrative resources	32
3.5.1.1 Subject positions	33
3.5.1.2 Identity constructions	34
3.5.2 Narrative editing	34
3.5.2.1 Positioning	35
3.5.2.2 Narrative plots	36
3.5.2.3 Counter-narratives	37
<b>4 METHODS</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1 Overview of the three studies	39
4.2 General methodological approach	42
4.2.1 Discourse analysis	42
4.2.2 Narrative analysis and analysis of narrative	43
4.3 Conducting the analysis in the three studies	45

4.3.1	Identification of subject positions (First reading in Study 1, 2, 3).....	45
4.3.2	Framing identity constructions (Second reading in Study 1, 2, 3).....	47
4.3.3	Positioning (Third reading in Study 1).....	48
4.3.4	Tracing of narrative plots (Third reading in Study 2) .....	50
4.3.5	Counter-narrative (Third reading in Study 3) .....	51
5	PAPERS .....	55
5.1	Paper I: .....	55
5.2	Paper II:.....	56
5.3	Paper III:.....	57
6	GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE THESIS .....	59
6.1	Methodological challenges and considerations.....	59
6.1.1	Teacher interviews, informed consent and anonymity.....	59
6.1.2	Teacher interviews and the selection of informants.....	60
6.1.3	The conceptual framework, analytical concepts and interpretations .....	60
6.1.4	My construction of the conceptual narrative.....	61
6.1.5	The implications of the contingency of narratives .....	62
6.2	Discussion of findings .....	63
6.2.1	Dominant identity constructions in the three studies .....	63
6.2.2	The dominant position of the teacher as pupil centred, inclusive and caring ..	66
6.2.3	The dominant discourse of individualisation in Scandinavian education .....	68
6.2.4	Teacher identity constructed as dichotomy, adjustment or alternative .....	69
6.2.5	The complex constitution of teacher identity in public teacher narratives .....	70
6.3	Some implications .....	72
6.3.1	Implications for teacher education .....	72
6.3.2	Implications for policy makers.....	73
6.3.3	Implications for future research on narrative teacher identity .....	74
6.4	Closing comment.....	75
	REFERENCES.....	77

## PAPER I, II & III

### APPENDIX I

- Information about the project to headmasters - Study 1
- Information about the project to participants– Study 1
- Informed consent - Study 1
- Interview guide - Study 1

### APPENDIX II

- Identity constructions – Study 3
- Subject positions – Study 3

# 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

## 1.1 Introduction

Over the last decades there has been an increased focus within many social sciences towards questions of identity and identity politics (Calhoun, 1994; du Gay, 1996; Weedon, 1997; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Sfard and Prusak, 2005). This interest has some of its origins in current global social, economical and political changes in population and relations. The interest is partly generated by political and academic movements that are concerned with the constitution of socio-economic and gendered identity. In addition to these more familiar movements, a more recent revival of indigenous and local knowledge and its belonging identity questions in the post-colonial parts of the world, has challenged what is described as "...the Anglo, masculine, heterosexist norm..." (Hamilton and McWilliam, 2001, p.36).

New technology, global patterns of trade and cross-cultural mobility of both people and culture has created an awareness of how geographically distant cultures and persons actually can be quite closely interconnected. These global processes of interaction, interconnectedness and influence have led to an increase in power to global economic trade, production, and policy at the expense of the power of the National State (du Gay, 1996). This has again generated a prevailing economic rationality and accountability in the public sector in most western countries. Education is not excluded from this development, which has generated changes in educational policy and reforms in many countries the last 15 years (Day, 2002; Fishman, 2002; Hammersley, 2002; Lindblad and Popkewitz, 2004). These changes are believed to "...challenge teachers' individual and collective professional and personal identities" (Day, 2002, pp. 678). Consequently many researchers with a concern for teachers and teacher education has lately emphasised the investigation of teachers' work and teacher identity within this new policy context.

It is however not only within the field of compulsory schooling global alterations and influences have challenged conceptions of identity. The current global alterations rocks the modern image of the homogenous and sovereign national state, family, gender and social class as primary frame of reference and resources for identity. "Kinship still matter to us as individuals; we invest it with great emotional weight, but kinship no longer offers us an overall template for social and personal identities" (Calhoun, 1994, p. 11). These tendencies consequently also influence conceptions of professional identity, and although the interest for

identity in working/professional life obviously is not new, the approaches to the field are taking new shapes and angles.

Marxist theories within sociology, and psychoanalysis within psychology, are the two academic disciplines traditionally most concerned with questions of work and identity and identity politics (Zaretsky, 1994; du Gay, 1996). Within these traditions job/professional identity has mostly been discussed within the context of the working class and the workers feeling of alienation has been a main focus: “‘Alienation’ has acted as a nodal point around which discussion of the proper place of paid work in people’s lives has been conducted” (du Gay, 1996, p.10). The concept of alienation is founded on a division of people’s lives in public and private spheres, which were believed to prevent workers from having an integrated identity (du Gay, 1996). The changes in technology and perceptions of local and global space have blurred the division between private and public life and the access to, and variety of, identity resources are thereby altered. In sum these alterations open for other constellations of society and social relations, as well as a relativist approach to identity which consequently allow us to choose what resources we draw on in the construction of our job/professional identity.

Both Marxist and psychoanalytical conceptions of work and identity have consequently been criticised and/or developed the last decades. Researchers are now faced with a number of ways to understand, not only job-identity but also how identity research can be conducted. A narrative conception of identity construction is one of the approaches that lately have gained prominence as an alternative to the more traditional approaches to identity, both within sociology, psychology and education. The general idea underwriting a narrative approach to identity can be summarised in the following way:

The ‘narrative’ dimension of identity [...] presumes that action can be intelligible only if we recognize the various ontological and public narratives in which actors plot or ‘find’ themselves. Rather than by interests, narrative identities are constituted by a person’s temporally and spatially variable ‘place’ in culturally constructed stories... (Somers and Gibson, 1994, p. 67)

This thesis is about the narrative construction of Norwegian elementary school teacher identity. The aim is not to explore individual teacher’s narrative construction of his or her identity. Through analysis of interviews with teachers, policy documents and texts from a teacher union, I rather aim to investigate how public narratives *about* teachers position

Norwegian elementary school teachers within certain conceptions of what teachers can do, say and feel. These analyses are done within a conceptual framework inspired by poststructuralist and discourse theory combined with theories of narrative identity.

Research on questions of teacher identity is conducted within various perspectives, approaches and foci. In the remaining parts of this chapter I will therefore present perspectives and approaches within the current international research on teacher identity. As this thesis aim to investigate teacher identity as a narrative construction, I will however firstly give a brief and general historical overview of the development of approaches within research on teaching and teachers that facilitates such a narrative research approach. Through a presentation and discussion of some selected studies concerned with narrative and discursive construction of teacher identity, I will finally highlight dominant approaches and point to some of the challenges I believe narrative research and research on teacher identity currently face. The perspectives and studies presented in this final section of this chapter are selected with attention to their relevance for my own study.

## **1.2 Teachers and teaching as a field of inquiry – from skills to narratives**

The last 30 – 40 years of research on teaching and teachers has been conducted from different angles and perspectives and with focus on different elements of teaching and teachers' work and lives (Zeichner, 1993; Bergem, Björkquist, Hansen, Carlgren and Hauge, 1997; Biddle, Good & Goodson, 1997; Richardson, 2001). The dominant choice of perspectives and methods within this research appears to run along similar lines both in Norway, Scandinavia and internationally. (Bergem et al., 1997; Biddle, Good and Goodson, 1997).

### ***1.2.1 Teacher skills, behaviour and attitudes***

Prior to the 1970ies, educational researchers with an interest in teachers and teaching largely focused on teacher behaviour and skills. This may be explained by the strong positivistic influence from experimental psychology on educational research and teacher education in the 1930ies (Herman, 1995). The impact from this line of research continued also during the first decades after the Second World War. In the 1950ies and early sixties, educational researchers would typically compare teachers' individual characteristics and teaching methods with indices of teaching effectiveness, often through large scale quantitative studies. Another major focus within teacher research in this period aimed at predicting who would be successful teachers (Bergem et al., 1997; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999). Obviously, a strong belief in

the ability of research to predict and point to contingent relationships within teaching was prominent.

Early in the 1970ies, there was a notable change in the profile of research on teachers. A movement with emphasis on culture, context, relations, participation and involvement rose within educational research, posing an alternative to behavioural and experimental research and conceptions of learning and teaching. This change in perspective was a result of an increasing awareness among researchers about how limited our knowledge is about the way teachers think. In addition many researches had started to question what researches actually get access to by studies of teacher behaviour only (Zeichner, 1993). What is the quality of the data obtained, and what kind of knowledge do we not get access to through this approach? As a result of this debate, research questions and methods in educational research changed during the late sixties and the seventies. The switch from a more behavioural approach to an emphasis on teachers' own experiences, competence and understandings also opened for more qualitative and interpretive methods (Bergem et al., 1997). This change and the discussions that followed, was however not unique for educational research, but appeared in most social sciences during the early seventies.

### ***1.2.2 Teacher thinking and the teacher in context***

This changing focus for educational research led to a subsequent change towards a growing interest in qualitative research methodology. During the 1970ies, there was an increasing focus in Norway on teachers' attitudes towards their work and working conditions, along with the socialization and enculturation of teachers in schools (Bergem et al., 1997). Researchers developed an interest for teachers own understandings of teaching and learning, and this gained prominence during the next decade and culminated in the late eighties with a tradition labelled "the teacher thinking". The general ideas and approaches to inquiry within this tradition influenced educational research both internationally and in Scandinavia. Within the "teacher thinking"- tradition the main focus was on how teachers' thoughts and reflections influence their actions (Zeichner, 1993) and there was a focus on themes like teachers reflections, teacher practice and teacher knowledge. This interest in teachers' conceptions of their working conditions, relations and life in schools also generated a large and varied body of teacher-oriented classroom research, primarily concerned with the everyday life, practices and reflections of teachers (Bergem et al., 1997).



The theoretical framework supporting (much of) this research was heavily influenced by cognitive approaches to learning, thinking and identity and demonstrated a strong opposition to the behavioural focus in the pre-seventies research.

The growing interest in research within the teacher-thinking tradition marks a swing of the pendulum from studies of teacher behaviour to teacher cognition and analyses of the interactions between students and teachers in classrooms (Bergem et al., 1997, p. 450).

In addition to the cognitive focus on teachers' thoughts and reflection, there was a growing awareness about the teachers' context. During the eighties and the nineties there were several studies investigating teachers' professional lives, and how these were influenced by e.g. reform, relationships with students, subject matter and working conditions. These studies pointed to the fact that teachers' teaching depend on contextual factors as well as teachers' thinking and reflections.

The emphasis within the "teacher thinking"-tradition on teachers own experiences, competence, understanding, relations and context gave research on teachers a more personal and individual focus and was a move "...from the teacher-as-practice to the teacher-as-person..." (Goodson, 1997, p. 147). The focus on teacher-as-person fostered a strong conviction among researchers within educational research that teachers own accounts about what it is like to be a teacher was vital to better understand and improve teaching and teacher education (Cortazzi, 1993; Biddle, Good and Goodson, 1997). As a consequence, teacher narratives are now considered to be important data in researchers strive to get access to teachers' own understandings, conceptions and experiences of teaching (Gudmundsdottir, 2001).

### ***1.2.3 "The narrative turn" in research on teachers and teaching***

One of the earliest arguments in favour of teacher narratives in research is based in a belief that narratives are among the most important and basic cultural meaning-making tools we have access to. With reference mainly to Bruner (e.g. 1986), narrative research is considered appropriate in the study of teachers' reflection and knowledge as "...narratives have been crowned as a mode of thinking" (Gudmundsdottir, 2001, p. 226). This is supported by an understanding of teachers' knowledge and reflection as event structured and therefore best expressed in stories (Cortazzi, 1993; McEvan and Eagan, 1995; Gudmundsdottir, 2001,).

It is also common for those in favour of narrative research to underscore that teachers own narratives about their professional- and everyday life in schools are offering important understandings of what teaching is. This approach thus draws heavily on the “teacher thinking”-tradition’s focus on teachers’ own conceptions of their professional life. Teachers are supposed to know best what teaching is like, and teachers’ narratives can therefore give “...knowledge of teaching from the inside...” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997, p.77). Teachers’ narrative accounts of their careers and everyday life will be a valuable contribution to many of the accounts of what teaching is and should be that has previously been produced by research (Cortazzi, 1993; Goodson, 1997). This is believed to foster a better understanding of teaching and teachers. Throughout the nineties and in to the new century, narratives are therefore considered by many researchers to be one of the best means to get access to teachers’ reflections, knowledge and experience.

As educational researchers has conducted studies within a narrative approach it has gradually been put emphasis on the ability this approach has to take account of several contextual elements with importance for teachers’ conceptions of their work (Gudmundsdottir, 2001). A narrative approach is therefore perceived to have the potential to capture diversity and complexity in ways that previous research approaches are unable to. This is a perception that has given teacher’s autobiographies and narrative accounts a prominent position within research on teachers and teaching (Carter, 1993; Cortazzi, 1993; Casey, 1995; Biddle, Good and Goodson, 1997; Goodson, 1997; Kyratzis and Green, 1997; McEwan, 1997; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Gudmundsdottir, 2001; Sfard and Prusak, 2005).

This “narrative turn” in educational research is simultaneously a turn towards more qualitative approaches. The narrative turn is not exclusive for educational research, but has penetrated a broad range of disciplines within several social sciences. Narrative research in education is currently combined with a range of theoretical approaches and is thus developing into several diverse strands of research. Today there is a broad variety of methods, foci and themes of investigation. Within research on teachers the narrative approach has been applied in studies concerning teachers’ professional development, teacher knowledge (Clandinin and Connelly, 1999; Olson and Craig, 2005), teacher careers (Pomson, 2004) and the teaching of subject matter (Drake, Spillane and Hufferd-Ackles, 2001). Teacher identity has been more or less explicitly intertwined in these themes (Carter, 1993; Casey, 1995; Goodson, 1997; Kelchtermans, 1997; Kyratzis and Green, 1997; Clandinin and Connelly, 1999; Gudmundsdottir, 2001; Bejiard, 2004; Sfard and Prusak, 2005). In the next section I will

therefore turn to teacher identity as a field of inquiry and give a brief overview of the current tendencies within this research area.

### **1.3 Approaches to research on teacher identity**

The changes in research on teachers and teaching described in the previous section also fostered an interest in teacher identity among educational researchers and the last decade a series of studies involving teacher identity from several parts of the world has been published ( e.g. Carter, 1993; Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Marsh, 2002; Moore, Edwards, Halpin and George, 2002; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002; Day, 2002; Estola, 2003; George, Mohammed and Quamina-Aiyejina, 2003; Roberts-Holmes, 2003; Beijaard et al., 2004; Barrett, 2005; Flores and Day, 2005; Walkington, 2005). Teacher identity is currently a diverse area of research. The definition of identity, the methodological approaches and thematic foci draw on various traditions and conceptions. In the following I will give a brief overview of the most common foci, approaches and definitions of identity within recent studies of teacher identity.

For some studies the question of construction and development of teacher identity is connected to the teaching of subject matter (e.g. Drake, Spillane and Hufferd-Ackles, 2001), while others investigate student-teachers development and conception of teacher identity (e.g. Britzman, 1986; Roberts, 2000; Estola, 2003; Sugrue, 2004; Walkington, 2005). There is also a quite extensive body of research where identity is contextualised within educational reform and changes in educational policy (e.g Day, 2002; Moore, Edwards, Halpin and George, 2002; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002; George, Mohammed and Quamina-Aiyejina, 2003; Day, Elliot, Kington, 2005; Hovdenak, 2005). Studies of teacher identity is also often closely connected to teacher knowledge (e.g. Clandinin and Conelly, 1999; Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt, 2000; Beijaard et al., 2004) and teacher professionalism and professional development (e.g. Roberts, 2000; Day, 2002; Roberts-Holmes, 2003).

Despite the amount of studies involving teacher identity in one way or another, the concept of “identity” is often treated as unproblematic and singular and is therefore in many cases not explicitly defined in studies concerning teacher identity (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Beijaard et al., 2004; Sfard and Prusak, 2005). Those studies, attempting to define or describe teacher identity draw on several conceptions, traditions and understandings and it is hard to identify specific tendencies within the research literature. According to Beijaard et al. (2004) the concept of teachers’ professional identity has been used in various ways and related to

various other concepts, such as “images of self”, “teacher roles”, “reflection”, “practice” and “experience” (Beijaard et al., p. 108). Despite these differences most current studies however seem to consider teacher identity as a relational phenomenon. Teacher identity is thus considered to be shaped and changed by and within a multitude of contextual and personal elements (Beijaard et al., 2000; Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores and Day, 2005; Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons, 2006). Some researchers has attempted to incorporate as many elements as possible in their studies, while others focus more specifically and in depth on some elements. Some studies approach identity as a stable feature rooted in core sets of values and practices, while others approach identity as unstable, flexible and dependent on contextual or personal changes (Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons, 2006)

In the theoretical and methodological approaches that are applied within teacher identity research, there is also a multitude of perspectives, theoretical frameworks and analytical concepts in use. There seem however to be dominance in the use of small scale and in depth qualitative approaches (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Beijaard et al. (2004) identify three main categories within current research on teacher identity. Some studies are concerned with the characterization of teachers’ professional identity. These studies aim at identifying how teacher identity is “puzzled together”. What elements teacher identity consists of, how much influence each element has and where they have their origin are significant questions. Other studies are more concerned with the making of teacher identity, and how “...’personal’ and the ‘professional’ sides of becoming and being a teacher...” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 113) is integrated. This strand of research are concerned with questions of where, when and how teachers adopt or construct their identity. A third strand of studies is concerned with how identity is (re)presented and constructed in teacher narratives (Beijaard et al., 2004). In the next chapter I will in present some selected studies within the strand that takes a narrative approach to teacher identity, as this is in line with the research I present in this thesis.

#### **1.4 Dominant approaches and some challenges within research on narrative and discursive construction of teacher identity**

Although identity is implicitly intertwined in much of the current narrative research in education and the rather extensive amount of research on teacher identity, there are few studies published that explicitly focus on the *narrative* construction of teacher *identity* (Beijaard et al., 2004). In the following I will present some studies using (auto) biographies to

investigate the narrative construction of teacher identity. Some of these studies have been very influential within this field of inquiry. As my own work is concerned with how public narratives and discourses construct teacher identity, I will also present some examples of studies that approach the construction of teacher identity from a discursive point of view. For the same reason I will finally present a study that illuminates how different images, texts and movies narrate a public image of teachers. These studies are selected for their methodological or theoretical similarity and relevance for my project.

#### ***1.4.1 Autobiographical narratives and teacher identity***

For more than twenty years, Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin (e.g 1995, 1996, 1999) have published and edited books and articles on teacher knowledge and teacher identity. They argue strongly for the use and analysis of teacher narratives in the exploration of teachers' lives. Their influence in the field of narrative inquiry of teacher identity has been significant. Their main contribution is their conception of how teacher knowledge, teachers' context and teacher identity "...are linked and can be understood narratively" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). Through their concept of "stories to live by" they argue that teacher knowledge and identity are narrative phenomenon, and must be studied and understood as such. This is how Connelly and Clandinin conceptualise the term "stories to live by":

Stories to live by, the phrase [...] refer to identity, is given meaning by the narrative understanding of knowledge and context. Stories to live by are shaped by such matters as secret teacher stories, sacred stories of schooling, and teachers' cover stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, p. 4)

Through their publications Connelly and Clandinin have provided researchers with a valuable conceptual framework that makes teacher narratives meaningful (Anderson, 1997).

Eila Estola's (2003) study of how student teachers construct their teacher identities through (auto) biographical stories is a rather typical example of research within the (auto) biographical strand of narrative research on teacher identity. Estola's study is typical for several reasons, primarily because the study has biographical narratives as its material for analysis. Estola analyses 35 essays written by students in a pre-service teacher course. These analyses points towards another, quite common element within this strand of research, namely the conception of teacher narratives as *educational*, with an empowering force in the professional development of teachers.

...stories are attractive, because they are both directly representative of human experience and closely connected to theory in that they provide accounts that are educationally meaningful to both participants and readers (Estola, 2003, p. 183).

(Auto) biographical narratives are thus not just considered to be useful for the researcher, but also to have a powerful educational function for the (student) teachers that write/tell the story and for those who read it.

Already in the mid eighties Britzman (e.g.1986) published a study where she underscored the importance of narratives and life histories as data in researchers strives to understand the construction and development of teachers' and teacher students' identity. In her study Britzman illuminates how teacher students' biographies interact with more public myths about teachers. Britzman claims that this interaction not only shapes the students' conception of what a teacher is and can do, but also preserves individualist notions of teaching. This study is one of the earliest studies pointing to the connection between public and private narratives in teachers' construction of their identity.

In a review article about narrative research on school practice, Gudmundsdottir (2001) characterizes narratively oriented school research to be "...almost exclusively associated with research on school practice, teacher or student-teacher biographies, and autobiographies" (Gudmundsdottir, 2001, p. 226). As a result of the focus on teachers' own narrative accounts of their lives and careers, there is a tendency for the research material within narrative educational research to consist of life histories from a small sample of teachers (Mc Evan and Eagan, 1995; Carter, 1993; Goodson, 1997; Beijaard et al., 2004). Another characteristic of this strand of research is the low amount of studies that focus on the broader societal and political context teachers are a part of (Beijaard et al., 2004).

There seem to be a general agreement that the narrative approach gives access to rich and complex understandings of teacher identity and how this identity is constructed by the individual teacher. But if such research should be more than the re-presentation of individual stories, it is important for researchers within this field to contextualise the exiting and intriguing individual accounts of identity. Such a contextualisation is considered to be necessary, as:

...lives and stories link with broader social scripts--they are not just individual productions they are also social constructions. We must make sure that individual and practical stories do

not reduce, seduce and reproduce particular teacher mentalities and lead us away from broader patterns of understanding (Goodson, 1997, pp.116).

If teacher narratives are not contextualised, there is a fear within the research field that the educational potential in teachers' stories will be reduced to an uncritical reproduction of researchers' understandings of teachers and the teachers' understanding of themselves.

#### ***1.4.2 Discursive and poststructuralist approaches to teacher identity***

As the previous section underscored, much research on teacher identity has had a focus on individual teachers and their experiences, and there has been a subsequent lack of attention to context or discourses that inform and are informed by the individual teachers' identity (Goodson, 1997; Beijaard et al., 2004). Both discourse theory and poststructuralist theories can be productive as theoretical frameworks if one wishes to broaden the individual focus within teacher identity research. There are several studies about the construction of teacher identity that are done within a discursive and poststructuralist framework. The two studies that are briefly presented in this section have been inspirational in my own work as they are examples of how this theoretical framework can be used to study a broader contextual construction of teacher identity.

Monica Miller Marsh's (2002) study of the discursive fashioning of teacher identity aim to provide a broader focus for analysis than just the individual teacher's own narrative accounts. Through observation and interviews, Marsh follows a first year kinder-garden teacher, Ms Nicholi, for one year. She identifies several contextual elements with implications for the teacher's identity construction, such as the teacher education program, Ms Nicholi's personal life history and the elementary school Ms Nicholi works in. Marsh firstly identifies the most prominent discourses in these contexts, before she shows how Ms. Nicholi draws on several discourses that "work together in complex and contradictory ways" (Marsh, 2002, p. 344) in her teaching and when she talks about herself as a teacher. This study illuminates how prominent historical, social, cultural and political discourses guide teachers' conceptions of their teaching aims, of the children they teach and their own teacher identity.

Among the few Norwegian studies it is relevant to mention is a study inspired by Foucault's conceptions of discursive practices called "Teacher Practice, Pedagogical Discourses and the Construction of Knowledge: Two Case Studies of Teachers at Work" published by Thorolf Krüger in 2000. In this study Krüger follow the everyday life of two music teachers closely for a period of six months. This field work is then followed by



interviews of the same teachers. Based on this Krüger identifies how the teachers' everyday practices, styles of reasoning and norms are inscribed in certain discourses and power/knowledge-relationships. These relationships generate certain discursive practices which facilitate and/or restrain the teachers' didactical strategies, abilities to change and experiences in their everyday life as teachers. Although Krüger does not explicitly focus on teacher identity in his study, it is a good example of how it is possible to explicate how teachers' practices, arguments and beliefs are inscribed in discourses, and what consequences this have for the way teachers perceive their job.

### ***1.4.3 Popular culture and the narrative construction of teacher identity***

By most researchers within the narrative teacher identity tradition, identity is considered to be "...collectively shaped even if individually told..." (Sfard and Prusak, 2005, pp. 17). There are however very few studies focusing explicitly on how a collective teacher identity is being shaped. There has been much focus on narratives told *by* teachers and not so much on narratives told *about* teachers by actors outside the school.

One of the very few studies on construction of teacher identity that have broadened the analytical lens beyond teacher interviews, observation or narratives is conducted by Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell (1995). Their material range from drawings of teachers made by children, pre-service teachers and experienced teachers from different parts of the world, to films and comic books about teachers. This broad range of material is analysed with the belief that "Our identities as teachers stem from both individual and collective life history" (Weber and Mitchell, 1995, p. 9) as a point of departure. Their focus on images of teachers in popular culture and their research is published in 1995 in a book called "That's funny; you don't look like a teacher". In this book, Weber and Mitchell show and discuss how collective and cultural images and metaphors of teachers inform and are being informed by our everyday understandings of what teachers look like, are and do.

Weber and Mitchell's study underscore how important it is to explicate common and public metaphors and images to better understand why some conceptions of teachers gain prominence in our schools and our society. Reading their work made me aware of how important it is to investigate how teacher identity is narratively and discursively constructed also by other agents than the teachers themselves.



## 2. AIMS AND THE RESEARCH QUESTION

### 2.1 General aims

As the previous chapter underscores, there has been an overemphasis within narrative approaches to teacher identity to use autobiographical material and personal accounts from teachers or teacher students as material sources for analysis. Although there has been an increased emphasis on how teachers draw on discourses and contextual elements in their construction of teacher identity, the main *material* for analysis is still teacher narratives from diaries or interviews etc., or observations of teachers. Very few studies draw on alternative empirical sources as a point of departure to investigate the narrative construction of teacher identity. There is a lack of studies identifying *public* narratives about teachers as they are presented for example in educational policy documents, educational theories, teacher union texts, newspaper articles, magazines and media debates. There is also a lack of studies that may contribute to illuminate how different public narratives about teachers underwrite our conceptions of teachers and how these conceptions position the teacher within certain identities. This overemphasis on teachers' individual narratives and practice gives the research on narrative teacher identity a rather narrow scope. The overall aim for this thesis is therefore to contribute to a broadening of the scope of the research on narrative teacher identity.

The reason why it is being perceived as important to broaden the scope is twofold. Firstly, the privatisation of teacher identity reduces it to an individual responsibility and construction – ignoring the more public, political and collective dimensions. Secondly, a single sided focus on individual accounts and narratives will reduce our possibilities to get rich descriptions and nuanced understandings of teacher identity. Studies within for example gender research has showed how public narratives inscribed in art, commercials, magazines, movies and fashion underwrite our conceptions of what we consider to be normal behavior, attitudes and clothing for men and women (e.g. Weedon, 1997; Gauntlett, 2002; Holland, 2004). I believe Weber and Mitchell's (1995) study (presented on page 18 in chapter 1) indicates that public narratives about teachers might underwrite conceptions about teacher identity in similar ways.

This thesis therefore investigates how teacher identity is narratively constructed by *several* significant actors within the Norwegian elementary school system. In addition to a)

transcribed texts from interviews with female elementary school teachers the project draws on texts from two other sources: b) public school policy documents and c) written material from the Union of Education Norway<sup>1</sup>. In this thesis educational policy makers, elementary school teachers and representatives from the Union are considered to be influential and important actors within the Norwegian elementary school system. The various actors contribute with three sources of material that are explored in three separate studies that constitute the core of this thesis (see chapter 5 for summary of findings and the attached full version of the articles).

This thesis does not intend to define *what* identity Norwegian teachers as a group or as individuals possess, to estimate whether certain identities are more or less common to Norwegian teachers, or to create an extensive list of typologies of teacher identities. The intention is on the contrary to investigate *how* teacher identity is narrativey constructed and *how* teachers are positioned within certain identities in public narratives about teachers. My unit of analysis is thus narratives about the Norwegian elementary school teacher: Private narratives from the teachers themselves and public narratives from the Union and from policy documents such as the National curriculum and similar texts.

In this thesis the Union- and the educational policy texts will not be considered as contextual elements surrounding the teacher interviews. The three actor groups will rather be perceived as three different, but equal voices telling stories about teachers. To use three sources of material for analysis in three separate studies also gives me an opportunity to see if, and to what extent, there is some sort of overlap in the way educational policy, teachers own accounts and the teacher union narrate and position teachers.

With the former section as a backdrop, this thesis also aims to explore how the combination of narrative analysis and the more political/policy approach of discourse analysis can be a fruitful approach to understanding teacher identity when other sources of material than personal life stories/autobiographies are analyzed. To investigate how the theoretical and analytical frameworks create possibilities for fruitful and reasonable ways to understand teacher identity is important for two reasons. First of all, a discussion of methods and analysis is necessary and vital to ensure validity in the studies within this thesis. Secondly, such a discussion will contribute to a further development of qualitative research methods, appropriate for the understanding of educational practice.

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<sup>1</sup> The Union of Education Norway (in Norwegian “Utdanningsforbundet”) will throughout the thesis be referred to as “The Union”

## 2.2 Research question

The main research question for this project is:

**How is teacher identity narratively constructed by significant actors within the Norwegian elementary school system?**

When the research question was developed, the materials from the three sources were selected and collected and I also continued my theory studies. During the first readings of the empirical material and the parallel theoretical studies, four more detailed sub-questions were developed in order to focus the main research question. Throughout the entire research process, empirical analysis and theory studies have continuously informed each other. The sub-questions are thus both empirically and theoretically generated.

- How is teacher identity narrated by elementary school teachers, educational policy plans and the Union of Education of Norway?
- What identity resources can be identified in these actors' narrative accounts about teachers and teaching?
- How are these resources combined in ways that position teachers within certain identities?
- Are there any specific constructions of teacher identity that gain prominence in the materials?



### 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I will outline the general theoretical and conceptual framework for this thesis. The first part of the chapter is organised around the three most central concepts framing my project as a whole, namely *identity*, *discourse* and *narrative*. These concepts are discussed before I arrive at a description of how I understand and use the concept *narratively constructed teacher identity* in this thesis. The general theoretical framework is significant for the methodological approaches in the three studies that constitute the core of this project. The analytical concepts used in the three studies are also generated from the general theoretical framework. The second part of this chapter will therefore describe the analytical concepts and how they are connected. Procedural questions, such as *how* the analyses are conducted will however be presented in the methods chapter.

#### 3.1 Identity

I will first outline and discuss two approaches to job-identity; one essentialist and one constructivist, and argue for the understanding of identity which I have chosen to use in this thesis. The discussion will take the understanding of how roles contribute to the development or construction of identity as a point of departure. The last part of this section will discuss the concept of *teacher identity* in relation to the concept of *professional identity*.

##### 3.1.1 Changing conceptions of identity

One approach to job-identity can be categorised as *essentialist*. This understanding is based on a modernist idea of a split between public (professional) and private (personal) life (Zaretsky, 1994) combined with a romantic notion about a true, authentic and original self in all human beings (Kvale, 1992; Calhoun, 1994; Elliott, 2005; Carr, 2005). This self is "... described in terms of a centre or essence of personality" (Kvale, 1992, p. 122), hence an "*essentialist*" approach to identity (Calhoun, 1994).

This essence or centre of the identity is perceived as a core that is surrounded by social roles and the expectations about actions and ideas inscribed in these. As roles can be in opposition to the identity core, they may strengthen and make the identity-core more solid, or they can be destructive and weaken the core. In this way the social job-roles will *influence* teacher identity in different ways, but not necessarily contribute to deciding who the teacher

*really* is. In this perspective, the roles just support or suppress the (stable) core teacher identity. It is therefore possible for a person to develop a job identity that is compatible with the authentic core identity through acceptance or denial of different social roles he or she must relate to in job settings. In order to avoid a feeling of alienation and split personality, it is important for a teacher to find her true professional identity and to maintain this identity as something pure, solid and stable. A teacher with such a solid professional identity is able to maintain an inner “sameness” and continuity and thereby recognise him- or herself as the same person across situations and independent of specific contexts.

An alternative approach to identity argues against this kind of ‘sameness’ when it comes to understanding identity. It might be experienced as difficult – or even impossible – to be the “same” person, with the same stable identity in different contexts and relations (Calhoun, 1994; Zaretsky, 1994). A conception of a “real” or “true” self is therefore believed to be impossible. As an alternative, people are believed to constantly change, according to shifting contexts and circumstances. People continually negotiate their identity in order to balance the actions they consider normal and reasonable, what they do and what they wish to do. “Our identities are always rooted in part in ideals and moral aspirations that we cannot realise fully” (Calhoun, 1994, p. 29). Identity is thereby not something ready-made that we can find or develop, but something we create and recreate through our relations to the world and other people. This second approach to identity is therefore called a “*constructivist*” approach, as it is founded on the understanding that people construct their identities through relations, choices, practices and language (Kvale, 1992; Calhoun, 1994; Hall and du Gay, 1996; Weedon, 1997; Carr, 2005; Elliott, 2005). This is also the approach to identity that constitutes the point of departure for this thesis and my further deliberations of teacher identity in this chapter.

Within a constructivist approach to identity the challenge for the teacher is not to find his or her “*real* teacher self”, but to integrate the different roles and fragments of his or her professional and personal life in a meaningful way. Teachers who manage this will have a feeling of an integrated identity and this will help them to conduct their work in a competent way. In their job teachers are confronted with different roles through which they will construct and reconstruct their teacher identity through a constant negotiation. To what extent this negotiation of identity is experienced as conflicting or difficult will however vary individually. Roles that are in conflict for one teacher might not be experienced as conflicting by others. Whether teachers reject certain roles, are opposed to them, find them pleasing and

comforting is somewhat beside the point, as these roles and the negotiation between them all play a part in the construction of identity (Calhoun, 1994).

### **3.1.2 *Teacher identity / professional identity***

I have chosen to use the term "teacher identity" rather than "teachers' professional identity" in this thesis. This is because the term "teachers' professional identity" is associated with some theoretical and political debates that will not be addressed in my thesis.

It is common within current research on teacher's job identity to use the concept "professional identity" (Beijaard et al., 2004). The concept "professional" and the related "profession" are used in different ways. Within an Anglo-American tradition these concepts refer to "...the expert knowledge of the teacher and an occupational control with the members" (Popkewitz, 2000, p. 12). In some European traditions "professional" has to a greater extent referred to certain occupations and diverse kinds of employment (Popkewitz, 2000).

In Norway the understanding of "professional" has been influenced both by the Anglo-American and the European tradition. To become a teacher in Norway one must fulfil certain educational requirements. Teaching is also referred to as a "profession", meaning an occupation. Within the current political landscape "professionalism" and "professional" is also strongly associated with questions of teacher autonomy and expert knowledge and the professionalism/autonomy discourse appears to penetrate much of the current debate in the field. The concept of "teachers' professional identity" is strongly associated with these debates in the Norwegian context. In order to avoid using this debate as a point of departure for my theoretical framework and the analysis in my studies, I therefore do not use the term "professional identity" in this thesis.

## **3.2 Discourse and teacher identity**

To study teacher identity from a discursive approach is not about "revealing" what teachers "really" mean or what it is that constitutes their identities, but to investigate how discursively produced resources are being used in the construction of teacher identity. In the following I will first briefly outline the conception of discourse I use in this thesis, before describing how I perceive identity as discursively constructed.

### 3.2.1 *Discourse*

There are several strands of theories within discursive approaches to educational research that are developed over the last thirty years. These theoretical strands have developed in different directions, both when it comes to the understanding of what discourses are, how discourses develop and operate and how analysis within a discursive perspective can be conducted. The concept of *discourse* can be understood and used in a variety of ways, and may include different phenomenon and elements.

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis will for instance reserve the term discourse for different semiological systems, such as text and talk, and thus distinguish discourse from other social practices (Whetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001; Philips and Jørgensen, 2002). As an alternative will the way Howard and Torfing (2005) understand 'Discourse Theory' include how people understand and act in the world as discourse, thereby excluding the idea of extra-discursive social dimensions. Within this theoretical strand, various practices, such as speech acts, texts, objects as well as abstract and political structures are thus considered to be discursive (Torfing, 1999; Howarth, 2000; Whetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001; Philips and Jørgensen, 2002; Howard and Torfing, 2005). My understanding of discourse is inspired by the latter approach and hence rather broad. *Discourses are in this thesis understood as frameworks of meaning that we draw on in our efforts to create meaning and coherence in our lives.* In this perspective, the things we do and say are made meaningful *within* discourses.

Discourses produce discursive practices, which refer to ".....the ways in which people actively produce social and psychological realities" (Davies and Harre, 2001, p. 262). Examples of discursive practises are narratives, actions and rituals and other cultural and historical constructed patterns of thinking and acting. Discursive practices can be explicit, implicit, formalised or informal. When such patterns of thinking and acting have been repeated and confirmed many times they appear natural and will eventually frame what we experience as possible, forbidden, normal, beautiful, and true (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982; Foucault, 1999; Torfing, 1999; Foucault 2002a; Foucault 2002b). What we consider possible, forbidden, normal, beautiful, and true will eventually constitute new discourses.

There is thus a duality in the relationship between discursively produced practices and discourses. Discourses produce and are simultaneously being produced by discursive practices. Discourse researchers emphasise, due to their analytical foci, the relationship between discursive practices and discourses differently. While some researchers are concerned with how historical, cultural and social practices construct discourses, others describe how discourses produce these practices. The analytical focus for this thesis is on the



discursively produced identity resources, hence more in line with the latter, than the former approach.

### **3.2.2 *Discourse, language and identity***

While the diverse approaches to discourse differ on certain aspects, they still share an understanding of *language* as a constituting force in our social world and identity. Language is something more than just a tool to *present* reality and meaning; it is our most important means to *construct* reality and meaning (Riessmann, 1993). This understanding of language as a constitutive force also has consequences for our understanding of how identity is constructed. Language is not solely perceived as a means to express subjectivity. Subjectivity is regarded as linguistically constituted. People and groups create identity in, by, and through the possibilities they are provided by the means of language. In this perspective identity is consequently seen as "... precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse every time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1997, p. 33). Teachers can create certain notions of teacher identity, dependent on the language system and discourse they operate within.

### **3.2.3 *Discourse and identity resources***

A significant element in the construction of identity is discursively produced identity resources. Subject positions are such identity resources and construction of identity therefore "... occurs through the identification by the individual with particular subject positions within discourses" (Weedon, 1997, p. 112). Subject positions are historically and socially constructed identity categories that can best be explained as a point or a position in discourse(s) that persons can identify with (Weedon, 1997). Subject positions are however not in this thesis regarded as ready-made options forced upon the individual teacher by a deterministic discourse, but rather perceived as a repertoire of identity resources for teachers to draw on (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). Within a teacher/school discourse there will probably be a range of subject positions for the teachers to identify with. Some of these positions will be considered more relevant, normal and meaningful for some teachers than others. In the process of constructing identity, we draw actively on available resources and possibilities for narrative editing in order to construct sameness, difference, coherence and/or diversity. One way to do this is through narratives.

### 3.3 Narrative and teacher identity

From the previous emphasis on the constitutive dimension of language, it follows that identity is constructed *in* the narrating process and that narratives are not just a way to express identity, but also has the capacity to constitute identity (Somers and Gibson, 1994; Weedon, 1997; Mishler, 1999; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001; Sford and Prusak, 2005). Within this approach the construction of teacher identity will therefore be perceived as a communicative practice, and narrative teacher identities are believed to be “...shaped and edited as storytelling proceeds” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p. 113).

People, groups and institutions establish and adjust their identities through the construction of narratives about what has happened and how the future will be. Narratives integrate experiences, beliefs, practices and values into meaningful sequential and temporal order. Narratives explain past events, actions and experiences as well as “...forming expectations about future events.” (Teichert, 2004, p.183). To tell a narrative is at the same time to explain and interpret what has happened or what one believes will come. Narratives are consequently both descriptive and normative and thus *negotiate* as well as construct identity (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998).

A story is always told *from* a specific place, *to* a specific audience, *in* a specific setting with a specific *intention* and no narration is therefore ever neutral. Storytellers position themselves and their stories differently in different contexts and at different times as they try to establish coherence between narratives, their experiences and actions, and identity (Ricoeur, 1992; Somers & Gibson, 1994). This narrative flexibility helps people, institutions or national states to perceive a relatively stable identity over time. When it comes to questions of identity it is therefore irrelevant to evaluate narratives as “true” or “false”, meaning correspondent with some objective reality. A teacher’s account of what she or he considers to be good teaching might not be in line with how this teacher actually interacts in the classroom. The descriptions of good practice is however relevant when it comes to identity questions, because it will give an indication about which discourses the teacher considers relevant to draw on and what she or he considers as “good” teaching. Narrative accounts hence say something about how a person or a group is, or would like to be, perceived by themselves and others. In the construction of such narrative explanations, we draw on a whole range of available cultural and public narratives and discursive resources that can contribute to making our lives coherent and meaningful (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). Consequently this thesis perceives teacher identities as being constructed and negotiated in and by narratives about what it is like to be a teacher.

Narratives constructing teacher identity can be narratives told *by* teachers, *to* teachers and *about* teachers and teaching. The studies in this thesis mainly focus on the narratives *about* teachers and teaching told by several actors (including teachers) to a varied audience (including teachers). The review in the first chapter of this thesis show that there are several accounts within narrative research on teacher identity that focus on how individual teachers construct their teacher identities. The chapter also underscores a lack of research on how public narratives contribute to the construction of teacher identity. How does for instance the political language in National curriculum and policy documents influence public expectations about teachers and teaching, and how does this contribute to the shaping of teacher identity? Cultural, political and public narratives about how matters are causally and temporally linked are often strongly embedded in cultures and peoples minds (Roe, 1994). These narratives also draw on significant cultural identity resources and are therefore important to explicate and analyse. With this as a point of departure I have chosen to focus on *public narratives* about teachers in this thesis.

### **3.3.1 Public narratives**

Somers and Gibson (1994) operate with three dimensions of identity constructing narratives; ontological narratives, public narratives and metanarratives (Somers and Gibson, 1994). *Ontological narratives* are stories told by individuals in an effort to make sense of and bring structure to their personal lives. *Metanarrative* refers to the “grand stories” and the most dominant ideologies in for example a national state. *Public narratives* are narratives about groups or persons, represented by for example media, researchers, documents, politicians and/or teachers. These narratives are public in the sense that they are “...attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual...” (Somers and Gibson, 1994, p. 62). Public narratives are situated between the local and personal ontological narratives, and the more ideological and cultural metanarratives and are thus more general than the individual level, but not as influential as the far more overarching metanarratives. Although these three narrative dimensions are significant in the understanding of teacher identity, my main focus in this thesis is on public narratives about the Norwegian elementary school teacher.

In study 1 I interviewed five female elementary school teachers and the individual narratives from each teacher is described as “ontological narratives”. In the analysis of these teacher interviews it is however the *public* dimensions of teacher narratives and teacher identity that is paramount, as is the case in the analysis of the public policy texts and the material from the Union of Education Norway. It is therefore important to note that in the

analysis of the interviews, my prime interest is not on how the individual teacher constructs *her* identity narratively in *her* ontological narratives. The diverse narrative accounts from each teacher are perceived as elements in public narratives about what it is like to be a teacher, told by teachers, or as Gergen puts it:

I wish to consider self-narratives as forms of social accounting or public discourse. In this sense, narratives are conversational resources, constructions open to continuous alteration as interaction progress (Gergen, 2001, p.249)

With this perception as a background it was the narratives about what it is like to be a teacher that appeared *across* the interview material that was significant to identify and investigate in the readings of the interview material.

### 3.3.2 *Narrative*

In order to investigate public narratives it is necessary to establish an understanding of what a narrative is. As with the concepts of discourse and identity, there are no canonical ways to use the concept of narrative, neither within educational research nor identity research. The question; “What is (a) narrative?” must be answered in relation to the research question, the unit of analysis and the material at hand. In this thesis I am concerned with *teacher* identity (as opposed to individual identity) and *public* narratives (as opposed to personal autobiographies). A definition of narrative must consequently be able to include relevant identity constructing public accounts about teachers.

I find Polkinghorne’s (1995) definition of narrative a productive place to start. He claims that narrative can be understood as a “...composition that draws together diverse elements, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). It is however important to note that I understand narrative as something more than a structuring of unstructured events. Narrative is in this thesis conceived as a unique human capacity to make incidents and happenings meaningful and also as one of the most powerful means we have to use language to construct reality and thereby identity (Ricoeur, 1988/1992; Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001).

Shenhav (2005) argue that in analysis of political and public narratives and when one deals with collective identities, it is productive to operate with a minimalist definition of narrative. A minimalist definition of narrative has few strict descriptions of what a narrative is except from the ordering of elements in some sort of time sequence (Shenhav, 2005). This approach will for example not demand a certain method of narration, causal linking of

elements, particular structures (e.g. beginning-middle-end) or specific audiences to define a written or spoken account as a narrative.

My conception of narrative is quite broad and with few strict descriptions beyond temporality and theme. In this thesis I thus understand *narrative as written or spoken human accounts that draw together happenings, thoughts, ideas and actions in temporally and thematically meaningful constructions*. This understanding of what a narrative is has made it possible for me to include various narrative accounts from various sources as material. It has also allowed me to select analytical concepts and approaches that are relevant and meaningful to the investigation of the material at hand.

### **3.4 Narrative and discursive construction of teacher identity**

In the previous sections of this chapter I have outlined the understanding of how teacher identity is constructed that serves as a point of departure for this thesis. Combining a narrative and discursive approach to identity makes it possible for me to investigate how public narratives about teachers position the teacher within certain identities. Such an understanding of the subject as discursively produced through narrativity constitutes a shift in the analytical focus from individual teachers' identities to the discursive structures, processes and power relations these teachers are inscribed in. Teacher identity is in this thesis thereby understood as something more than the individual teacher's subjective experience of e.g. belonging or alienation. Poststructuralist approaches describe this shift in focus from individuals to discourse as an understanding of the subject as *decentred* (Weedon, 1997; Elliott, 2005). Within the conception of decentring, narrative resources such as subject positions are given a prominent role as one presupposes that "...culture is composed of subject positions, not individuals" (Zaretsky, 1994, p. 211).

The decentring of the individual teacher and the move to focus on discursively produced identity resources in narratives opens for the possibility to look for several sources that tell public narratives about teachers. To investigate teacher identity from a discursive and narrative approach is in this thesis thus to investigate *public narratives* that are told *about* teachers to identify identity resources within these narratives and show how teachers are positioned in discourse by these resources and narratives. To understand teacher identity as a narrative and discursive construction will demand a focus on *how* identity is constructed, in addition to *what* this identity consist of (Chreim, 2005).

In this thesis I have a fundamental understanding of identity as non-essentialist and constructed by what actors do and say and the way they choose to draw on discursive identity resources. I have also established that public narratives about teachers are the unit of analysis. As the focus in this project *not* is on how individual teachers construct their identity, but how teacher identity is constructed in public narratives about teachers, I will not evaluate if Norwegian teachers in general identify with the narrative identities generated from my analysis. My assumption is, however, that many teachers will identify with the narratives presented by my informants. These narratives may thus say something general about the teaching profession in Norway, even though the aim is not to generalize the findings.

### **3.5 Analytical concepts**

With the previous sections as a backdrop I now turn to the presentation of the analytical concepts used in the three papers. I will also indicate how these concepts are connected and thus contribute to the whole of the thesis. These concepts are central for the analysis conducted in the three studies presented in paper I, II and III.

In the following presentation, the analytical concepts are divided in two main categories. The first category is called ‘narrative resources’ and refers to the ‘*what*’ of identity construction, in my case, subject positions and constructions of identities (Weedon, 1987; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). The second category is called narrative editing. This category refers to the different ways storytellers draw on and combine the narrative resources (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000) or the ‘*how*’ of identity construction. This thesis focuses on three such editing techniques which are; positioning, narrative plot and counter narrative.

Based on the theoretical framework presented previously in this chapter I presuppose that storytellers use narrative resources and narrative editing techniques to construct sameness, difference, coherence and/or diversity in their narrative accounts. When identity is constructed and re-constructed through storytelling, storytellers actively use available narrative resources. I will therefore first describe the narrative resources, before I turn to the editing techniques in the last part of the chapter.

#### **3.5.1 Narrative resources**

The main analytical aim for the thesis is to investigate *how* teacher identity is narratively constructed. *What* the teacher identity consisted of was initially not considered to be of great significance for my project. I however soon realised that it was very difficult to get to the *how*

without any conceptions of the *what*. To better understand how teacher identity is conceptualised in public narratives about teachers I firstly had to be familiar with what these narratives were *about*. In the analysed material, teachers are confronted with a whole range of descriptions, functions, value-statements, expectations, demands and chores. To get an overview of the diversity in the material, I needed an analytical tool that could characterise and organise the diverse statements. Within discourse theory and poststructuralist approaches to identity the concept of “subject positions” is central and I soon found this concept to be a fruitful analytical tool in my first readings of the material. The search for subject positions turned out to be a constructive way to structure and simultaneously appreciate the diversity in the material.

### ***3.5.1.1 Subject positions***

Within discourse- and poststructuralist theories *subject positions* refer to cultural, historical, social and discursive identity categories (Weedon, 1987). The word ‘position’ indicate that these cultural categories has a location – they are situated. A subject position may thus be defined as a point or a position in the discourse that individuals can identify with or reject. Subject positions also have content and contain for example images, expectations, chores and values. How persons understand and make use of the available repertoire of images, expectations, chores and values is incorporated in the subject position, as there also is a “...structure of rights for those that use that repertoire” (Davies and Harre, 2001, p. 262). Since a subject position has both a conceptual repertoire, a location and structures, it opens for a specific view of the world, as it simultaneously prevent other ways of experiencing and understanding the world (Davies and Harre, 2001).

Typical subject positions available for Norwegian teachers in the analysed empirical material might for example be; “parent-centred”, “cooperation centred” or “curriculum oriented”. Subject positions are possible identification markers. Teachers can identify with all of these subject positions simultaneously, but with varying strengths. A stronger emphasis on parent-centeredness will most probably generate other value statements and practices in the everyday life in the classroom, than an emphasis on curriculum or educational policy would do. Subject positions are more or less explicit within our ongoing discourse(s) and their status and content will change as people and societies change. Which subject positions that are available and presented as positive in narratives about teachers, will therefore be a strong



indicator on how storytellers would like teachers to understand their job. In this thesis subject positions are understood as a significant resource in the construction of teacher identity.

### **3.5.1.2 Identity constructions**

As I analysed the empirical material, different images of teachers appeared as the subject positions seemed to strengthen each other or “cluster” and thereby create certain patterns. These patterns generated images with specific features, and I was able to distinguish them from each other, although their borders were unclear and fuzzy. I understand an *identity construction* as the outline of such an image of a possible identity with characteristic features, attitudes and behaviour, and thus as important resources in the construction of identity. Examples of such identity constructions generated from my material are ‘The developing and changing teacher’, ‘The typical teacher’, ‘The knowing teacher’, ‘The cooperating and open minded teacher’.

The word “construction” refers to the unfinished and floating aspect of these images of possible teachers. Like subject positions, identity constructions will change over time and within societies or groups of people. Although identity constructions are in flux, they exist more or less explicitly in all educational institutions and result in very real and concrete, everyday practices and statements. Take for example the implementation of educational reforms. In the interviews, the teachers sketched an image of “The typical teacher”. A particular trait of this teacher is that she or he does things the way she or he always has done them and s/he is therefore not very interested in changes. In my empirical material an alternative conception of teachers is also outlined: the change-oriented teacher. This portrays the teacher as creative, innovative, flexible, developing and changing. It is not hard to imagine how different the implementation of educational reforms will be in schools where most teachers positioned themselves (and their colleagues) within the “The typical teacher”-identity, compared to schools where ‘The developing and changing teacher’ has such a prominent position.

### **3.5.2 Narrative editing**

All institutions produce possibilities for narrative identities for their members. This is important for an institution, both to legitimise its existence, and to meet the need for solving central tasks within the institution. Institutions therefore “... incite participants to construct the stories they need to do their work” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). These stories are



constructed by the *narrative resources* the institutions give their members access to. It is however important to notice that this does not mean that members are provided with ready made narratives about their institution and their jobs *or* ready made job identities (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). How members understand and use the narrative resources vary within circumstances, from person to person, and situation to situation (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Davies and Harre, 2001). Members of the same institution, with the same access to the same narrative resources might edit these narrative resources differently and thereby construct different narratives and different narrative identities.

The combination of different narrative resources and how they are related to each other is called *narrative editing* (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). There are different techniques of such narrative editing and in the following I will describe the three editing techniques relevant to this thesis; positioning, creations of plots/storylines and the construction of counter-narratives. How these three analytical concepts are generated through interplay between the empirical material and the conceptual framework will be described in the methods chapter.

### **3.5.2.1      *Positioning***

All practices or situations usually provide individuals with several available narrative resources (Davies and Harre, 2001) such as subject positions and identity constructions. Through narration we activate these narrative resources and position ourselves in favour of or in opposition to them. There is always a possibility of choice of how to position ourselves within a situation or practice. The construction of identity-narratives can therefore be understood as a process of *narrative positioning* by an identification with or rejection of the accessible resources.

*Reflexive positioning* refers to when teachers position other teachers and is for example used in narratives about good and bad teachers, such as for example when Heather (see Article 1, p. 535) describes some of her colleagues in her interview; “And they are interested in educating themselves. They take part in things in their spare time. I think that’s really important. That is a good teacher. Yes, I really think so!”.

*Interactive positioning* refers to when the teachers position themselves (Davies and Harre, 2001) in favour or opposed to subject positions and identity constructions. Mary (see Article 1, p. 536) does this explicitly when she positions herself as a nice and kind person in

the interview; “I think the best of people (laughs). You could say that I don’t like to be stricter than I have to”.

Positioning gives both access to, and prevents different understandings of the world and ones place in it, as a position favour some values, practices and opinions. When teachers are positioned in public narratives, different possible teacher identities are thereby simultaneously constructed. The concept of positioning is useful because it opens for an understanding of people as active agents in their own lives, and the construction and negotiation of identity as a dynamic, creative and changing activity (Davies and Harre, 2001; Ritchie and Rigano, 2001).

### 3.5.2.2 *Narrative plots*

All public narratives follow certain *plots*. I understand ‘narrative plot’ as the way events, elements and actions are temporally and thematically interconnected (Polkinghorne, 1995; Berger, 1997). The temporal and thematically structuring of events is called emplotment, and provide criteria for inclusion and exclusion of elements in to the narrative, dependent on what particular outcome the narrative eventually will culminate in (Polkinghorne, 1995). A narrative plot therefore creates a specific understanding and explanation of a phenomenon or happening. “When happenings are configured or emplotted, they take on narrative meaning” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). Narrative plots will consequently frame what is possible, give room for certain intentions, expectations and demands in public narratives and thereby also give direction to relevant identities.

Within public narratives there are several plots, but some of these have a higher cultural status or are considered more significant than others and will therefore attain a more dominant status (Jones, 2002). Normative and dominant narrative plots will prefer certain elements and narrative resources and exclude others, which again will influence the variety of possible identities. A narrative plot that consider cultural diversity in the Norwegian society as one of the main problems for democracy, will for example allow fewer cultural identities than a plot that considers an increasing cultural diversity as a possibility to strengthen the democratic processes in Norway. Dominant plots, storylines and narratives will thereby operate as a form of narrative control in the sense that they ultimately construct certain preferred narrative identities (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000).

### 3.5.2.3 *Counter-narratives*

Dominant plots and narratives that operate as some sort of narrative identity control are inscribed in power relations. According to Foucault, such power relations are simultaneously oppressive and productive (Foucault, 1982). Power namely generates resistance, which again can be the point of departure for the telling of counter-narratives. Sometimes people or institutions produce alternative public narratives as an attempt to resist or be opposed to one or several dominant cultural storylines. Such alternative narratives are what I refer to as *counter-narratives* in this thesis.

There are several actors and voices that produce different public narratives *to* and *about* education, school and teachers, but currently, global educational policy seems to have a dominant position (Popkewitz, 2000). In the third paper I show how a global and dominant narrative of neo-liberal accountability is experienced by the Union of Education Norway as a powerful, but negative force in current Norwegian educational policy. In a campaign that aim to construct ‘profession ideals’, the Union resists and is opposed to this dominant and powerful narrative. The paper shows how this resistance creates an opportunity for the union to sketch out an alternative understanding of education and teaching, where the pupils’ well being, rather than the fulfilment of pre-conceptualised measurable goals should be paramount for the teacher.

In this thesis I consider dominant narratives and plots to be important in the construction of teacher identity as they “...provide an important cultural resource which people can both *draw on and resist* in order to produce their own accounts” (Jones, 2002 (my emphasis)). To understand the construction of counter-narratives as a form of resistance, gives me a possibility to investigate how teachers are positioned within certain identities and better understand why these identities are experienced as meaningful.



## **4. METHODS**

In this chapter I will first give an overview of the three studies that are reported in paper I, II and III. Secondly I will present the general methodological approach for this thesis, that is qualitative and closely connected to the theoretical framework and the philosophical assumptions presented in chapter 3, before I finally describe and give examples of how the analyses in the three studies are conducted. This part of the current chapter should be regarded as a supplement to the methods sections in paper I, II and III..

### **4.1 Overview of the three studies**

Three sources of material are explored in this thesis. The different sources of material are investigated in three separate studies, each of them reported in one paper. In the following, I will give a detailed overview of analytical concepts and foci in each of the three studies presented in paper I, II and III. Table 1 below gives an overview of research questions, analytical concepts, material and main findings in the papers.

**Table 1** Overview of the three papers

	<b>Study 1 - Paper I</b>	<b>Study 2 - Paper II</b>	<b>Study 3 – Paper III</b>
Title of paper;	Narrative construction of teacher identity: positioning and negotiation	The public face of teacher identity - narrative construction of teacher identity in public policy documents	Teacher Union and Teacher Identity
Material	Interviews with 5 female elementary school teachers	Three Norwegian educational policy documents	The Union of Education Norway’s “Professional ideals”-campaign
Research question(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What accessible narrative resources can be identified in the teacher narratives about what it is like to be a teacher?</li> <li>• How are these resources used in the narrative construction of teacher identity?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What dominant narrative plots about teachers’ work can be identified in the public policy documents?</li> <li>• How do these narrative plots construct and/or presuppose certain constructions of teacher identity?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is teacher identity narratively constructed in the Union’s campaign material?</li> <li>• What counter-narrative(s) can be identified in the campaign material?</li> <li>• What teacher identities are teachers positioned within by the counter narrative(s)?</li> </ul>
Analytical concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject positions</li> <li>• Identity Construction</li> <li>• Positioning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject positions</li> <li>• Identity Construction</li> <li>• Narrative plot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject positions</li> <li>• Identity Construction</li> <li>• Counter-narrative</li> </ul>
Findings	<p>This paper shows how five Norwegian female elementary school teachers use positioning and narrative resources to construct and negotiate several possible teacher identities.</p> <p>More than 30 subject positions and four identity constructions were identified.</p>	<p>The paper describes how a narrative plot across three educational policy documents constructs and/or presupposes a certain construction of teacher identity.</p> <p>More than 20 subject positions and five identity constructions were identified.</p>	<p>This paper shows how resistance to an accountability-narrative creates an opportunity for the Union to sketch out an alternative understanding of education and teaching where the pupils’ well being is paramount for the teacher.</p> <p>About 20 subject positions and seven identity constructions were identified.</p>

The analytical concepts in the three studies are ‘Subject position’, ‘Identity construction’, ‘Positioning’, ‘Narrative Plots’ and ‘Counter-narratives’. These concepts are described in chapter 3.5. Subject positions and identity constructions are understood as *narrative resources* and refer to the content, or the ‘*what*’ in teacher identity. Positioning, narrative plots and counter-narratives refer to *how* teacher identity is narratively constructed in the public narratives, hence *narrative editing* techniques. This is visualised in table 2 below:

**Table 2** Narrative resources, editing techniques and analytical concepts

	NARRATIVE RESOURCES	NARRATIVE EDITING
Subject positions	x	
Identity constructions	x	
Positioning		x
Plots/storyline		x
Counter-narratives		x

To explore how narrative resources and narrative editing construct teacher identity in public narratives I conducted three main readings within each of the three studies. The first and second reading in each study aimed at identifying the narrative resources, while a third reading focused on the different narrative editing techniques. Table 3 below shows a schematic overview of the three readings in each of the three studies.

**Table 3** Overview of the three readings within each study

	Subject positions	Identity constructions	Positioning	Narrative plots	Counter-narratives
<i>Study 1</i> Teacher interviews	1 <sup>st</sup> reading	2 <sup>nd</sup> reading	3 <sup>rd</sup> reading		
<i>Study 2</i> Policy documents	1 <sup>st</sup> reading	2 <sup>nd</sup> reading		3 <sup>rd</sup> reading	
<i>Study 3</i> Union of Education Norway	1 <sup>st</sup> reading	2 <sup>nd</sup> reading			3 <sup>rd</sup> reading

As table 3 shows, the narrative resources are identified in all three studies. This was done firstly to investigate the existence of some sort of common reservoir of narrative resources across the whole material. In addition, these analyses were a good way to get to know the material in depth before I started the much more time consuming analysis of *narrative editing*.

The selection of analytical concepts for the analyses of *narrative editing* was done in interplay between the theoretical framework, methodological approaches and the empirical material. The teacher interviews turned out to be exiting sites for the investigation of *positioning* as the teachers explicitly identified themselves with or rejected subject positions and identity constructions. This way, the teachers constantly negotiated identity by flexible

and dynamic use of the accessible narrative resources. The policy documents were however more static and less flexible. As these documents are very concerned with future and past hopes and fears for the Norwegian society, pupils, teachers and educational system, they were well suited to identify *narrative plots* and how these produce certain teacher identities. The Union of Education Norway's "Profession-ideals"- campaign explicitly aim to show resistance towards some of the current trends in educational policy. To read the campaign material as a construction of a *counter-narrative* was productive in my investigation of how teachers are positioned within certain identity constructions in this campaign. The interplay between the empirical material and the conceptual framework made it possible to investigate the different sources of material with a comparative approach, yet with respect for the unique qualities of each set of material.

The schematic presentation in table 3 might give the impression of the research process as very linear and straight forward. The readings in each study were however at times conducted parallel to each other. Findings from one reading informed the other readings, as did perspectives derived from theoretical studies parallel to the analysis. This multi-layered and theory-rich analytical practice of several interpretations of the same material is central in qualitative analysis. It makes the research richer and strengthens the interpretations (Kvale, 1996).

## **4.2 General methodological approach**

In this section I will explicate my understanding of how the combination of discourse analysis and narrative analysis provide a productive overarching framework for the analyses in this project.

### **4.2.1 Discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis is not a unified method with defined procedures, but must be perceived as a collection of several, diverse analytical approaches. The understanding of language as what constitutes our social world and identity is however a unifying point of departure for these approaches. Despite the diversity, there are some approaches to discourse analysis that can be identified as individual strands with distinct conceptions of analytical aims and objectives. Three such strands can in particular be singled out, namely; "Critical Discourse Analysis", "Discourse theory" and "Discourse psychology" (Torfing, 1999; Howarth, 2000; Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001; Philips and Jørgensen, 2002; Howarth and Torfing, 2005). The



analyses in this thesis are inspired by the two latter approaches. None of these are explicit about concrete analytical procedures, but provide a constructive interpretive repertoire and framework (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001; Philips and Jørgensen, 2002; Howarth and Torfing, 2005).

I first and foremost draw on “Discourse theory’s” poststructuralist conception of all social practises and systems of meaning as discursive. The analytical aim for the “Discourse theory” - approach is to study and illuminate how meaning, groups and identities are established by the way signifiers are defined and fixed (Torfing, 1999; Howarth, 2000; Philips and Jørgensen, 2002; Howarth and Torfing, 2005). My conception of subject positions and my identification of these, in addition to the emphasis on negotiation as significant in the construction of identity, draw on this approach. In addition, discourse theory emphasises the political and public elements of discourse, which also is paramount in my approach to teacher identity in this thesis (Torfing, 1999; Howarth, 2000; Howarth and Torfing, 2005). This first approach to discourse analysis is combined with elements from “Discourse psychology”. The aim for the studies in this thesis is to explore how identity is constructed in the narrating process. The interpretive framework “Discourse psychology” offers is adequate for my research for three reasons. Firstly, this approach claims that psychological phenomena, such as identity, must be seen as social activities and not as deeper “essences” behind/beyond language. This is very much in keeping with the conception of identity construction that underwrites this thesis. Secondly, the main aim for analysis within a “Discourse psychology”-approach, is to conduct studies of how discursively produced recourses is used as language constitutes and negotiates meaning and subjectivity. This includes an emphasis on narratives as paramount in the construction of self and identity, which is highly relevant for my project (Gergen, 2001; Hollway, 2001; Philips and Jørgensen, 2002). Thirdly, this approach provides an interpretive repertoire to identify processes of positioning and how this generates certain identities (Davies and Harre, 2001).

#### ***4.2.2 Narrative analysis and analysis of narrative***

The two approaches to discourse analysis presented above, gives a sound and productive interpretive framework for the investigation of how public narratives use discursively produced resources to position teachers within certain identities. As narrative analysis has the potential to better grasp the more temporal and thematic elements in the narrative processes, I decided to draw on elements from narrative analysis in addition to the previously presented approaches to discourse analysis.

Currently “narrative analysis” within educational research include a broad and diverse selection of theoretical perspectives, traditions and analytical approaches. In a review article Rogan and de Kock (2005) has organised a series of approaches to narrative analysis within three main clusters; a) the *performative* methods cluster with focus on the construction of narratives in for example interviews, b) the *structural* methods cluster that focus on details in text, such as for example how words are used and the “... exploration of the concrete, technical aspects of the language of the narratives” (Rogan and de Kock, 2005, p. 635) and finally the c) *literary* methods cluster with emphasis on *figurative language, plots, and themes* of the texts. Analytical approaches in this third cluster are less detailed than the previous category and are thus more concerned with whole text analysis (Rogan and de Kock, 2005). My studies can be categorised within this latter cluster of approaches, as my aim is to identify how plots and temporal and thematic elements in public narratives position teachers within certain identities. The identification of such overarching narrative elements has therefore been central in my analyses.

Polkinghorne (1995) distinguishes between two basic modes of narrative inquiry. The first is called ‘Analysis of narratives’ and is convenient when the material consists of several narrative accounts. The researcher investigates these narrative accounts in order to “...locate common themes or conceptual manifestations...” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.13) across the selected accounts. According to Polkinghorne, the identified concepts can be generated from theory, former research or the analysed material itself. The second mode of narrative inquiry Polkinghorne describe is called ‘Narrative analyses’. Within this approach, the researcher organise elements from the material into a narrative account that can take form of a plot or other modes of “...explanation that is retrospective, having linked past events together to account for how a final outcome might have come about” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.16). The point here is to link narrative statements to each other in such a way that they construct a reasonable whole.

I draw on both these approaches in my analyses. In the two first readings of the material, where the intention was to identify narrative resources, I was inspired by an ‘Analysis of narrative’- approach. Subject positions and identity constructions were generated from narrative accounts from the three sources of material, with the intention to search for tendencies *across* the material.

In the third reading, where the aim was to investigate *how* the narrative editing techniques (positioning, plots and counter-narratives) positioned teachers within certain identities, my general analytical approach was more in line with the “Narrative analysis”-

mode. Each set of material was read separately and organised as narrative accounts (such as plots and counter-narratives) by themes, temporality, sequences and contingency that was identified in the texts. The more detailed descriptions of how this was done will be further outlined in the following section where all the analytical readings will be described more in detail.

### **4.3 Conducting the analysis in the three studies**

There is a lack of studies in discourse analysis that are explicit on the concrete analytical procedures. This is also the case when it comes to narrative inquiry (Rogan and de Kock, 2005). Such transparency is important as explicit descriptions and discussions of the whole research process is the best way to ensure validity and that findings are reasonable. Howarth and Torfing (2005) underscore the importance of transparency in discourse analysis like this;

[transparency] will not only help us to improve the quality of our discourse analysis, but also help to justify the validity of our research results, because other researchers will see what, how, and why we are doing what we do (Howarth and Torfing, 2005, p. 25).

The importance of transparency in the research process is not only relevant for discourse analysis or narrative inquiry but vital within all strands of qualitative research (Silverman, 2001). The following explications of how the analytical readings in the studies were done, is an attempt to ensure methodological transparency in this thesis. This section must be considered as an addition to the deliberations of method and analysis in the three papers. As the analyses are described and discussed differently in the three papers, they are also discussed in various depths in the following section.

#### ***4.3.1 Identification of subject positions (First reading in Study 1, 2, 3)***

The aim of the first analytic reading in all three studies was to identify a variety of subject positions with relevance to teachers and teaching. During this reading I got a visual image of teaching as a job that is enacted in a three-dimensional room in which teachers manoeuvre. I understand subject positions as possible places for teachers to occupy in this room, each place or position has its specific view of the room. I used the questions “What positions are available for the teachers to occupy” and: “What understanding of the world does this position give access to?” as a point of departure for the first reading of the texts. These questions were

developed from poststructuralist and discourse theories on subject positions. In the following, I will show how the identification of subject positions was done by using an excerpt from the English version of the National curriculum for teacher education as an example.

Firstly, sentences and phrases that said something about what a teacher must know, do and/or be were highlighted. The quote below shows an example of how this was done:

Throughout his or her working life, the teacher is dependent on ways of acquiring and updating knowledge. Teacher education must provide insight into such methods and training in their use. Sound *subject competence*, based on a combination of science, arts and vocational studies, forms the basis of educational activity..... Roles such as mediator of culture, guide, model and inspirer require the teacher to have sound competence in many subjects

All the highlights were then extracted and categorised thematically with the intention to generate a broad variation of subject positions. Statements with reference to similar functions, values or competencies were categorised together, as visualised in table 4 below;

*Table 4* Categorisation of excerpts from the texts into subject positions

Highlighted and extracted quotes	Subject position
“....the teacher is dependent on ways of acquiring and updating knowledge.” “...insight into such methods and training in their use.”	<i>The teacher is development, learning and change oriented</i>
“Sound subject competence ...combination of science, arts and vocational studies.....” “...sound competence in many subjects.”	<i>The teacher is subject matter / knowledge / competence oriented</i>
“Roles such as mediator of culture.....”	<i>The teacher is a carrier and promoter of culture</i>
“Roles such as..... model....”	<i>The teacher is a good role model</i>

It was however sometimes difficult to decide what category some of the highlights should fit in to. These excerpts were thoroughly considered in relation to other excerpts in relevant alternative categories and also discussed with a colleague. A final list of subject positions, with descriptions of each subject position was eventually developed, as visualised by examples in table 5 below. The subject positions were numbered randomly, and the numbers therefore do not refer to any hierarchical ordering of the subject positions.

*Table 5 Example of descriptions of subject positions*

<b>6. The teacher is development, learning and change oriented</b>	- willing and able to develop oneself and the school. Also makes sure the pupils develop and are creative and new thinking.
<b>9. The teacher is subject matter/knowledge/competence oriented</b>	- teachers must know and be able to teach basic subject matter and competences, and “solid” knowledge /scientific/research-based knowledge
<b>13. The teacher is a carrier and promoter of culture</b>	- traditions, values, history, and knowledge, local, national and global must be transmitted and made available to the next generation and immigrants
<b>10. The teacher is a good role model</b>	- to pupils, colleagues and parents, both in behaviour, knowledge, cooperation and working methods.

This list of subject positions were then used as a means for “coding” the original texts, whether interview transcripts, policy documents or campaign material. How this was done is exemplified in the text below. The numbers in the text refer to the number the subject position hold on the list.

Throughout his or her working life, the teacher is dependent on ways of acquiring and updating knowledge (6). Teacher education must provide insight into such methods and training in their use. (6). Sound *subject competence* (9), based on a combination of science, arts and vocational studies, forms the basis of educational activity..... Roles such as mediator of culture (13), guide, model and inspirer require the teacher to have sound competence in many subjects (9)

Finally, the various subject positions were counted to get an *impression* of what positions that was most prevalent in the texts. It is however important to note that the subject positions were not counted to get any exact statistical measurements.

Appendix II shows an overview of subject positions identified in study 3. The subject positions identified in study 1 are reported in paper I and the subject positions from study 2 are described in the appendix in paper II.

#### **4.3.2 Framing identity constructions (Second reading in Study 1, 2, 3)**

A second reading in all three studies focused on the identification of possible teacher identities that were constructed in the public narratives about teachers and teaching, hence “identity construction”. As “identity construction” is a broader category than “subject position” this second reading aimed to get as few categories as possible, while the first reading aimed to identify a broad and multiple variety of different subject positions.

The second reading also started with highlighting phrases and sections of the texts that said something about what teachers know, do and/or are. The excerpt and quotes were then categorised thematically, based on the principle that phrases that appeared to support each other, or cluster, were put in the same category. Based on the excerpts and themes, a description of the identity construction was written. Table 6 below gives an overview of the categorisation process, using excerpts from the teacher interviews as example.

**Table 6** *Categorisation of excerpts generating identity constructions*

<b>Highlighted and extracted quotes from the interview transcripts</b>	<b>Themes supporting each other / cluster in the interviews</b>	<b>Name of category / identity construction and description</b>
<p>“And I suppose I’m probably a kind sort of person. You know, I think the best of people” (Mary)</p> <p>“I really care for the pupils in my class and it is so nice to teach them”(Alice)</p> <p>“Happy pupils that enjoy themselves. That is sort of the best” (Grethe)</p> <p>”To me it is important to try to se each individual pupil”(Alice)</p> <p>“...insecure pupils who are afraid of the teacher, they don’t work very well” (Grethe)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on a good social environment and safety</li> <li>• Kindness</li> <li>• Positive feelings like happiness and joy</li> <li>• To care</li> <li>• To see and acknowledge the pupils individually</li> </ul>	<p>“The caring and kind teacher”</p> <p>(see description in paper 1, page 536)</p>

The procedures described above were also followed in the identification of identity constructions in the public policy documents (paper II) and in the campaign material from the Union of Education Norway (paper III). Appendix II shows an overview of identity constructions generated from study 3. The identity constructions identified in study 1 are reported in paper I and the identity constructions from study 2 are described in the appendix in paper II.

#### **4.3.3 Positioning (Third reading in Study 1)**

The aim for the third analytical reading of the transcribed teacher interviews was to identify how the teachers positioned themselves by the help of the narrative resources. In this reading I paid attention to what positions the teachers took up through their identification with or rejection of certain subject positions, as described by Davies and Harre (2001) in the following quote:

Positions are identified in part by extracting the autobiographical aspects of conversation in which it becomes possible to find out how each conversant conceives of themselves and of the other participants by seeing what position they take up..... (Davies and Harre, 2001, p.264).

Based on the first and second readings of the transcribed teacher interviews, I highlighted statements and narratives where the teachers made references to subject positions and/or identity constructions, as in the following example from one of the interviews:

**Gunn:** But when you say a typical female teacher.....what is a typical female teacher?

**Mary:** I don't know (laughter) ...no, it's a bit stupid in a way to say it like that, but.....(laughter)

**Gunn:** Well maybe there is a reason for you to say it?

**Mary:** Yes, there is. Well I haven't worked with many of those typical.....I mean where I used to work before. But I think it is a bit.....those I've sort of met on courses here in this school. The teachers here have a rather high average age and it seems like they're very proper and very structured and so on.....

(Joint laughter)

**Gunn:** And you do not see yourself in that way?

**Mary:** not exactly. No, I'm more like someone who sort of finds her way while walking....like that.....(laughter)

The highlighted texts were then excerpted and categorised according to whether the teachers distanced themselves (indication of negative positioning) or identified themselves (indication of positive positioning) with the narrative resources. Table 7 shows how the highlighted elements from the transcribed interview above is categorised.

*Table 7 Negative and positive positioning*

Description of possible subject position/identity construction	Indication of negative positioning	Indication of positive positioning
<p>“...a typical female teacher...”</p> <p>“.....a rather high average age and it seems like they're very proper and very structured and so on...”</p>	<p>“<b>Gunn:</b> And you do not see yourself in that way?”</p> <p><b>Mary:</b> not exactly...”</p>	
<p>“...someone who sort of finds her way while walking...”</p>		<p>“I'm more like...”</p>



The teachers' narrative positioning was seen in relation to the categories, themes and descriptions from the second and first reading of the transcribed teacher interviews, before a discussion on how this positioning opens for negotiation of diverse teacher identities was written. (see paper I, page 538 - 543)

#### ***4.3.4 Tracing of narrative plots (Third reading in Study 2)***

The second paper discusses how narrative plots give access to and presupposes certain identity constructions in the selected public policy documents. As the policy documents appeared to have a high internal coherence they firstly seemed almost impossible to penetrate. In order to analyse them I therefore had to re-write the three selected policy texts in to four public narratives about education. I named these narratives: "The public narrative about teachers", "The public narrative about Norwegian history and future", "The public narrative about teaching" and finally "The public narrative about learning". The construction of these narratives was necessary to be able to identify narrative plots running across the documents.

To construct these narratives I firstly looked for indications of temporality, such as "...altering changes...", "...has become more...", "...over the last generations there have been a..." and causality such as "...this will lead to a..." in the documents. The different indications of temporality and causality, their related phrases and descriptions of teachers, pupils, learning, teaching and the Norwegian society were then thematically sorted in the following four categories: "teachers", "Norway in the future and the past", "teaching" and "learning". These categories then served as the point of departure for the re-writing of the four public narratives mentioned above.

Eventually narrative plots were identified within and across these four public narratives by the help of four questions;

1. How are education / pupils / teachers /learning / knowledge described historically and currently?
2. What seem to be the challenges that school and teachers face in the contemporary Norwegian society?
3. How must these challenges be met / solved by the school and its teachers?
4. What identity constructions do these descriptions, challenges and solutions open for and/or presuppose?

These questions were developed through discussions with two colleagues who also conduct discourse analysis of educational policy texts.



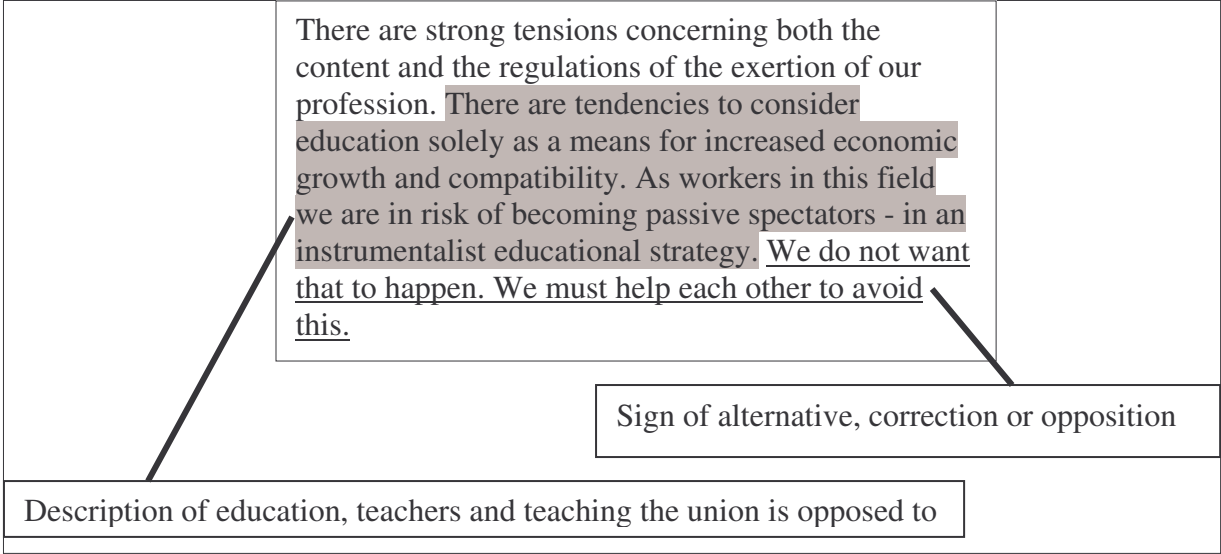
The identification of narrative plots demanded several cross-readings of the four public narratives and the original documents. To ensure that the identified plots were reasonable and in line with the original material, I re-read the original policy documents several times and also compared the plots with the results of the first and second analytic reading. In paper II, I give a detailed description of a narrative plot by explicating how the documents argue for certain approaches to the understanding of teaching, learning and teachers (see page 134 - 139 in paper II).

**4.3.5 Counter-narrative (Third reading in Study 3)**

In this last reading in study 3 the aim was to identify descriptions of teachers, education and teaching that the Union campaign is *opposed to* or *in favour of*. The selected campaign material was systematically analysed to identify a) signs of alternative, correction or opposition that pointed to b) public narratives about teachers and teaching, which are negated in the campaign and thus function as a point of departure for the construction of alternative c) counter-narratives about teachers and teaching.

I firstly identified evaluative phrases where the campaign texts explicitly stated opposition or resistance. With these negative evaluative phrases as a point of departure, the next step of the analysis was to identify descriptions of education, teachers, and teaching that the campaign signalled an opposition against. This is exemplified in the following quote from [http://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/UdfTemplates/Page\\_\\_24706.aspx](http://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/UdfTemplates/Page__24706.aspx), in figure 1 below.

**Figure 1** Identification of descriptions of education, teachers and teaching the union campaign is opposed to



All descriptions the campaign signalled an *opposition against* were excerpted and organised thematically. The thematic category that was most prominent was recognised as informed by neo-liberalist and accountability-thinking. This interpretation was done with basis in my knowledge of dominant traits within current global educational policy and my familiarity with research on accountability in education. Together with the category of “Teachers as obedient public servants” the category of neo-liberal informed statements constructed a narrative I named “The public narrative of accountability in education”.

The next step was then to identify descriptions of education, teachers, and teaching that the union campaign was in *favour* of and that also could be identified as *counter to the accountability narrative*. The quote below from the campaign material is an example of such an alternative description of teachers and teaching:

We are active agents, and not passive spectators. When we meet children, pupils and students we are active and free. We use our professional judgement in the planning and facilitating of our work.

Similar favourable descriptions of teachers and teaching were excerpted and thematically organised. Especially two of these thematic categories “The teacher as a conscious participant in the development of educational policy and debate” and “The teacher as preserver of common core values” could be seen as counter to the accountability narrative. These categories constructed a narrative I have called “The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child”.

Table 8 shows an example of how phrases and sections from the campaign material were seen in relation to each other in the third reading.

*Table 8 Example of how text-elements are seen in relation to each other*

<b>Sign of alternative, correction or opposition</b>	<b>Descriptions of education, teachers and teaching the union is opposed to</b>	<b>Descriptions of education, teachers and teaching the union is in favour of</b>
<p>“We do not want that to happen. We must help each other to avoid this”</p>	<p>“There are tendencies to consider education solely as a means for increased economic growth and compatibility. As workers in this field we are in risk of becoming passive spectators - in an instrumentalist educational strategy.”</p>	<p>“We are active agents, and not passive spectators.”</p> <p>“...we are active and free.”</p> <p>“We use our professional judgement...”</p>
<p>Point of departure to identify.....</p>	<p>.....▶ The rejected narrative of accountability in education.</p> <p>Point of departure to identify.....▶</p>	<p>.....▶ Counter narrative of the teacher as responsible and loyal to the child.</p>

The counter-narrative of “The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child” were then connected to the identity constructions identified in the second reading. With this as a point of departure the teacher identities the counter-narrative positions teachers within were explored. Three identity constructions turned out to be particularly relevant, namely “The caring and loyal teacher”, “The conscious, stable and engaged teacher” and “The responsible teacher with a unique competence”.



## 5. PAPERS

### 5.1 Paper I:

#### **“Narrative Construction of Teacher Identity: Positioning and Negotiation”**

This paper shows how five Norwegian female elementary school teachers in in-depth interviews use narrative resources to construct and negotiate several possible teacher identities. In the interviews the teachers talked about their everyday life as teachers, their relationships with colleagues, pupils and parents and what they considered to be good, difficult and important in their job.

The narratives about what it is like to be a teacher in the Norwegian elementary school were transcribed and analysed within a theoretical framework based on a combination of poststructuralist, discursive and narrative approaches to identity. Firstly, the analysis identified narrative identity resources such as subject positions and identity constructions used in the teacher narratives. Secondly, the analysis illuminated how these narrative resources are used in the teachers’ narrative construction of their identity as teachers.

Across the teacher narratives more than 30 subject positions and four identity constructions were identified. How the identity construction of ‘the caring and kind teacher’ breaks through as a dominant is one of the main findings reported in the paper. An extensive part of the subject positions seems to cluster around this identity construction. The care for the pupils’ safety, development, learning and well-being seems to be what both motivates and concerns the teachers the most. By the use of examples from the teachers’ narratives, the paper also explicates and discusses how the teachers negotiate several and diverse teacher identities as they actively use narrative resources to position themselves in varied ways in their narratives. This discussion also emphasises how negotiation is vital in the construction of identity.

The findings exclude the belief that teacher education, school leaders, teacher unions or curriculum can provide teachers with ready-made and universal identities which they should fit in to. Instead, the perception of identity reflected in this paper allows teachers to construct identities that might be experienced as unique, relevant and meaningful. With these findings and discussions as a backdrop, the paper claims that teacher identity is not only constructed, but also multifaceted. In addition, the paper shows that it is important to understand *how* teachers narratively construct their identities to understand *why* they present themselves and their job in certain ways.

## 5.2 Paper II:

### **“The Public Face of Teacher Identity - Narrative Construction of Teacher Identity in Public Policy documents”**

The second paper focuses on how teacher identity is narratively constructed by a narrative plot that runs through several public policy texts. The analysed policy texts are selected from two Norwegian national curriculum documents regulating teacher education (1999 and 2003) in addition to the National Curriculum for the 10-year Compulsory School (1997). The documents are analysed within a theoretical framework based on poststructuralist and discourse theory combined with theories of narrative identity.

The paper describes how a narrative plot is identified across the selected documents. The understanding of learning as an immanent force in children is the point of departure for this narrative plot. A teacher who is incapable of accommodating each child, due to his or her personality and/or knowledge, runs the risk of destroying this immanent urge in the child to learn. In order to prevent the destruction of the pupils' learning, teachers must therefore adjust their teaching so that the individual pupil is being included. *If* the pupils' immanent urge to learn is destroyed, the child's potential to learn skills and knowledge necessary to understand and contribute to the society will be diminished. This will for certain reduce the child's possibility to become a productive member of society, and thus be a threat to a well functioning democracy. In addition to position the teacher within a certain teacher identity, this narrative plot places a huge responsibility on the teacher. Not only the individual pupils' progress and well being, but the future of the Norwegian democracy is dependent on the quality of the individual teacher's knowledge, competence and personality.

This is a narrative plot that both presupposes and underwrites an understanding of the teacher as someone who is able to accommodate the individual child and adapt their teaching to the child's presuppositions, thus “The including and pupil-centred teacher”. The analysis also identifies several subject positions underpinning this teacher identity.

Based on these findings, the paper argues that these educational policy documents have a rather strong governing function called *narrative control*. This narrative control goes beyond the administrative regulation of elementary school and teacher education, as it produce teacher identities that eventually might frame how Norwegian teachers experience and carry out their job. The paper's theoretical and methodological approach to identity offers a fruitful framework to understand some of the presuppositions that constitute the Norwegian teacher as “including and pupil-centred”.

### 5.3 Paper III:

#### “Teacher Union - Teacher Identity”

Early autumn 2004, the Union of Education Norway launched a campaign called the “Profession Ideals”- campaign, with the intention to develop joint ideals for the teaching profession in Norway. The third paper shows how teacher identity is narratively constructed in this campaign. The material for analysis was selected from the Union’s official web-page, and a special “Profession Ideals”- campaign web-page. The selected texts were analysed within a theoretical framework inspired by a combination of poststructuralist, discursive and narrative approaches to identity. The paper explicates how the campaign materials produce teacher identity through a dominant public narrative and one of its counter-narratives.

The paper firstly shows how the Union of Education Norway draws on a dominant public narrative of “Accountability in education” when they describe current and future educational policy. Throughout the campaign material teachers are encouraged to be in opposition to this accountability-narrative. Secondly, the paper explicates how this opposition can be read as a counter-narrative of “The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child”. The construction of this counter narrative draws on a dominant discourse of accountability as “all bad”, where “accountability-thinking” and teachers’ possibilities of pupil centred teaching are positioned in a mutually excluding dichotomous relationship. The Union - campaign expresses a strong disagreement with expectations, beliefs and understandings inscribed in what we may label the *accountability narrative* and thereby implicitly positions the teacher as pupil-centred. The accountability-narrative thus serves as an important resource for the Union’s construction of teacher identity.

The paper underscores the importance of dichotomies in the narration and negotiation of teacher identities. Through polarization and mutual exclusion of identity constructions, descriptions of what it is possible to do, think and feel as a teacher will emerge. The identification of dichotomies, the identity constructions they produce and the possibilities for negotiation between these are therefore essential if one wishes to understand why some descriptions of teachers, such as “The caring and loyal teacher” gain prominence.





## **6. GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE THESIS**

This chapter has three main sections. I will start with a discussion on methodological challenges and considerations on research ethics, interpretations, soundness and trustworthiness on different stages throughout the project. Considerations on the project's limitations and possible biases are also included in this discussion. The second part of the chapter is a discussion of the main findings from the three studies, while the final part is concerned with reflections and questions with relevance to possible practical implications of my research.

### **6.1 Methodological challenges and considerations**

The issues discussed in the two first sections of this chapter are mainly relevant to study 1. For the two other studies the methodological challenges and considerations has another character as these did not involve persons, but documents that are already accessible to the public. The last part of this section is therefore primarily concerned with discussions on interpretations and reflexivity. The issue of transparency will penetrate these discussions as I believe this to be one of the most significant aspects in discussions on the soundness and trustworthiness of qualitative research. Also, discourse theory provides rich possibilities for “thick” descriptions in Geertz’ sense (Geertz, 1973).

#### ***6.1.1 Teacher interviews, informed consent and anonymity***

In the first study, written informed consent to conduct the interviews, analyse the transcripts and use quotes in articles were obtained from all the interviewed teachers (appendix I). The teachers were also informed that they could withdraw their contributions to the project at any stage of the process. Tapes, transcripts of the interviews and lists of participants have been stored separately as required by Norwegian Social Science Services. To ensure anonymity of the participating teachers and third party (colleagues, parents and pupils) all names of schools, villages, cities and persons were erased or replaced with fictive names in the transcripts and in paper I. In addition, I did not use quotes from the interviews in paper I where descriptions of situations, local communities and/or people easily could identify the teachers or third party. To further ensure anonymity, the characteristics describing each teacher were kept to a minimum in paper I.

### ***6.1.2 Teacher interviews and the selection of informants***

Although the teachers I interviewed in study 1 are from both rural and urban schools, they share several similar traits. Firstly, they are all female from the Western part of Norway. Three of the teachers have in addition been teaching for approximately the same amount of years and are educated during the same period of time. As many of the teachers in this sample are quite similar, it might have given prominence to some elements of what it is like to be a teacher, on the expense of others. Although I had no intention of identifying teacher identity traits that can be generalised to a broad population of teachers, I wanted to make sure that the interviews pointed to reasonable and relevant elements of the current discourse on what it is like to be a teacher.

As a part of the Union “profession ideals”- campaign, the union members were encouraged to respond to the question of what they considered to be most important in their job. This was also a central question in the teacher interviews in study 1. The union members’ responses were published on the Union web-site and the transcripts of my five teacher interviews could thereby easily be compared to these responses from a broad selection of union members. The teachers’ foci in the interviews and the replies from the union-members were very similar. This was not intended as a systematic means for validation, but more as a way to ensure that the teacher interviews and the analysis of these seem to have explicated reasonable and relevant elements of the current discourse on what it is like to be a teacher.

### ***6.1.3 The conceptual framework, analytical concepts and interpretations***

The conceptual framework outlined in chapter 3 has been important in the development of my research questions, the methodological approach, and analytical concepts, and also for how I write up my results. Such theory-driven research might run the risk of generating results where the empirical material is used as some sort of ‘proof’ that the theoretical framework provides a sound conception of the phenomenon in question (Silverman, 2001). I have consciously tried to avoid reducing the empirical material in such a way throughout the analysis and interpretations.

As the conceptual framework primarily gives access to an interpretive framework, but provides few descriptions of concrete analyses, it has also been a challenge to operationalise the analytical concepts in a sound way so they may become productive and concrete analytical tools. Although this provides an opportunity to conduct analysis that is in alignment with the research question and types of material, it also demands reflection and openness on

how the analyses are conducted; what findings they generate and how these can be interpreted.

To ensure such reflection and transparency, I have settled on two activities: Firstly, I have presented and discussed interpretations and categorisations with colleagues and fellow researchers several times throughout the whole research process. During these presentations and discussions I got valuable feedback on the selection of theories, collection of material, and whether my analyses and interpretations were conceived as meaningful. Feedback and comments from my colleagues were incorporated in my analysis and in the writing of the articles and my thesis. Secondly, I have been explicit in my descriptions of how I understand the analytical concepts and how these concepts were generated. In addition I have included detailed examples of how the analyses are conducted, in all three papers and in chapter 4 of this thesis. The quite detailed presentation and examples of analysis in chapter 4.3 is an attempt to ensure that the theoretical framework gives direction in the analysis and interpretation without predicting the final results. This is also in line with what Howarth and Torfing (2005) encourage discourse analysis to be. They challenge researchers to do interpretations of empirical studies "...that take us beyond the mere illustration of the arguments and concepts" (Howarth and Torfing, 2005, p. 25). The discussions with colleagues and the explicitness of the analytical processes has thus been an attempt to ensure that the theoretical framework give direction to the research process without putting the analysis in a gridlock of expected findings.

#### ***6.1.4 My construction of the conceptual narrative***

"Conceptual narrative" refers to the concepts and explanations researchers use to tell their story about how they perceive the ordering of the world and their place in it (Somers & Gibson, 1994). The way I present the material and the analyses, write up the results and discuss its implications is thus another conceptual narrative, constructed by the layered and complex interrelations between the material, the conceptual framework and my predispositions. For me, to take the full consequence of this, has been to acknowledge that there are possibly several other public narratives about teachers inscribed in the material than the ones I have detected and explicated. There might be other narrative plots, other subject positions and other identity constructions. Another conceptual framework and other analytical foci would also frame my interpretations differently.

Within the conceptual framework of this thesis, research is considered to be a narrative and discursive practice, and it has been important for me to take in to account that my

research, just as other discursive practices, *produces* and simply not just re-presents, knowledge and narratives. Throughout the three studies and the writing of this thesis I have identified, produced and reproduced narratives and meanings. In my combination of theoretical approaches and empirical material, my analyses, interpretations and re-narrations of public narrative(s) about Norwegian elementary school teachers, I am not merely a spectator, but inscribed in the field. As a researcher it is therefore vital to acknowledge that when I do discourse- and narrative analysis, I *both* illuminate/identify *and* construct/produce narratives. This awareness has consequences for how I write up the findings and how I present the transferability and implications of these (Cherryholmes, 1988).

### ***6.1.5 The implications of the contingency of narratives***

The chapter on conceptual framework states that when somebody tells a story, they tell it from a specific place, to a specific audience and in a specific setting. Narratives are contingent to teller, audience, context, history, time and place and no narration is therefore ever neutral (Cherryholmes, 1988; Kyratzis and Green, 1997; Weedon, 1997; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Davies and Harre, 2001; Sfard and Prusak, 2005). This implies for example that the teachers probably told their stories and framed their statements in a specific manner when they spoke to me. It is also possible that they would have narrated these stories in other ways and with other highlights, another day or to another person. It is for example likely that the teachers' accounts would have been informed by an accountability discourse if they were interviewed only a year later, as it at this time rose a public debate about national tests and the publication of results in Norway. In this perspective, judgements about whether narratives are accurate in the sense that they correspond with some pre-defined reality, are not relevant (Cherryholmes, 1988). I have to take the campaign material, policy documents, as well as the teachers narratives for face value as ".....the narrative perspective is interested in the stories as such, accepting them for what they appear to be: words that are taken seriously and that shape one's actions" (Sfard and Prusak, 2005, p. 21). Consequently I can not be the judge of the "accuracy" of the material in my studies. To obtain objective neutrality has never been a goal for the work in this thesis. My aim has been to explore some of the ways these voices and narratives constitute teacher identity.

It also follows that there are not *one* master narrative about teacher identity to be told. There are several and changing public narratives about teacher identity. It is however impossible to capture all of these in one research project, such as this one. My aim has therefore been to analyse the selected narratives and statements *as texts* and to show how

*these* texts give access to some conceptions of elementary school teachers in Norway. The results of my study can therefore not be generalised to Norwegian teacher as a population. This has never been the intention of my work. But the results can say something in general about current tendencies in the conception of teacher identity in some public narrative accounts about teachers.

## **6.2 Discussion of findings**

My initial research question generating the three studies was: *How is teacher identity narratively constructed by significant actors within the Norwegian elementary school system?* As already mentioned in chapter 3.5.1 it was however very difficult to say anything about *how* teacher identity was constructed in the narratives, without any conceptions of *what* these constructions consists of. Much effort was therefore put in quite detailed analysis to identify narrative resources (subject positions and identity constructions) and how these resources were used to position teachers in certain ways in the three sets of material. The investigation of *what* subject positions and identity constructions that were prominent in the narratives also made it possible to get quite detailed descriptions and discussions of *how* these subject positions and identity constructions were put in these prominent positions. In this chapter I will continue to discuss these processes, after a brief presentation of the three identity constructions that appeared as paramount in my analysis of the material.

### **6.2.1 Dominant identity constructions in the three studies**

When the result of the three studies are compared, three identity constructions breaks through as dominant *across the whole material*, namely a) the teacher as pupil centred, caring and including, b) the teacher as cooperation-oriented and c) the teacher as innovative and willing to change and develop. Table 9 gives an overview and description of these three identity constructions in the three studies.

As the table shows, the teacher as cooperation-oriented is not identified as an individual identity construction in the teacher interviews. The features characterising this identity construction is however very much present in the two other teacher identities, “The caring and kind teacher” and “The creative and innovative teacher”, and is thus an important element in the construction of teacher identity in the teachers’ narratives.

**Table 9** Overview and description of dominant identity constructions in the three studies

<p><b>Teacher Interviews</b></p>	<p><b>The caring and kind teacher</b> This teacher feels close to the pupils, cares for them and feels responsible for their well being and development. Good relations and cooperation with the pupils are important to make sure that the children feel safe and experience a good social environment in the school. This is essential, as learning is thought of as impossible if the pupils don't feel safe.</p>	<p>focus on social environment and cooperation</p>	<p><b>The creative and innovative teacher</b> This teacher is oriented towards “new” ideas about school and teaching and has a creative and flexible attitude. S/he is eager and willing to learn more and develop competencies, teaching skills and methods. This teacher is someone with a “glow” Cooperation with colleagues and pupils is also essential to this teacher.</p>
<p><b>Educational policy</b></p>	<p><b>The including and pupil-centred teacher</b> This teacher is occupied with the facilitation of learning possibilities and curriculum for the individual pupil. Inclusion is a key-word and all pupils are to be met in accordance with their needs and their possibilities. The teacher must meet pupils with care and compassion, but also the necessary amount of demands and challenges.</p>		<p><b>The socially oriented and cooperation-orientated teacher</b> This teacher is socially conscious and the creator of good learning possibilities and a safe social environment for all the pupils. To be a visible leader is considered important feature within this identity construction. In addition it is considered vital for the teacher to be able to coordinate learning activities and cooperate with pupils, colleagues, parents and other relevant partners in the local community.</p>
<p><b>Union of Education Norway</b></p>	<p><b>The caring and loyal teacher</b> This teacher cares for the pupils and make sure their needs are met. He/she also has the ability to se the potential in every child, as he/she has a genuine interest in their pupils. Their relation to their pupils is built on trust, equality and respect. This teacher is loyal to the child and will take action if political decisions, curriculum, other people or circumstances puts the child’s best at jeopardy.</p>	<p><b>The cooperating and open minded teacher</b> This teacher understands that cooperation with colleagues is necessary to reach educational goals and develop the school as an organisation. S/he believes in equality, fellowship, and diversity multiculturalism. S/he accepts other people’s opinions, cultures and perspectives. S/he meets colleagues / parents in dialogues and cooperation with respect and without dominance, control and misuse of power.</p>	<p><b>The developing and changing teacher</b> This teacher knows that humans learn in many situations and in many ways and that it is important for teachers to have access to different ways to enhance the pupils learning. This teacher therefore continuously develops, learn and change. S/he has high demands to her-/him-self and reflects continually.</p>

It is however the first identity construction of *the teacher as pupil centred, caring and including* that is especially paramount in all three studies. Table 10 below gives a brief overview and description of how this identity construction is constructed and gains its position in the three sets of material.

**Table 10** Overview and description of the pupil centred, caring and including teacher identity from the three studies

<b>Material</b>	<b>Description of the dominant identity construction</b>	<b>Description of how this identity is constructed and gains its prominent position</b>
<b>Teacher Interviews</b>	<b>The caring and kind teacher</b> This teacher feels close to the pupils, cares for them and feels responsible for their well being and development. Good relations and cooperation with the pupils are important to make sure that the children feel safe and experience a good social environment in the school.	Through the teachers' rejection or identification with subject positions, this identity construction appeared. For teachers to position themselves within this identity is essential for learning results, as learning is thought of as impossible if the pupils don't feel safe.
<b>Educational policy</b>	<b>The including and pupil-centred teacher</b> This teacher is occupied with the facilitation of learning possibilities and curriculum for the individual pupil. Inclusion is a key-word and all pupils are to be met in accordance with their needs and their possibilities. The teacher must meet pupils with care and compassion, but also the necessary amount of demands and challenges.	This teacher identity is constructed in order to prevent the destruction of pupils' immanent urge to learn. The identity construction has a pupil centred approach with focus on adaptive teaching. This will ensure the inclusion of all pupils and thereby also their learning. For teachers to position themselves within this identity is essential to ensure learning for the individual pupil, in addition to a future democratic society.
<b>Union of Education Norway</b>	<b>The caring and loyal teacher</b> This teacher cares for the pupils and makes sure their needs are met. He/she also has the ability to see the potential in every child, as he/she has a genuine interest in their pupils. Their relation to their pupils is built on trust, equality and respect. This teacher is loyal to the child and will take action if political decisions, curriculum, other people or circumstances puts the child's best at jeopardy	This identity construction is launched as a necessary alternative, opposition and correction to neo-liberalist tendencies in current educational policy. For teachers to position themselves within this identity is essential to maintain equal education for all, as this position include opposition towards marked oriented and accountability focused understandings of education.

This identity construction has also been subjected to discussions and has had much of the attention in my three papers, and will consequently be the point of departure for the continuing discussion in this thesis. In the next sections I will focus on and discuss *how* teachers are positioned as pupil centred, caring and including. I will elaborate on how it is possible to understand in what ways dominant discourses, and dichotomies in the field of education and elementary school have relevance for the narrative construction of teacher identity. I will start this discussion by briefly sketch out how the prominent position of the



teacher as pupil-centred, inclusive and caring can be interpreted and understood within some explanatory frameworks.

### ***6.2.2 The dominant position of the teacher as pupil centred, inclusive and caring***

The main findings presented in this thesis could be interpreted as an indication of the Norwegian elementary school as “care-infected”, with an over-emphasis on the pupils’ social environment and relational issues on the expense of professionalism, learning of subject matter and discipline. This interpretation is closely connected to a perception of traits and action as gendered on one hand and the conception of pupil-centeredness and learning as opposites on the other.

A majority of Norwegian elementary school teachers are female. Care and relational issues tend to be perceived as feminine traits, and the positioning of teachers as pupil centred, caring and including in the public teacher narratives, could therefore very well be interpreted as a result of the dominance of a feminine discourse in elementary school. This is a common interpretation (Noddings, 2001; Barber, 2002; Vogt, 2002; Gomez, Allen and Clinton, 2004) and rest among other things on the conception of care as synonymous to mothering (Vogt, 2002). This is closely connected to the fact that also within teaching in elementary school, caring has for so long been regarded as suitable and natural for women. This conception has been challenged by several current empirical studies on teachers and care (e.g. Noddings, 2001; Barber, 2002; Tirri and Husu, 2002; Vogt, 2002; Gomez, Allen and Clinton, 2004).

A focus on care, pupil centeredness and issues concerning social learning environments can be detached from a gendered exploratory framework. This will shift the focus from the involved persons as individuals, over to the relations between them. If teaching is considered to be a relational activity, descriptions of for example the “good” teacher or learner, must apply to relational qualities and not just as descriptions of features, attitudes or behaviours of the persons involved (Noddings, 2001). If teaching, learning, inclusion and care is to be considered relational and contextual activities, these activities must consequently be evaluated according to how these relations facilitate or prevent certain subject positions and identities and their expected behaviour and values. Within a relational approach to teaching, to be a pupil-centred, inclusive and caring teacher will mean to take responsibility for building relations of trust and respect that goes both ways, and consequently provide a socially safe and including learning environment.

Voices in the last few years’ public media debate on compulsory education in Norway has argued that the emphasis on relations and the construction of a socially safe learning



environment leads to a decrease in pupils' learning. This "diagnosis" easily serves as an argument for an increased emphasis on, for example subject matter, order and discipline. At the core of this conception lies an understanding that equalises pupil centeredness, inclusion and care with teachers as "good persons" without will or ability to sanction pupils' behaviour or emphasis learning of subject matter. Noddings (2001) puts it this way:

If one supposes that caring is merely a nice attitude, an attitude that ignores poor behaviour and low achievement in favour of helping students to feel good, of course, caring will be seen as antithetical to professional conduct (Noddings, 2001, p. 101)

In my material, to be a pupil-centred, including and caring teacher is not solely about how to be a good person. It is also to ensure that pupils learn what they need to learn. As underscored in paper I, the pupil centeredness and focus on social learning environment in the teachers' narratives does not automatically indicate that there is a lack of concern and focus on learning, subject matter, discipline and learning results. Caring teachers and a pupil centred approach is not positioned as the opposite of learning in the teacher narratives, but are rather closely linked. The focus on the individual pupil's abilities and possibilities within the social and academic learning environment is thus considered to be a necessary condition for, and not a contradiction to, learning. This important point is also underscored in a similar way e.g. by Vogt (2002) in her study on thirty two Swiss and English primary school teachers' conceptions of "The caring teacher".

What the prominent position of the pupil centred, inclusive and caring identity construction however might indicate, is a tendency to be more preoccupied with learning *environment*, the *conditions* for learning and learning *processes*, than the *definition* and *measuring* of concrete learning *results*. Such emphasis does not equal a as a lack of interest, concern or knowledge about learning per se. But the idea that all pupils should learn the same things at the same time at the same speed, might however pose a dilemma for teachers that position themselves within this identity construction. To emphasise the need to have some space for individuality in school is not the same as to say that pupil-centred teachers ignore learning/subject matter knowledge, *or* that subject matter-centred teachers do not care for their pupils.

### 6.2.3 *The dominant discourse of individualisation in Scandinavian education*

As care and child-centeredness takes various forms it must also be interpreted within the cultural context it is studied (Barrett, 2005; Barber, 2002; Vogt, 2002). In Scandinavian educational policy, inclusion, individualisation of teaching and adaptive learning has been prominent within compulsory primary education for a long time (Arnesen and Lundahl, 2006; Carlgren, Klette, Myrdal, Schnack and Simola, 2006; Telhaug, Mediås and Aasen 2006; Stephens, Tønnessen and Kyriacou, 2004). The way the teacher as pupil centred penetrates the material in my thesis can therefore, within the frames of implementation theories, be interpreted as a sign of a successful implementation of educational policy. The encouragement in the policy texts and curriculum to facilitate, accommodate and include all pupils appears to be picked up by elementary school teachers and their union leaders and translated in to practical action and teacher ethics. Hence, policy works!

Such an interpretation of the material in the three studies, would rest on the conception that changes occur in a causal and linear manner and that one of the sources (policy texts) are in the position to influence the other sources (teacher narratives and teacher union). However, as underscored in chapter 2.1, the three sources of material are treated as three different, but *equal* voices telling stories about teachers. This status of the sources of material and the way the analyses are conducted does not allow any interpretations of causal relationships *between* the three sources. This thesis' conception of discourses and discursive practices as described in chapter 3, however allows a somewhat different interpretation of how the pupil centred, inclusive and caring identity construction has gained its prominence across the material.

The findings from the three studies point to an *overlap* in the way educational policy, teachers own accounts and the teacher union narrate and position teachers. Within this thesis' narrative and discursive framework this overlap can be interpreted as an indication that the three sources of material are inscribed in and informed by the same powerful educational discourses. In a review of Scandinavian teaching practices, Carlgren et al (2006) describes how an educational discourse of individualisation in various forms has been, and still is, dominant in Scandinavia:

...individualisation has been a theme for a long time in all the Nordic countries.....the theme of individualisation draws upon naturalistic romanticism, educational progressivism and child-centred psychology. Neo-liberal educational policy—with the individual self-reliant learner at the centre—together with social constructivist learning theories, seem, however, to be the main forces for individualised teaching and learning today (Carlgren et al, 2006, p. 319)

This discourse of individualism, regardless of form and shape “...makes it possible to create an individual-centred professional ethos for teaching” (Simola, Heikkinen and Silvonen, 1998, p. 81). This puts an obligation for all teachers to “...treat everybody as an individual and, by offering individual study programs and personal curricula, to respond to learning interest and qualities of ever pupil” (Simola, Heikkinen and Silvonen, 1998, p. 81). Within the discourse of individualisation, the Scandinavian teacher is positioned as pupil-cantered, inclusive and attentive to the possibilities and needs of each individual child.

When dominant discourses regulate what identity resources and teacher narratives that are most accessible, and more importantly; normatively preferred, they gain what Holstein and Gubrium (2000) describes as *narrative control*. Such narrative control goes beyond the most obvious descriptions, regulations and expectations of what of knowledge, functions and practices Scandinavian elementary school teachers should engage in, as it underwrites some preferred teacher identities and exclude others. The prominence of the identity construction of the teacher as pupil centred, inclusive and caring in the narratives in my studies might be an indication of how the discourse on individualisation has gained such narrative control in the Scandinavian context of compulsory education.

#### ***6.2.4 Teacher identity constructed as dichotomy, adjustment or alternative***

Although there are discourses that operate in a dominant manner within the field of education and thus underwrite teacher identities, identity constructions also gain prominence because it represent what is perceived as a *necessary adjustment or alternative* to certain teacher identities, educational values and conceptions of learning and childhood. The teachers I interviewed do for example not necessary underscore that it is important to be kind and caring, just because they are female and care is considered to be a feminine trait inn our culture. The caring and kind teacher seems to be a product of the need to pose an alternative to an image of a strict and demanding teacher with more focus on discipline, rules and order than the individual pupils’ possibilities for learning. My studies show in various ways how the pupil centred, inclusive and caring teacher is presented as a necessary alternative to teachers that are strict and without humour, teachers that do no take the pupils individual learning needs and learning possibilities seriously, and to teachers that are overly concerned with the judgement of pupils’ products.

Educational discourses are penetrated with binaries and dichotomies that define and frame what we perceive as “good” and “bad” teaching, such as for example pupil-centred

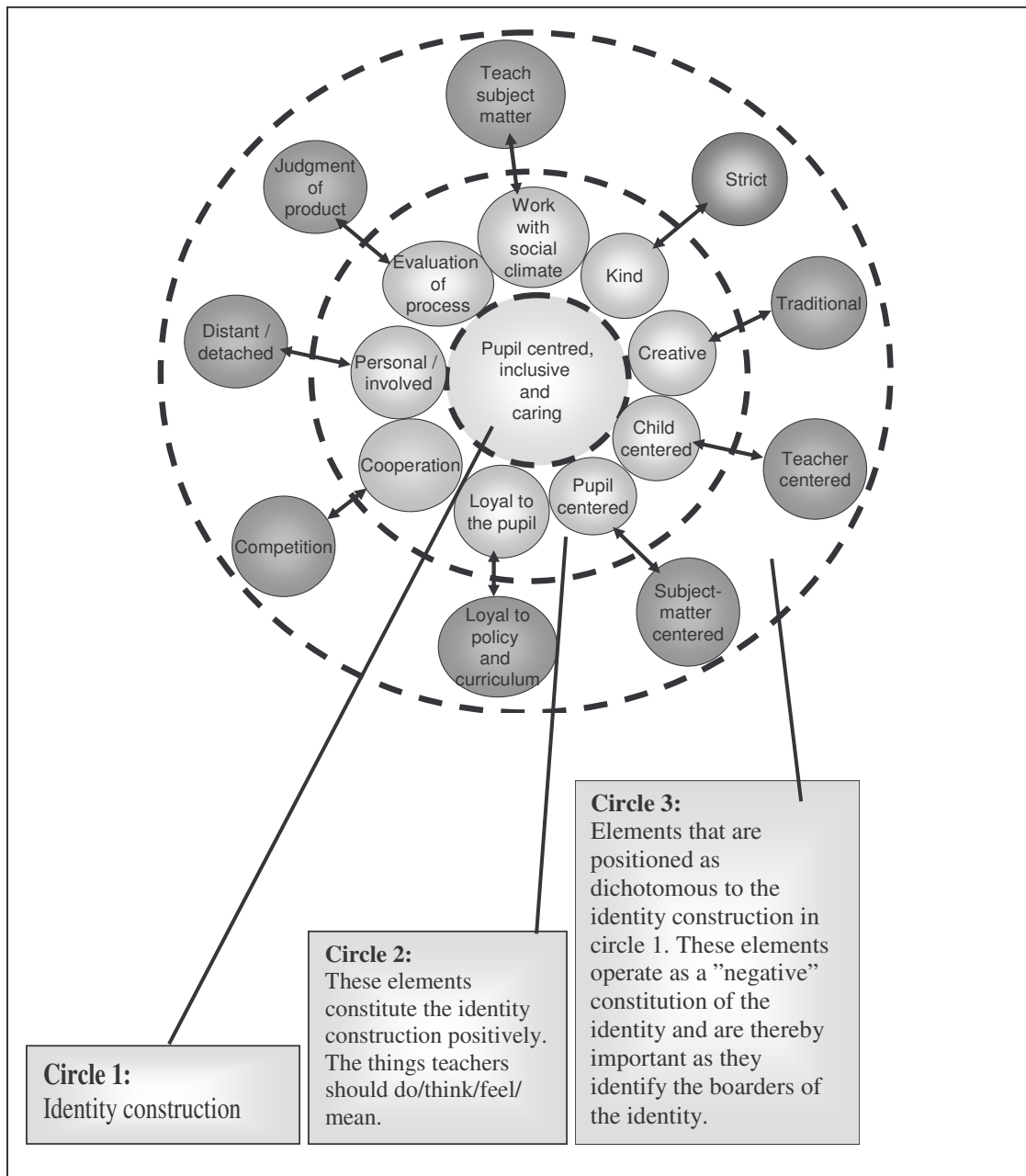
teaching versus subject matter-centred teaching, education as an individual right versus education as a public good and loyalty to policy and curriculum versus loyalty to the pupil. These binaries will define positions, identities and practices due to their differences and similarities from other positions, identities and practices. This way phenomena, objects, actions and positions gain their meaning through conceptions of what they are *different from*, as well as what categories they belong, or are *similar to*. All the three studies in this thesis are examples of how binaries and dichotomies, similarities and differences constitute teacher identity.

### **6.2.5 *The complex constitution of teacher identity in public teacher narratives***

If the complex everyday life in schools could be reduced to a few linear and bi-polar, dichotomous dimensions, such as for example “care versus learning”, it would be unproblematic to describe how teacher identity is constituted. My studies however show that there are no simple, one-dimensional and causal explanations or predictions to why teachers are positioned within some identities as others are rejected. All the dichotomies, discourses and identity resources teachers have access to can be combined in various ways. The way these different identity resources define differences and similarities allow a nuanced understanding of what it is like to be a teacher in elementary school. Together the three studies in this thesis underscore how elementary school and elementary school teachers are inscribed in a complex and multidimensional *web* of discursively produced resources. The caring, inclusive and pupil centred teacher, that is loyal to the pupils, concerned for their well being, and see the value of creating a safe and stimulating social environment that include all pupils, is consequently *constructed in the overlap between several* discourses, discursive practices, and dichotomous relationships.

Figure 2 on the following page, is an attempt to visualise how some of the dichotomies from the analysed material interact in the constitution of the teacher as caring, inclusive and pupil centred. This figure is not meant to be an exhaustive description of why and how teachers are positioned within this identity construction. It is meant as an illustration of how teacher identity can be perceived as constituted in a web of multidimensional dichotomies, and how it is the *sum* of these that contribute to the constitution and fixation of a certain teacher identity.

*Figure 2 Some of the dichotomies from the analysed material that constitutes the teacher as caring, pupil centred and inclusive*



The inner circle symbolises the identity construction positioning the elementary school teacher as pupil-centred, inclusive and caring. The elements in the second circle are some of the subject positions that I identified in the material that cluster and thus constitute this identity construction. The outer circle is also a collection of subject positions that are available to teachers in elementary school. The sum of the subject positions in this third circle would however construct a teacher identity that is incompatible with for example vital elements in the dominant discourse of individualisation understood as accommodation of

learning opportunities for individual pupils. Although these subject positions represent behaviour or values that are in conflict with dominant educational discourses, they are important in the constitution of teacher identity. These subject positions have what might be called a “negative” constitutive force on the teacher identity in the inner circle and are consequently of great importance to the constitution of the Norwegian elementary school teacher as pupil-centred, inclusive and caring.

### **6.3 Some implications**

Although this project does not aim to identify teacher identity traits that can be generalised to a broad population of teachers, it is possible to discuss possible implications and questions following the findings and the discussions in the three articles and this thesis. In this last part of my thesis I will pose some questions with relevance for teacher education, policy makers and indicate possible questions for future research on narrative teacher identity.

#### ***6.3.1 Implications for teacher education***

It is hard to point to concrete implications this study will have for, for example, instruction, content and the structure of Norwegian teacher education. But the study represents an understanding of identity and identity construction that might provide a renewed way to approach teacher identity and thereby also the way teachers are taught. Poststructuralist, discursive and narrative accounts of identity emphasize the different resources each person have access to and their capacity to select the resources needed in each situation (Keddie, 2005). Teacher educators should be aware of and conscious about what identity resources they provide through the theoretical approaches they introduce student to, and the practices students must take part in during their studies.

Such an approach to the understanding of what teacher education is raises a series of questions, both for teacher educators and for further research within the field: What repertoire of identity resources is teacher education introducing its students to? What implicit and explicit narratives about teachers and teaching are told in the teacher education programmes? What counter-narratives about teachers, teaching and education live within and around Norwegian teacher education? In what ways are these identity resources and identity constructing narratives supporting or opposing the repertoire of identity resources and narratives that live in elementary schools? In what ways are identity resources and identity

constructing narratives in teacher education supporting or opposing the public narratives about teaching the students are exposed to in society?

These questions can illuminate discourses and narratives about teachers, which Norwegian teacher education currently and historically are inscribed in. Evaluations conducted in 2006 by a governmental appointed NOKUT<sup>2</sup>-committee puts Norwegian teacher education under heavy criticism and strongly encourage teacher education institutions in Norway to change the way they do things (NOKUT 2006). A disclosure of discourses and narratives about teacher identity has the potential to open for several understandings of what teacher education can be. Kalmbach Phillips describes the potential for change that then might unfold: "...by understanding how discourses do their work, we can consider spaces of resistance and change for teacher education" (Kalmbach Phillips, 2002, p.10). Consequently, teacher education must make some considerations as to how prospective teachers are introduced to teaching. Not just when it comes to the content of the teacher education, but also in the explicit and subtle ways narratives about "the good and the bad teachers" are told.

### ***6.3.2 Implications for policy makers***

My studies show how strong the position of the teacher as pupil centred, caring and inclusive is in the Norwegian elementary school system. This strong position might have implications for how educational policy is implemented. Policy makers must acknowledge that policy implementations put things in motion, but not always in the direction they initially intended. Some attempts to implement policy causes resistance and this resistance might strengthen already vital elements in the educational discourse and consequently strengthen certain teacher identities. The way the Union of Education Norway responds to the attempts from the Norwegian Royal Department of Education to introduce accountability-thinking through national tests, is an example of how policy produce energy and puts things in motion, but in the opposite direction than the policy makers obviously intended.

In the Union campaign, policy makers and implementers are put in an outsider-position to the everyday life in schools. The teachers are positioned as insiders to elementary school and are consequently the ones that know what pupils need and how they should be taught. If the pupils best is such a strong element in an elementary school discourse, any attempt to introduce something that is perceived by teachers as contradictory to this, will generate opposition and resistance. If there is a political urge to change Norwegian education,

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<sup>2</sup> NOKUT is the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education



policy makers must work in various ways. Policy changes and reforms will only be acknowledged by insiders if these changes have some sort of resonance with an insider perspective. By this point I do not wish to indicate that insiders automatically are opposed to everything outsiders suggests. My point is to underscore that it is impossible to change Norwegian elementary school simply by giving instructions or implement new curricula or laws if these changes run across strong and dominant constructions of teacher identity. If changes or reforms are rejected by teachers this might indicate that there is a weak link between the desired changes and "...themes already present on the teacher identity landscape" (Robinson and McMillan, 2006, p. 333). It follows that if such a situation occurs, policy makers must acknowledge the outsider-position they are assigned and take dominant educational discourses and teacher identities seriously.

### ***6.3.3 Implications for future research on narrative teacher identity***

My studies show that the construction of teacher identity draws on several resources. The variety and diversity in subject positions and identity constructions that is visible in the current material indicate that teacher identity has many facets and can be negotiated and combined in several ways. This shows the flexibility and the elasticity in identity constructing narratives and how these narratives constantly are shaped, reshaped and adapted to the situation. It would therefore be interesting if more educational researchers concerned with narrative teacher identity would broaden the scope within this field of research beyond the investigating of individual teacher narratives.

There is an endless series of research questions that can be posed in the field of teacher identity. Some of the current changes in Norwegian compulsory education open for exiting research opportunities. Digitalisation of the classroom and the increasing multicultural population in Norway will for example give access to new, exiting, troubling and challenging identity resources for both teachers and pupils to draw on. These resources should be investigated and explored. Firstly to better acknowledge and understand Norwegian elementary school teachers and future generations of learners, but also to better understand what learning activities and knowledge such resources generate.

On a macro level it would for example be interesting to investigate in what ways historical, national and global meta-narratives of the educational system is providing teachers with resources for construction of identity. If such meta-narratives are relevant for elementary school teachers in Norway as a source for identity resources, what consequences will this have for future teacher identity? Current meta-narratives of the educational system is



penetrated with a belief in education to be the solution of many severe national and global problems and challenges, such as fighting poverty, strengthen democracy, promote gender equity, and enhance the gross national product (Telhaug et al, 2006; Carlgren et al,2006; Arnesen and Lundgren, 2006). How will these expectations produce narratives about teachers and teaching, and what possible identity resources are inscribed in these narratives? To broaden the perspective even more it could be interesting to investigate in what ways other meta-narratives of for example childhood, parenthood and economy are inscribed in public narratives about teachers and teaching.

#### **6.4 Closing comment**

This thesis has not been an attempt to establish truths about Norwegian elementary school teachers. The intention has been to investigate the *production* of some of the truth claims in the field of current Norwegian elementary school. As such truth claims are inscribed in public narratives about Norwegian elementary school teachers; they also position teachers within certain teacher identities. I believe this thesis shows that to get a conception of *why* teachers are positioned within, and take up, certain identities, it is necessary to understand *how* they come to be positioned in such a way.

I find that the theoretical and analytical frameworks in my thesis create possibilities for new, fruitful and reasonable ways to understand the construction of teacher identity. This framework emphasis broader cultural and historical discourses as it simultaneously shed light on the nuances and micro-processes of the narrative construction of teacher identity. This double focus increases the complexity of how it is possible to understand teacher identity, but thereby also move the conceptions of elementary school teachers beyond the most obvious cultural stereotypes.

As discourses generate and create language and use of language, analysis of narratives and statements gives access to the things that are considered valid, true, right and normal within discourses. Insight into the forces that move within educational discourses makes it possible to perceive teaching as a discursive practice, and to illuminate the things regulating this practice. To find ways to “open” and analyse discourses might explicate complex and “invisible” conditions and presuppositions for what we think and do. Such disclosure of conditions and presuppositions allow researchers, policy makers, educators and elementary school teachers to reflect, discuss, change or strengthen these conditions and presuppositions.

This can again open for alternative ways to understand and discuss what teachers, teaching and education are, should, and could be.

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# Paper I

# **Narrative construction of teacher identity: positioning and negotiation**

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This article shows how five Norwegian female elementary school teachers use narrative resources to construct and negotiate several possible teacher identities. The aim of the article is to illuminate how teacher identities can be narratively constructed and understood, and not to define what identity Norwegian teachers as a group or individuals possess. The five teachers were interviewed about their everyday life in Norwegian public elementary schools and their narratives were analysed within a theoretical framework based on post-structuralist and discourse theory combined with theories of narrative identity. In the teacher narratives more than 30 subject positions were identified, in addition to four identity constructions: ‘the caring and kind teacher’; ‘the creative and innovative teacher’; ‘the professional teacher’; ‘the typical teacher’. Through discussions of excerpts from the teacher narratives the article argues that the negotiation between multiple identities is a necessary part of the construction of teacher identity. This illumination of teacher identity as multifaceted and constructed has several implications, as it excludes the belief that teacher education, school leaders, teacher unions or curriculum can provide teachers with ready-made and universal identities which they should fit in to. Instead, the perception of identity reflected in this article allows teachers to construct identities that might be experienced as unique, relevant and meaningful.

*Keywords: Teacher identity; Narrative identity; Subject position; Discourse analysis*

## **Introduction**

This article is based on discourse analysis of interviews with five Norwegian female teachers who talk about their jobs and everyday lives as teachers in Norwegian public elementary schools. The point of departure for the analysis of the interviews is the following research questions: what accessible narrative resources can be identified in the teacher narratives about what it is like to be a teacher and how are these resources used in the narrative construction of teacher identity? The article will argue that these teachers construct and negotiate several possible teacher identities in their narrative

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presentation of their job. I will show how these women actively use available subject positions as narrative resources to position themselves as teachers. The aim and purpose of the article is to show how teacher identity can be narratively constructed and understood, and not to create typologies of teachers or define what identity Norwegian teachers as a group or individuals possess.

The teacher interviews were analysed within a theoretical framework based on post-structuralist and discourse theory combined with theories of narrative identity (Mishler, 1986; Ricouer, 1992; Calhoun, 1994; du Gay, 1996; Weedon, 1997; Torfing, 1999; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Howarth, 2000; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Wetherell *et al.*, 2001; Foucault, 2002). This combination of theories frames the research questions in a fruitful way, as it provides a theoretical framework that will provide a means to study, analyse and understand the construction of job identity as a narrative and discursive process within institutions. The theoretical framework also provides an analytical focus, as it presupposes an understanding of the subject and subjectivity as produced in discourse (Weedon, 1997; Wetherell *et al.*, 2001). An understanding of the subject as discursively produced will shift the analytical focus from the individual teachers' identities to the teachers' narrative expressions about what it is like to be a teacher and the narrative resources for identity construction these teachers have access to. The focus will, in other words, be on the structures these teachers are embedded in, and not on the teachers themselves. The research question, the theoretical approach and the analytical focus framing this article are therefore focused on illuminating the narrative resources, processes and identity constructions and not on the single individual teacher.

### *The larger project*

The material analysed and the results presented in this article are part of a larger project that aims to describe how discourses within the Norwegian elementary school system produce and prevent certain constructions of teacher identity. The aim of the larger project is to illuminate what mechanisms the different actors within this institutionalized school system use in the construction of such identities. To obtain access to different actors' constructions, the project drew on different sources of materials, such as public school policy documents, written material from the Norwegian national teacher union (Utdanningsforbundet) and interviews with female elementary school teachers. The present article is based on interviews with five female elementary school teachers and the aim of the analysis in the study presented is to illuminate how different teacher identities are constructed within the teachers' narratives about their job and not to estimate whether these identity constructions are more or less common to Norwegian teachers. Nor is it an aim of the present study to elaborate on more general discourses in society and/or the school as an institution that might construct and reconstruct teacher identity. This might be considered a limitation of the present study, which, however, will be compensated for by a broader discussion about such discourses in the larger project as a whole.

## Theoretical approach and central concepts

When we meet other people we often tell them about our experiences, what interests us, what we like to do, what we have to do and who we like to be around. Narratives like this are what Somers and Gibson (1994) call ontological narratives. Ontological narratives are the stories we tell in an effort to make sense of how we experience ourselves and how we would like to be understood in order to bring structure to our personal lives. We use these narratives both to construct and to negotiate individual identity (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). In other words, when we tell and interpret ontological narratives we also construct one or several narrative identities. Job identity is also a narrative and a discursive construction. All institutions produce possibilities for such narrative constructions of job identities for their members through the way they are organized and what is valued. This way the institutions give their members access to different kinds of narrative resources for identity construction (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Historically and socially constructed identity categories or subject positions (Weedon, 1997) are one of these available narrative resources. The subject positions will be more or less explicit within the discourse(s) we operate. The different subject positions give access to, for example, images, expectations, practices, opinions and values, and are therefore central in the construction of different understandings of the world and our place in it. When we use the accessible subject positions as resources in our ontological narratives we also place ourselves in certain positions in the discourse. The construction of ontological narratives can therefore be understood as a narrative positioning in the discourse by an identification with or rejection of accessible subject positions.

Both the subject positions themselves and the way they are used as means for discursive positioning by identification or rejection function as narrative resources when we tell, write or read identity-constructing narratives. If several positions make clusters within a discourse, an identity construction will emerge. Although the narrative resources might be shared by the institutional members, the way these members understand and use these narrative resources to construct possible identities might vary within circumstances, from person to person and from situation to situation (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Davies & Harré, 2001). To understand identity construction as a process of narrative positioning is useful, because it opens up an understanding of teachers as active agents in their own lives and the construction of teacher identity as a dynamic and changing activity (Davies & Harré, 2001). Elementary school teachers, with the same access to the same narrative resources, might, therefore, construct several and different narrative job identities.

The understanding of job identity as a construction, described above, offers an alternative to a more traditional essentialist understanding of job identity. Theoretical approaches such as Marxism, a neo-Weberian approach, symbolic interactionism and psychoanalysis have had a major influence on the way job identity has been perceived in research and everyday language in the 20th century (Zaretsky, 1994; du Gay, 1996). These approaches to job identity can be described as 'essentialist' (Kvale, 1992; Calhoun, 1994), because they presuppose a true and stable identity core.

Discourse theory and post-structuralist approaches do not, on the other hand, consider job identity as something stable and unchangeable. Our relations to the world and other people, our choices, practices and language constantly create, construct and reconstruct our identity (Weedon, 1997, p. 33).

### **Methodological considerations**

The above outlined understanding of job identity as a narrative construction produced by the accessible narrative resources available in each setting demands methods of data collection that give the persons involved an opportunity to construct narratives in different forms. Qualitative interviews, or a research conversation, give these opportunities.

#### *Data collection*

In Norway the majority of teachers in elementary schools are female and have been educated in public teacher training colleges. The teachers within this study were therefore selected by two main criteria: gender (female) and teacher training in a public teacher training college in Norway. To obtain access to a variety of teacher narratives and narrative identity constructions I wanted to talk with teachers of different ages from both typical rural and city schools and with a minimum of three years' working experience as elementary school teachers. During the interviews another common trait emerged, as it became clear that all the teachers had the experience of living relatively close to the schools they worked in.

To get in touch with teachers that met these criteria I contacted several elementary school headmasters with a request to provide information on the project to teachers in their schools and to invite them to participate. I also contacted/invited teachers recommended by some of my colleagues who had previously worked in elementary school. These first contacts were followed by a letter with written information about the project, the selection criteria, how interested participants could get in contact with me and what was expected of the participants. The teachers who volunteered to be interviewed were contacted by me by phone or e-mail and were given extended information about the project.

Arrangements about the date and place for the interviews were made. One of the teachers was interviewed in her home, while I met the other four in the schools where they worked. I was given permission to tape the interviews and all the teachers signed an agreement that allowed me to use the transcribed material in my project. The interviews lasted approximately one and a half to two hours. During the interviews the teachers were encouraged to talk about their everyday life as teachers, their relationships with colleagues, pupils and parents and what they considered to be good, difficult and important in their job. The teachers contributed willingly with stories and their perspective on the themes in question, and the interviews developed more into conversations in which the teachers talked most of the time.

*Discourse analysis*

Analysing and interpreting what the teachers told me is an attempt to understand how they construct their understanding of themselves as teachers. Discourse theory gives both theoretical and methodological resources to conduct analyses where the point is to illuminate the way people construct meanings and identities within social structures (Howarth, 2000).

The interviews were first transcribed in detail and saved as an original version. To make the teacher narratives more visible and readable, the transcribed interviews were then rewritten as condensed and coherent stories. To make sure there had been no major changes in the content of the refined teacher narratives, they were compared with the original transcript and the tapes from the interviews. The teacher narratives were then organized thematically before they were analysed in a three-phased process:

1. identification of subject positions;
2. identification of the use of subject positions as narrative resources;
3. identification of multiple teacher identities constructed in the narratives.

The main analytical concepts are closely connected to the theoretical framework described earlier in this article and the analysis therefore focused on identifying subject positions, the narrative positioning and narrative identity constructions. To get to know the material properly, the interviews were analysed individually in the earliest readings, but in the majority of analytical readings the material was largely analysed as a whole.

The first round of analysis focused on the content of the narratives and statements identifying the different subject positions the teachers used in their presentation of their job.

- The interviews were read several times and the emerging subject positions were noted and described until an exhaustive list of subject positions had been made.
- All the interviews were read once more and coded according to the list of subject positions.
- A summary/overview of the most frequent subject positions was made, both for each interview and for the material as a whole.
- Another researcher read through the coded interviews and made comments and suggestions for changes. The suggestions were discussed and a few changes were made before a new summary was written.

The next phase in the analytical process focused on how the teachers used the identified subject positions as resources in their narrative construction of themselves.

- Statements and narratives where the teachers made references to subject positions were excerpted.
- The excerpts were categorized according to whether the teachers distanced themselves (negative positioning) or identified themselves (positive positioning) with the subject positions in question.
- A summary of tendencies and patterns in the two categories was written.



The third analytical focus was concerned with an identification of possible teacher identities constructed in this process of positioning. First the transcribed interviews were read through as a whole to look for identity constructions. Then the summaries from the second phase were analysed with the same purpose. Four major constructions of teacher identities were identified through these two readings and analyses.

### **Frequently used subject positions**

In the five interviews together the teachers make references to a multitude of subject positions to highlight different aspects of their understanding of themselves and their job. Each of these subject positions allows the teacher to experience and understand the world in a certain way. Each position opens up a specific view, as it at the same time prevents other ways of experiencing and understanding the world (Davies & Harré, 2001).

Of all the subject positions, three seem to be most prominent in the five interviews. The first and most referred to subject position is the one that positions the teacher as someone who is very much concerned with the child/pupil's well-being and development. The following excerpt from one of Mary's narratives highlights this subject position when she says 'It's not always easy, but you'll have to try to see each individual pupil and try to sort of bring out the positive in each kid'. In addition, the teachers also very often positioned themselves as persons who are very much oriented towards cooperation with pupils, colleagues and parents, like Grethe did when she said 'If you don't play on the same team as the parents, you might as well pack up. Yes, because if you don't manage that properly, you'll get the parents against you, and then you've lost'. These two subject positions were used most frequently throughout the five interviews and seem, therefore, to be those most significant for the teachers. The teacher as a person who is oriented and concerned with the social climate in class is the third frequently used subject position.

In the following other subject positions that often appear in the teachers' narratives are described. The phrases in parentheses are examples of quotes from the teachers' narratives that describe these subject positions.

- The teacher as someone with special competencies/knowledge. Teachers know and do things others (like parents) know and understand nothing or little about ('Others can't judge the job we're doing, because there are so many things they don't see and don't know anything about').
- The teacher as someone who separates private and public time and her school/work life from her personal life ('I don't come up with a lot of funny activities for them in the afternoons ...'; 'It's good to be free from work when you're not working'; 'I'm a private person too ...').
- The teacher as someone who is a nice and kind person who does good and nice things to her pupils and colleagues ('I guess I'm a nice kind of person'; 'I don't like being stricter than I have to ...'; 'School is supposed to be a safe and good place ...').

- The teacher as someone with dedication to her job. Teaching is something more than ‘just’ a job and is considered fulfilling and rewarding in itself (‘I like being a teacher. That’s it!’; ‘I do believe you must have a glow’; ‘I just love teaching these kids’).
- The teacher as someone who is reform and development oriented. To be positive to new things and changes and to develop and/or change their teaching and themselves is considered valuable and important (‘You never finish learning, you know’; ‘We must keep up with developments ...’; ‘That’s the art of teaching, the ability to work with new things and vary ...’).
- The job as a teacher is demanding, because it is exhausting, hard and sometimes lonely. (‘... it was fun, but it was also very lonely ...’; ‘You need a lot of extra energy in this job ...’; ‘It is tough to be a teacher. It’s not always easy’; ‘... when the summer holiday starts I’m so tired that I don’t remember anything ...’).
- The teacher as learning centred, with a focus on the pupils’ learning and development (‘I demand that they should learn at least one thing during the day, no matter what it is ...’; ‘... when you experience the pupils’ progress ... that makes me happy!’; ‘... If there is no good social climate in class, they don’t learn a thing!’).

The above mentioned subject positions are the most frequently referred to in the material as a whole. Other subject positions that are relevant in the narratives are: the teacher as a kind person, as someone who enjoys active children and some action at work, as someone with a lot of classroom experience, as an independent, responsible and competent person, as curriculum oriented, as parent oriented and as someone who considers the job as teacher fun, as rule/order/law oriented and as someone who considers herself an active resource in society.

In the following I will describe how the teachers in their narratives, with the help of these available subject positions, describe and present and thereby position themselves and other teachers. The subject positions have a function as narrative resources for the teachers’ stories and statements about themselves, their teaching and the people they meet in their job.

### **How subject positions are used as narrative resources for narrative positioning by the teachers**

The analyses aimed at illuminating how subject positions were used as a resource by the teachers in the narratives to construct teacher identity. This analytical aim is framed by a theoretical understanding of teacher identity as narratively constructed with the help of the narrative resources (subject positions) available in certain settings. When the teachers describe and make reference to these accessible subject positions in their ontological narratives they also place themselves in certain positions. This positioning is made visible in the narratives through the way the teachers evaluate and talk about the relevance of the subject positions in question. They clearly consider some of the subject positions relevant, valuable and normal, while others are considered irrelevant and/or not in keeping with significant aspects of being a teacher

of a certain kind. This narrative positioning is mainly done in two ways, or with the help of two mechanisms:

- (a) distancing, opposition and/or rejection of the available subject positions (negative positioning);
- (b) identification with and recognition of the available subject positions (positive positioning).

Throughout the whole material it is possible to see how the teachers use these two mechanisms in their narratives. In the following I will show some examples of how the teachers use these two ways of narrative positioning as part of the identity-constructing process.

### *Positioning by opposition and distancing*

In the following excerpt from an interview Mary tries to explain what kind of teacher she is by first describing a subject position (proper and structured) and then distancing herself from this subject position, before she describes another subject position (flexible and spontaneous) which she wants to identify herself positively with.

- Gunn: But when you say a typical female teacher ... what is a typical female teacher?  
 Mary: I don't know [laughter] ... no, it's a bit stupid in a way to say it like that, but ... [laughter].  
 Gunn: Well maybe there is a reason for you to say it?  
 Mary: Yes, there is. Well I haven't worked with many of those typical ... . I mean where I used to work before. But I think it is a bit ... those I've sort of met on courses here in this school. The teachers here have a rather high average age and it seems like they're very proper and very structured and so on ... .  
 [Joint laughter]  
 Gunn: And you do not see yourself in that way?  
 Mary: Not exactly. No, I'm more like someone who sort of finds her way while walking ... like that ... [laughter].

As the excerpt above shows, some of the subject positions are used by the teacher to describe what she clearly wants to be different from by an active and explicit distancing from certain kinds of behaviour, ideas, values and activities. Alice also positions herself as opposed to something several times during the interview, in her attempt to tell me who she is as a teacher. She is quite clear about what activities and ideas of what teachers are supposed to do she is opposed to: 'In addition to our job as teachers we are supposed to be like some sort of, not entertainment artist, but we are supposed to do things for the pupils in our spare time, and that annoys me' (Alice). In this part of the interview she clearly and explicitly defines things teachers do together with pupils in their spare time as something that is an addition to being a teacher and, therefore, not something she considers a part of her job. Alice positions herself in opposition to both a subject position that emphasizes teachers as an active resource in a (local) community and to a subject position where teaching is more of a dedication than a job. When she distances herself from these subject positions she clearly positions herself and her job as a teacher within the frames of the school hours.

*Positioning by positive identification and recognition*

Most of the identified subject positions are, however, used as explicit and positive references to how these women would like to be perceived as teachers. Alice clearly identifies herself with both child-centred, learning-centred and responsibility-centred subject positions when she says; 'I feel a huge responsibility that they (the pupils) learn something during the day'. In most of the narratives concerning their responsibilities as teachers the interviewees have this clear recognition of and identification with a child/pupil-centred subject position. Mary and Heather also have an explicit and positive identification with the child-centred subject position, but they combine it with other subject positions than Alice. Mary positions herself as a child-centred, responsibility-oriented teacher with special knowledge as a teacher that makes it difficult for her to 'stop' being a teacher after school hours. She puts it this way:

You might say that you are a grown up also outside school. [Laughs] And sometimes you need to take a bit of advantage of the position you hold. And especially when other adults have negative attitudes towards a child. That attitude might even be slightly wrong because of prejudices and those things. (Mary)

In the interview Mary positions herself as someone with special knowledge about children and how to treat them because she is a trained teacher. She also knows her pupils and this give her more specific knowledge about the kids. This knowledge makes her responsible for the pupils also after school hours, because she is able to understand and help the kids if other adults in the local community misunderstand them and give them a hard time. The combination of subject positions in Mary's statement positions her as a teacher both within and outside the school frames.

Heather also values after-school involvement by teachers, along with a general enthusiasm for the job as a teacher. Through a description of colleagues she appreciates and admires, Heather identifies herself with several subject positions, such as dedication, child centredness and a positive attitude towards developing as a teacher, along with an emphasis on being an active resource in a (local) community. She says it this way;

And I see the ones I define as good teachers, they have this 'glow' and love what they do. And they are interested in educating themselves. To take part in things in their spare time. I think that's really important. That is a good teacher. Yes, I really think so!

Heather describes a position that emphasizes the teacher as important both within and after school hours. In addition, she positions the teachers she described as dedicated and interested in both the pupils and the job itself. This excerpt is a good example of how narrative positioning is used as a way to construct and negotiate identity. Through the description of others and what she considers a 'good teacher' and her recognition of and identification with this position, Heather sketches out who and how she would like to be (perceived) as a teacher. She does not say anything explicit about herself as a teacher, but she recognizes and identifies herself with values, expectations and practices within a certain position and thereby implicitly positions herself.

### **Narrative positioning and the construction of multiple teacher identities**

As the teachers position themselves in different ways with the help of the subject positions in their narratives and statements, they simultaneously construct different possible teacher identities. In the analysis of the five interviews four major constructions of teacher identity emerged: ‘the caring and kind teacher’; ‘the creative and innovative teacher’; ‘the professional teacher’; ‘the typical teacher’. These identity constructions are not to be understood as ready-made and sharply defined identities, but rather as more flexible ‘clusters’, which construct and are constructed by the relevant subject positions the teachers relate to in the interviews.

#### *The caring and kind teacher*

This first identity construction, ‘the caring and kind teacher’, seems to be an important identity resource for teachers when they present themselves. Some of the teachers explicitly describe themselves as especially kind persons, like Mary: ‘And I suppose I’m probably a kind sort of person. You know, I think the best of people [laughs]. You could say that I don’t like to be stricter than I have to’.

But the caring and kind teacher is a teacher who first of all feels close to the pupils and cares for them. ‘I think it is great to be with the pupils’ Alice says when she is asked about why she is still a teacher. And she goes on: ‘I really care for the pupils in my class and it is so nice to teach them’. The emotional component in the relation with the children seems important and one of the teachers even describes her pupils as ‘almost like my own children’.

Another important component of the emotional relation to the pupils seems to be a feeling of responsibility for the children’s well-being and development. Grethe puts it this way:

The best thing is to be in contact with the kids and so to speak, help them to develop. To see them develop. And to see that they feel good. Happy pupils that enjoy themselves. That is sort of the best. Yes.

As do the other teachers, Grethe continuously uses this identity construction as a resource in her description of what she considers positive in her job.

In addition to kindness and a caring attitude, this identity construction also positions these teachers as people with patience and good sense of humour, which is important because it will help the teacher get on good terms with the pupils.

Gunn: What is the most important thing you do as a teacher in your current class?  
 Grethe: I have good communication with them with a lot of humour. Yes, and they must feel safe when they sit there. If you have insecure pupils who are afraid of the teacher, they don’t work very well.

As the excerpt above underlines, good relations and cooperation with the pupils are also considered important in making sure that the children feel safe and experience a good social environment in the school. A safe social environment is considered essential within this identity construction, because learning is thought of as impossible if the pupils don’t feel safe.

### *The creative and innovative teacher*

This identity construction positions the teacher as very much oriented towards ‘new’ ideas about school and teaching. This kind of teacher expresses a creative and flexible attitude, like Barbara when she says: ‘You have to see the opportunities at all times, and don’t lock yourself up and think “This is not possible”, but rather “what can we do to make this work?”’. A teacher within this identity construction is also always eager and willing to learn more and develop her own competencies, in addition to continuous development of teaching skills and methods.

To Mary the creative and innovative attitude has a connection to her own competencies: ‘I really feel that I can use my strengths’ she says and points to another aspect within this identity construction. The job is especially considered more interesting if the teacher, like Mary, can use her own interests and skills in her work: ‘I play the guitar and sing and read for the pupils. I’ve always done that a lot. It’s really fun!’ [laughs].

This identity construction also positions the teacher as someone with a ‘glow’ and a positive attitude towards colleagues and pupils (also after school hours). Cooperation with colleagues is essential to this teacher, both for her own (and the children’s) development and learning, but also in order to enjoy the job as a teacher. The main driving force, however, is the job in itself, the challenges and joys of teaching:

There are so many challenges every day. And although sometimes it’s too much [laughs] I like some action. I’m not the kind of person who could sit in an office and for example work with numbers. That would drive me crazy. (Mary)

### *The professional teacher*

This identity construction emerged through conversations in the interviews about working hours, responsibilities as a teacher and what it is like to be a teacher in the local community. The phrase ‘professional’ is used by the teachers themselves when we discussed these matters. By being professional they seem to mean that they can separate their private life and working hours. A professional teacher knows where her responsibilities start and where they stop. She doesn’t like to wonder or worry about pupils or the school in her spare time and is not interested in meeting pupils out of school. Some of the teachers, like Barbara in the following excerpt, express an explicit identification with this identity construction when she says:

I don’t want to live close to the children I work with every day because my job is to be a teacher, but I’m also a private person. I don’t like to have my pupils running around in my garden. They don’t have to know too much about me and what I do after work. (Barbara)

Heather represents a more ambivalent attitude towards such a strong identification and uses both her husband’s and her own arguments to negotiate around this identity construction when she is asked about the relationship between work and private life:

That’s not something I’m very good at. My husband doesn’t like to go for walks in the area where the pupils live (laughs) because I stop and talk to everybody. I think it’s nice, but I

understand his position too. And I maybe really should be clearer on those matters.  
(Heather)

In addition to the already mentioned features, this identity construction positioned the teacher as someone who considers herself a person like any other in the (local) community. The fact that she is a teacher doesn't give her any special obligation to take part in arrangements and happenings in the (local) community that involve the pupils.

### *The typical teacher*

This identity construction is the one most of the teachers refer to in an implicit way, and there are fewer explicit references to the relevant subject positions within this identity construction than in the others. However, through the interviews an image of a teacher who is a very responsible, structured person with good order emerges. She also seems to be a bit boring and to have little sense of humour. As Grethe states in the following excerpt, this identity construction positions the teacher as strict and demanding;

- Gunn: A typical teacher? What is a typical teacher?  
Grethe: Yeah, a typical teacher. People expect some sort of strict, demanding perfectionist. Yes, who's picky and points to your flaws; '... you shouldn't have done this and don't do that ...'. I think people expect that, but maybe it's not like that at all.

In addition, 'the typical teacher' does things the way she always has done them and she is, therefore, not very interested in changes in school and her own teaching. To some of the teachers 'the typical teacher' represents the felt and often more traditional expectations of what a teacher is supposed to be.

### **Narrative construction of teacher identity: positioning and negotiation**

As has already been stated in the Introduction, the aim for this article has not been to describe or define what identity Norwegian teachers as a group or individuals possess, but to illuminate how teacher identity can be narratively constructed, based on an understanding of job identity as a narrative construction produced by the accessible narrative resources available in each setting. With the help of examples from the teacher narratives, the following section of the article will, therefore, focus on how construction of teacher identity can be understood as a process of positioning and negotiation.

#### *Narrative resources and positioning*

The five teachers make references to more than 30 available subject positions in total, and to a large extent they refer to the same subject positions across the individual interviews. This indicates that the teachers have what Holstein and Gubrium (2000,



p. 117) called 'a shared stock of narrative resources'. Even though the teachers share this stock of narrative resources, the ontological narratives differ in their combination of subject positions, which again create many different and personal ontological narratives. Within and between the five interviews the teachers also position themselves differently towards the same subject positions. This is especially visible in connection to themes concerning teachers as a resource in the (local) community and the separation of job and private life, where the teachers position themselves in several ways. The ontological narratives the teachers tell are, therefore, varied and highlight many different aspects of what it is like to be a teacher in the Norwegian elementary school system. Although the teachers share a set of subject positions and they use the same mechanisms of positioning, each interview produced several different narratives. Subject positions and mechanisms of positioning clearly function as a reservoir of narrative resources for a diverse and varied construction of ontological narratives and statements.

But what creates this diversity of narratives? In the following excerpt we can see how Heather creates a narrative about her own work, talk and experience with the youngest children's learning process. She develops her narrative with the help of arguments from her experience, her beliefs and her knowledge about young children and how they learn.

The last two years I've been in first grade. I'm not so concerned with two plus two and the letters and the alphabet and so on. But I'm very concerned with a good social climate in the class, and for the children to feel safe and confident. I believe they won't learn anything anyway without that. So the first year I'm not so concerned with them 'learning' too much of such subject oriented knowledge. Learning comes easier if they feel confident.  
(Heather)

Here Heather makes a positive identification with two subject positions: the subject position of a teacher who emphasizes the pupil's well-being; the subject position of a teacher who is oriented and concerned with the social environment. She also both distances herself from and makes a positive identification with a subject position that considers learning of subject-oriented matter important. Since Heather considers learning of subject content as possible only when the children feel safe and confident, the subject position that emphasizes learning of subject content is only relevant when combined with the first two mentioned subject positions, an emphasis on the pupil's well-being and concern with the social environment. Heather's choice of subject positions and the way she positioned herself towards them give a particular impression of Heather as a teacher. She is also quite explicit in her attempts to be recognized as a teacher who allows the children to develop at their own pace. Several times during the interview Heather tells stories that position her this way.

Throughout the interviews the teachers explicitly 'present themselves in a particular way and give a sensible account of their experiences' (Mishler, 1999, p. 23). The stories the five teachers told me are not just 'good stories' chosen by their ability to entertain or inform, but are an attempt by the teachers to present themselves in a certain manner. Each teacher 'is aware that she is actively involved in deciding which story—which self—to convey and how to formulate it' (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000,



p. 112). The fact that the teachers knew that I was a young, female researcher has therefore influenced both what they told me and how they talked about their job. The identity-constructing teacher narratives are situated in the sense that they depend upon the narrative opportunities made accessible in the interview setting and thereby they are a 'product of the social force a conversation action is taken "to have"' (Davies & Harré, 2001, p. 262). Whether the teacher narratives are 'true' or 'false', understood as exact reflections of what happened, is irrelevant in this setting. The main point of departure for the construction of narratives about the job as teacher is how the teachers want to and can present themselves in different settings. The narratives the teachers tell and the language they use positions them in the discourse. Discourses have a constituting force in the sense that they provide individuals with limited access to narrative resources, such as subject positions depending on the discursive practice in question. Within each discursive practice or situation, however, the individual always has a possibility of choice of positioning, as the situations usually provide several available narrative resources and positions (Davies & Harré, 2001). This process of positioning constructs possible teacher identities. The combinations of subject positions, the variety of positioning in the teacher narratives and the four alternative identity constructions must, therefore, not be understood as a sign of ambivalence, confusion or inconsistency in the teachers, but as an indication of an active and constructive relationship to available narrative resources in different settings.

### *Positioning and dominance*

As outlined earlier in the article, four identity constructions appeared when the women talked about their jobs as teachers. The first two identity constructions, 'the caring and kind teacher' and 'the creative and innovative teacher', mainly emerged through the teachers' explicit positive identification and recognition of some positions in the interviews. 'The professional teacher' and 'The typical teacher' surfaced as identity constructions in the parts of the interviews where the teachers distanced themselves or expressed opposition or uncertainty towards certain positions. None of the teachers identified with just one of the identity constructions, and all of the four identity constructions are present in the five interviews.

However, 'The caring and kind teacher' breaks through as the dominant identity construction in all the five teacher interviews. In the teachers' efforts to present themselves, 'The caring and kind teacher' seems to be a significant identity construction with which to make a positive identification. An extensive part of the shared stock of narrative resources seems to cluster around this identity construction. 'The caring and kind teacher' could therefore be understood as a nodal point in the teacher's discourse. A nodal point occurs in discourse when sets of signifiers, such as this identity construction, are given privileged, certain and partially fixed meanings (Howarth, 2000). Compared with the others, this identity construction has privilege and a certain and relatively fixed meaning, because care for the pupils' safety, development, learning and well-being is important to the teachers and seems to be what both motivates and concerns them the most.

Within an institution like a school there will always be systems of meanings, like the image of 'The caring and kind teacher', that some of the agents within that community will try to stabilize and strengthen. The narrative resources (relevant subject positions and the way they position the teachers) clustering around 'The caring and kind teacher' give strength and stability to each other in the teacher narratives. Such an attempt to make certain ways of understanding the world stable and dominant is referred to as a hegemonic project (Howarth, 2000). Although one identity construction dominates in the interviews, its existence is dependent on other, less visible identity constructions. Dominance is relational in the sense that something is only perceived as dominant if there are less dominant elements surrounding it. A presupposition for a hegemonic project of dominance and preference is the presence of antagonisms (Howarth, 2000), which in this case would refer to the presence of alternative and even contesting narrative resources and identity constructions.

### *Positioning and dichotomies*

Alternative identity resources might culturally, socially and historically be understood as dichotomies. A combination of these resources in the construction of job identity might be considered frustrating and often almost impossible. However, a post-structuralist understanding of teacher identity as a narrative construction opens an understanding of such culturally defined dichotomies as not necessarily opposing or excluding each other. Dichotomies can, on the contrary, be understood as presuppositions of each other.

Several of the subject positions emerge, directly or indirectly, in the teacher interviews as pairs of dichotomies. Some of the subject position dichotomies are explicitly expressed as dichotomous pairs and set against each other by the teachers within each narrative. The excerpt from the interview with Mary on page 538 in this article, where she positions herself by contrasting the subject position of a flexible teacher with a subject position emphasizing the teacher as structured and proper, is an example of such explicit description and contrasting of subject positions within one narrative.

Subject positions that are explicit and clear in one narrative might, however, be more diffuse in other narratives, and in these cases the dichotomies are more subtle. But even if there are no explicit descriptions of contrasting subject positions, it is possible to see an image of these. The subject positions in the different teacher narratives often contrast with each other and emerge only through readings and analysis of the shared stock of narrative resources produced in the five interviews.

If we look closer into the construction of subject positions it is possible to see these dichotomist processes of construction. When the teachers, as an example, talk about themselves as someone with special competencies/knowledge, they often present their knowledge as a contrast to other people's lack of this knowledge. Teachers obviously know things about what goes on in the classroom, about learning, development and how to raise children that others know little about. When Mary talks about her relations to the children and says 'You must use more long-range strategies than most parents maybe do', parents' knowledge is held up as a contrast to the more specialized

knowledge the teachers have. Another example is the subject position that locates the teacher as someone who is reform- and development-oriented. This subject position also has its contrast, something that becomes explicit in the following excerpt when Heather says

I think we should bring something new into school. We must keep up with developments. There are too many teachers using the same old material and books as they have been using for the last 15 years. Just to make it easier for themselves.

When the teachers position themselves as somebody who has a positive attitude to change and/or development in school and their own teaching, they do this against the image of a change-resistant teacher. This teacher teaches the way she/he has always done, and she/he will not or cannot manage the challenges of new curricula, technology or teaching methods.

In the construction of teacher identities the presence of alternative and dichotomous understandings function as presuppositions for each other. The presence of less dominant and alternative identities as presuppositions for the construction of teacher identity becomes very clear when we look at what function ‘The typical teacher’ has in the construction of teacher identity. As already mentioned, there are fewer explicit references to the relevant subject positions within this identity construction than to the others. The image of ‘The typical teacher’ is, however, vivid and important as an identity construction. It is obvious that ‘The typical teacher’ is important in the construction of teacher identity because the teachers, like Mary in the following excerpt, use this construction to express opposition. ‘I don’t know, I don’t think I’m a typical female teacher ... . Maybe I’m not so concerned with keeping the pupils quiet, kind and calm. I’d like them to try to do things and so on ... .’ ‘The typical teacher’ as an identity construction has a clear function as a contrast and a polarity, especially to the two dominant constructions, ‘The caring and kind teacher’ and ‘The creative and innovative teacher’.

Contrasting identity constructions clearly reveal the boundaries of the identity constructions involved. Through polarization emerge descriptions of what it is possible to do, think and feel within each construction. It is, for example, impossible for ‘The typical teacher’ to allow children to discover things on their own and in an unstructured way, while ‘The creative and innovative teacher’ obviously must tolerate chaos and noise from moving and active children. However, more importantly, contrasting identity constructions within a discourse will ‘show the points where identity can no longer be stabilized in a meaningful system of differences, but is contested by forces which stand at the limit of that order’ (Howarth, 2000, p. 106). Or, in other words, contrasting identity constructions have the potential of revealing what teacher identities are considered possible and meaningful within the Norwegian elementary school.

### *Negotiation of identity*

Both within and between the interviews the teachers seemed to both identify with and distance themselves from all four identity constructions. This was especially the case

in the teachers' relation to 'The professional teacher' and 'The creative and innovative teacher'. Alice refers to both of these possible identities when we discuss when the job of teacher starts and stops:

- Gunn: Is it possible to be a teacher just at work, and not when you come home?  
Alice: Probably, but I can't. I sort of think too much and plan things and ... yes. And when things are OK, I mean, when we have good days in class and I'm in a good period, it's nice to 'take the job home'. I can be creative and think creative. But if you have deadly serious problems to deal with, you get very tired ...

Several times throughout the interview Alice explicitly states that she is not very interested in after-school involvement or assignments. She describes two different ways in which she can understand her job and her relation to it and how in different settings she can identify with both of them. When she is up to it she can be 'The creative and innovative teacher' and blur the division of job and private life that the 'The professional teacher' would emphasize. But when she is tired and concerned she would rather identify with the latter and reject 'The creative and innovative teacher'. Alice's statements are not a sign of inconsistency, but show how negotiation of identity between possible alternatives takes place.

The main point here is that the presence of different possible identities must not be understood only as the presence of negative conflicts between different identity projects, but as one of the presuppositions of identity construction as such, because it opens up negotiation. The revelation of boundaries to teacher identity and the contest between different forces in the discourse will demand such a negotiation between the alternative identity constructions. The four identity constructions were present in all of the interviews, but they served different purposes based on 'the very identity projects for which they serve as resources' (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 116).

Mary's use of 'The typical teacher' as a contrast to position herself in a certain way and the discussion around Alice's identification with both 'The professional teacher' and 'The creative and innovative teacher' are both good examples of how the tensions and negotiation between possible identities make the construction of a teacher identity possible. Negotiation is also essential for the construction of a teacher identity for another reason. When the teachers negotiate between different identity constructions they are able to construct identities that feel comfortable and unique. This might have an empowering force for the individual teacher, because it makes teacher identity flexible and adaptive to the context and the relations each teacher is a part of.

### **Narrative construction of teacher identity: a theoretical point of departure with practical implications**

The description of the subject positions and the four identity constructions might strike those who are somewhat familiar with teachers and their job as common sense. However, the description and illumination of everyday assumptions, beliefs and images has an enlightening and empowering force because it makes us aware of what

we consider common sense and, thereby, also normal, right, good and valuable. Research and theoretical discussions on themes like gender and job identity within similar theoretical frameworks (Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Weedon, 1997; Zembylas, 2003; Holland, 2004) argue that such awareness increases the ability to recognize and understand systems of power within institutions and discourses. A recognition and understanding of structures and how practices, assumptions, beliefs and images are embedded in these is a presupposition, if one wishes to make changes with practical consequences. To give explicit descriptions of the narrative resources teachers have access to is, therefore, important.

Post-structuralist understanding of teacher identities as narrative constructions provides an important understanding of how identity can be constructed that gives fruitful analytical tools in the analyses of teacher identity (Zembylas, 2003). The theoretical approach also has practical implications for teacher educators, teacher unions, headteachers, school politicians and individual teachers' efforts to define, understand or construct teacher identity. This understanding of identity excludes the belief that we can provide teachers with ready-made and universal identities which they should fit in to. As an alternative, the perspective framing this study focuses on awareness and illumination of what subject positions and other identity resources the school as institution provides through beliefs, theoretical approaches and the practices teachers take part in (Davies & Harré, 2001; Kalmbach Phillips, 2002).

The understanding of teacher identity as negotiable, flexible and adaptive also makes it more likely that one can discover, discuss and maybe take more seriously the challenges the teachers meet in their everyday life in schools. Such challenges consist to a large extent of negotiation between seemingly conflicting perspectives. To recognize available narrative resources and how teacher narratives are presented and understood, and how they construct and reconstruct identity, also has an empowering force compared with an essentialist understanding of identity (Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Zembylas, 2003). It is empowering in the sense that it will allow the construction of teacher identities that teachers themselves might experience as unique, relevant and meaningful.

The descriptions of the subject positions and identity constructions that seem to have most significance for the teachers might easily create an image of a teacher who is mostly concerned with the creation of a good social climate and making her pupils feel confident. This is very much in keeping with the traditional culture of the Norwegian elementary school. In Norway this culture is now, however, under heavy criticism because Norwegian pupils scored relatively poorly in the 2003 Pisa test<sup>1</sup> of mathematics and natural science. In the following public media debate about these results one of the explanations for these unsatisfactory results was that Norwegian schools emphasized a good social climate at the expense of a learning-centred (or subject-centred) culture. A closer look at the teacher narratives will, however, show that this is a critique that might be experienced as meaningless within a school discourse. A good social climate and effective learning were not described as dichotomies in the teacher interviews. The teachers do not automatically position themselves as opposed to learning when they make positive identification with subject

positions that emphasize a good social climate in class. On the contrary, for the teachers these subject positions seem to be easy to combine and also seem to have a strengthening effect on each other. This underlines how subject positions and identity constructions might be interpreted quite differently depending on where the actors are positioned in the school discourse. To understand why teachers present themselves in certain ways, it is therefore necessary to understand how they construct their narratives and narrative identities.

## **Conclusion**

My initial research question focused on accessible narrative resources in teacher narratives and on how they are used by teachers to construct their identities. I have shown how the subject positions are used actively as narrative resources in narrative construction and negotiation of multiple teacher identities at the same time as the identity constructions position the teachers in certain ways. The teachers obviously see different narrative options (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 110) and clearly edit their narratives according to how they wish to present themselves. The discussion of examples from the teacher narratives illuminates how different identity constructions are dependent on each other just to exist and shows how construction of multiple identities and negotiation between them is a necessary part of the construction of teacher identity. The discussion also shows the flexibility and elasticity in teachers' identity construction and how narrative identities are constantly shaped, reshaped and adapted to the situation in a process of great complexity. The study has revealed a variety of possible and accessible identity resources and constructions within the teacher discourse, which opens up a multifaceted understanding of teacher identity.

To obtain an additional understanding of the construction of teacher identity it is, however, necessary to broaden the analytical focus to include the dominant discourses about teaching that operate in society. How do dominant discourses about teaching, such as, for example, accountability and professionalism, regulate teachers' access to the narrative resources? How are the subject positions and identity constructions informed by these and other discourses? How are the discourses informed by the subject positions and identity constructions? These and other questions are important subjects for investigations that go beyond the scope of the study presented in this article. Although a broader focus will probably increase the complexity of our understanding of teacher identity, it will also hopefully move our understanding of teachers and teacher identity beyond the most obvious cultural stereotypes.

## **Note**

1. The PISA 2003 (Programme for International Student Assessment) test is an OSCE coordinated international assessment of pupils' functional competence in mathematics, natural science and reading. In 2003 more than 250,000 pupils from 41 countries participated, 4000 of whom were Norwegian.



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## Appendix 1

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<b>Teacher</b>	<b>General description</b>	<b>Most frequent subject positions</b>
Alice	A teacher for approximately 15 years Rural school	Child/pupil centred Being professional Responsibility centred Teachers have special competencies/knowledge Work is exhausting and demanding
Barbara	A teacher for approximately 15 years Urban school	Relation/cooperation oriented Child/pupil centred Flexible Learning centred Curriculum centred
Mary	A teacher for approximately 15 years Rural school	Child/pupil centred Teachers have special competencies/knowledge Flexible To be nice/kind Active
Heather	A teacher for approximately 3 years Urban school	Child/pupil centred Relation/cooperation oriented Dedication Socially oriented Values experience
Grethe	A teacher for approximately 30 years Rural school	Child/pupil centred To be nice/kind Relation/cooperation oriented Development/reform oriented Work is exhausting and demanding

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I have only included the five most frequent subject positions for each teacher. This is because the teachers have four or five subject positions that they relate to to a relatively higher degree than the other subject positions.



# Paper II

# The public face of teacher identity— narrative construction of teacher identity in public policy documents

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This article will illuminate how public narratives about teachers within the Norwegian national curriculum documents regulating teacher education (1999 and 2003) and elementary school (1997) construct teacher identities. The aim is not to define what identity Norwegian teachers as a group or individuals possess, but to describe how teacher identity is narratively constructed in some selected public policy texts. The policy documents are analysed within a theoretical framework based on poststructuralist and discourse theory combined with theories of narrative identity. The article describes how a narrative plot in the documents constructs and/or presupposes a certain construction of teacher identity. The understanding of learning as an immanent force in children is a point of departure for this narrative plot. The article argues that public narratives about teachers inscribed in the documents give the educational policy documents a rather strong governing function. This governing function is called narrative control and goes beyond the administrative regulation of elementary school and teacher education, as it produces and draws on teacher identities with significance for the Norwegian teacher discourse.

## Introduction

The main focus for the study presented in this article is to illuminate how public narratives about teachers within the Norwegian national curriculum documents regulating teacher education (1999 and 2003) and elementary school (1997) construct teacher identities. The aim for this article is not to define *what* identity Norwegian teachers as a group or individuals *possess*, but to describe *how* public policy texts about teachers and elementary school *produce* certain understandings of teacher identity. The policy documents analysis is framed by poststructuralist and discourse theory combined with theories of narrative identity (Ricoeur, 1992; Calhoun, 1994; du Gay, 1996; Weedon, 1997; Mishler, 1999; Torfing, 1999; Holstein & Gubrium,

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2000; Howarth, 2000; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Wetherell *et al.*, 2001; Foucault, 2002) and has the following research questions as a point of departure: What dominant narrative plots about teachers' work can be identified in the public policy documents? How do these narrative plots construct and/or presuppose certain constructions of teacher identity?

During the last decade there has been a growing interest and amount of research on construction of teacher identity among researchers in many parts of the world (e.g. Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Bergem, 1997; Biddle *et al.*, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Kalmbach Phillips, 2002; Marsh, 2002; Estola, 2003; George *et al.*, 2003; Roberts-Holmes, 2003; Beijaard *et al.*, 2004; Søreide, 2006). Most of these studies have been focused on illuminating student teachers' or more experienced teachers' own opinions, narratives and statements concerning identity questions. Other studies have broadened the analytical lens to include the images of teachers in, for instance, popular culture (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). A few studies have also been done to illuminate how teaching and teacher identity is constructed in some Norwegian policy documents (Stephens *et al.*, 2004; Hovdenak, 2005). Very few studies have, however, analyzed Norwegian public school policy documents and curriculum *as public teacher narratives* with the intention to identify how these policy narratives construct teacher identity. Educational policy documents and curricula confront Norwegian elementary school teachers with descriptions of functions, expectations and regulations of how to conduct their job. To analyse the policy narratives underpinning these descriptions, functions and expectations is important for several reasons. As dominant public policy narratives 'underwrite and stabilize the assumptions for policymaking' (Roe, 1994, p. 34), analyses of these narratives might give insight into how policy-makers perceive education, learning and teaching. This has consequences for the possibilities that teachers within the Norwegian elementary school have to interpret and understand what learning and teaching is and could be, and thereby also how they should think about themselves as teachers, thus their teacher identities. In addition, the dominant arguments, scenarios and plots within the policy teacher narratives will give prominence to some teacher identities and thus frame how teachers can experience and carry out their job.

### **The public policy documents**

The study is based on an analysis of three national curriculum documents that are significant in the organisation and governing of teacher education and elementary school in Norway. All the three documents are published by the Ministry of Education and Research. The documents are divided in two parts: one general part stating aims, values and perspectives on education, teaching and learning; and a syllabus where subjects, themes and progress are described. In the presented study the analyses are focused on the general parts of these documents.

- The first document is the National Curriculum for Teacher Education (1999) (referred to as NCTE-99). This document has a description of how education is a

part of the current and future Norwegian society. The document also has a detailed description of what a teacher is and should be able to do, act and feel.

- The second document is a newer version of the National Curriculum for Teacher Education from 2003 (referred to as NCTE-03). This document is a much shorter version than the NCTE-99. Mainly it is the descriptions of education's place in society that are reduced, but also the descriptions of the teacher are made more compact. Although NCTE-03 has replaced the NCTE-99 as the curriculum for the Norwegian teacher education, I have included both documents, as they in sum give a good indication as to what values and ideas have been considered important in Norwegian teacher education the last decade.
- The third document, the National Curriculum for the 10-year Compulsory School (1997) (referred to as NCCS-97), is the national curriculum for all elementary and secondary education in Norway. It has a broad description of the past, current and future Norwegian society and its strengths and challenges. The document also describes what a good teacher is and how children learn at their best, knowledge traditions, what values Norwegian school must rest on and aims for the educational system to fulfil.

The three documents are selected for several reasons. First, they are three of the current public documents that most explicitly describe and prescribe how teachers in the Norwegian elementary school are to understand their job. Second, these documents can be understood as the (for now) final result of a political negotiating process, and thereby as an expression of the voice of several political actors within educational discourse during the last decade. The content in both National Curricula for Teacher Education and National Curriculum for the 10-year Compulsory School is decided more or less directly by the Norwegian parliament and no other profession or institution in Norway experiences such *direct* political influence. These documents are therefore important indicators of value systems operating within educational institutions and discourse in Norway (Hatch, 2002). Norway has a strong tradition for national curricula combined with an ideology of an inclusive public elementary school for all. Put together, such policy documents as these have a powerful voice in the educational discourse that teachers operate within (Stephens *et al.*, 2004).

### **Theoretical approach**

Identities are discursively and narratively constructed by the way people relate to the world and to other people, the choices they make, their practices, their use of language and the narratives they hear and tell about themselves and others (Somers & Gibson, 1994; Weedon, 1997; Mishler, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001). Narratives told by, for example, media, researchers, documents, politicians and/or persons about groups or persons that are 'attached to cultural and institutional formations larger

than the single individual' (Somers & Gibson, 1994, p. 62) are called *public narratives*. Public narratives explain, structure, and make sense of our everyday world, and in addition they provide persons and institutions with different kinds of resources for identity construction (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Public narratives told by and about teachers will therefore be significant in the construct and negotiation of teacher identity (Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Zembylas, 2003; Søreide, 2006). How institutional members understand and use these narrative identity resources to construct identities might, however, vary from person to person, and from situation to situation (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Davies & Harre, 2001). The construction of teacher identity is in this article considered a continuous process where narrative resources are combined, recognised, rejected and redefined in different ways in the public narratives that are told by, to and about teachers.

Public policy school documents are one of many sources that construct public narratives about the Norwegian elementary school teacher. Analyses of policy narratives in public policy school documents can illuminate how these documents construct teacher identity through the way these narratives combine, use and produce identity resources. One such narrative resource is historically and socially constructed *subject positions* (Weedon, 1997). A subject position opens for a specific view of the world, as it simultaneously prevents other ways of experiencing and understanding the world (Davies & Harre, 2001). What subject positions are considered accessible will therefore be a strong indicator as to how it is possible and reasonable for teachers to understand their job. Other narrative resources in the construction of teacher identity are images or *constructions* of possible *identities*, which outline characteristic features, attitudes and behaviours. How institutional members understand and use these narrative resources to construct identities might, however, vary from person to person, and from situation to situation (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Davies & Harre, 2001).

The combination of different narrative resources and how they are related to each other is called *narrative editing* (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). There are different techniques of such narrative editing and one of them is to create a certain narrative *plot*. A plot is the way a narrative is told and the way events, elements and actions are connected to each other in the narrative (Berger, 1997). As a consequence, a narrative plot creates a specific understanding of a phenomenon by ruling out alternative understandings of the phenomenon. When narrative plots define a phenomenon it is an attempt to *fixate meaning* (Torfing, 1999; Howarth, 2000; Howarth & Torfing, 2005) by providing 'a principle upon which to read past, present and future events, and capture people's hearts and minds' (Howarth & Torfing, 2005, p. 15). Such attempts to fixate meaning can, however, only be temporary, as there always exists a potentially different understanding of the world.

Based on these theoretical presuppositions, the remains of this article will give some examples of how narrative plots in the selected public policy documents give prominence to certain constructions of teacher identity, but first I will give a brief outline of how I analysed the documents.

## Analysis

The three public school policy and curriculum documents referred to at the start of this article confront Norwegian elementary school teachers with a wide range of expectations towards their job, which all appear as self-evident and natural parts of the internal coherence in the documents. This 'self-evident' and coherent form made me experience the public policy documents as impenetrable at first glance. To get to know the material I have had to undertake several readings of the documents, each reading with a different analytical aim.

### *1st reading: subject positions*

The first reading of the documents identified subject positions. First I marked subject positions with relevance to teachers in the already highlighted phrases from the first reading. These subject positions were sorted and listed before I read the three original documents once more and coded them in accordance with the subject positions list. Across the three documents it was possible to identify 21 subject positions, including the teacher as *concerned with the individual pupil*, the teacher as *cooperation oriented*, *democracy oriented*, and oriented towards *subject matter/knowledge/competence* (see Appendix 1).

### *2nd reading: constructions of teacher identity*

In the second reading the aim was to identify constructions or images of teacher identity across the three documents. Descriptions of teachers in the documents were highlighted, categorised and condensed, before I read the three original documents once more and coded them in accordance with these categories. This second reading of the policy documents resulted in five broad categories of teacher identity: *the socially oriented and cooperation-orientated teacher*, *the teacher as a bearer of the cultural heritage*, *the knowing teacher*, *the self-assured, flexible and innovative teacher* and *the including and pupil-centred teacher* (see Appendix 2).

### *3rd reading: narrative plots*

The two first extensive readings of the documents explicated many interesting aspects of teacher identity. My primary interest was, however, to illuminate *how* narrative plots across the public policy documents construct or presuppose certain teacher identities. Possible narrative plots were identified across the three documents with the help of four questions:

1. How are learning, pupils and teachers described?
2. What seem to be the challenges that school and teachers must face in contemporary Norwegian society?
3. How must these challenges be met/solved by the school and its teachers?

4. What constructions of teacher identity do these descriptions, challenges and solutions open for and/or presuppose?

These questions were developed in cooperation with two colleagues who also do discourse analysis of educational policy texts. Through the answers to these questions I was able to illuminate how the public narratives constructed across the documents argue for certain ways to understand teaching, learning and teachers, thus the narrative plot. The description of the narrative plots was then discussed with another researcher doing analyses of Norwegian educational policy texts.

### **Narrative plots and the construction of teacher identity**

As within all discourses, the Norwegian educational discourse gives prominence to some subject positions and some constructions of teacher identity. One of the most prominent teacher identities within the Norwegian educational discourse is the teacher as occupied with adaptive learning and the care for the individual pupil (Stephens *et al.*, 2004; Søreide, 2006). The analysis of the three selected policy documents indicates that there are several subject positions underpinning this identity construction, such as, for example, *The teacher with concern for the individual pupil*, *The teacher with concern for a good social climate in class*, *The teacher as a care giver*, *The teacher as democracy oriented* and *The teacher as motivating and inspiring the pupils* (for descriptions, see Appendix 1). Several of these subject positions are also prominent in teachers' own narratives about what it is like to be a teacher in different parts of the world (e.g. Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Fishman, 2002; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002; George *et al.*, 2003; Barrett, 2005; Søreide, 2006). There are, however, some elements that are specific to the Norwegian situation. The policy documents' description of the Norwegian teacher has, for example, 'more of a moral flavour than [their] English counterpart' (Stephens *et al.*, 2004, p. 113) and teachers are also explicitly expected to base their work as teachers in values such as 'justice, equality and adaptive learning' (NCTE-03, p. 9) along with other core Christian and humanistic values (Stephens *et al.*, 2004).

In the following section I will briefly present how the policy documents describe *The teacher as inclusive and pupil-centred*, before I explicate how a narrative plot identified across the three selected policy documents describes learning, teaching and teachers in a way that gives prominence to this specific teacher identity.

#### *The including and pupil-centred teacher*

*Inclusion* is a keyword within the Norwegian educational discourse, and all Norwegian children are supposed to attend their local elementary school regardless of disabilities, learning difficulties or other special needs and all pupils are entitled to an individual curriculum. The policy documents strongly recommend teachers to see and accommodate each individual pupil and they must be able to 'adjust the teaching in accordance with the single pupil's presuppositions and possibilities' (NCTE-99,



p.15). Although the documents insist that the teacher should be capable of teaching *all* pupils in accordance with their needs and their possibilities, it is not primarily the *group* of children that is supposed to be in focus for the teacher in his/her teaching. The analyses of the policy narratives illuminate that attention to and inclusion of the *single individual* pupil is described as an important characteristic of teachers. The subject position *The teacher with concern for the individual pupil* was one of two subject positions that appeared most frequently across the three policy documents. Typical ways to describe this subject position across the documents are: 'The teaching shall meet children ... on their own premises. All pupils must be challenged, supported and helped' (NCTE-99, p. 18) and 'The teaching shall be adjusted to suit the individual' (NCCS-97, p. 5). The documents position the teacher as someone who takes all pupils seriously and meets them with care and compassion, but also with the necessary amount of demands and challenges. In the following sections of the article I will illuminate how scenarios, truth claims and statements construct a narrative plot where this teacher identity is a significant element.

#### *Children's natural urge for learning*

The point of departure for the narrative plot that presupposes the teacher identity presented above is the way the documents describe children and their learning. In the National Curriculum for Compulsory Education children are described as having a natural urge and ability to learn. 'Children's curiosity is a natural force. They are very eager to learn' (NCCS-97, p. 11) is a quotation from this policy document that sums up all the policy documents' descriptions of children and their presuppositions for learning. The Curriculum for Teacher Education from 1999 underscores this conception of children's learning as it says: 'Such an approach to learning presuppose that pupils are curious, take imitative, want to develop and continuously learn and try new things' (NCTE-99, p.11). There are no descriptions in the policy documents that present any *alternative* understandings of children's learning.

The statement 'Children's curiosity is a natural force' is a statement that is very convincing in two ways. First, children's curiosity and eagerness to learn is not described as something that in a certain situation or for certain children *might* be considered natural and immanent. All children in all schools are curious and willing to learn. Second, the term 'natural force' is also used in a convincing way as it points to traits, behaviours and qualities that are more instinctive and biological than culturally produced. Here the documents position children and their abilities by the help of a classical dichotomy—the natural and biological versus the cultural and social. When curiosity is connected to 'the natural' (biological), as in this quote, curiosity becomes something that is independent of social and cultural change. In other words; children are described in a certain way with certain traits that are unchangeable, universal and independent of culture, history and situation.

The excerpt might be understood as a description of children as such, but it might also be understood as a statement of a specific way to understand knowledge and learning, or in other words as an epistemological statement. Such statements cannot be



neutral or purely descriptive as they also include certain sets of values and norms. These values and norms frame thought, behaviour and interpretations as they influence what we consider good, valuable, ethical and normal. When the documents talk about children and learning, they nevertheless do this in a descriptive form. The policy-makers' epistemological point of departure is not explicated and descriptions and epistemological statements are woven into each other. The statement 'Children's curiosity is a natural force' is, however, an epistemological statement because it indicates a belief in humans as driven by instincts and biological predispositions in their learning.

Such a sociobiological point of departure will be occupied with how natural traits in humans result in 'different "natural" forms of behaviour and spheres of activity and influence' (Weedon, 1997, p. 124). By referring to 'the natural', the statement attempts to fixate truth and normality by 'insisting that certain meanings are the true ones because they are determined by natural forces beyond our control' (Weedon, 1997, p. 126).

An epistemological stance that implies curiosity as a natural and immanent force in humans will lead to different understandings of education and teaching than if learning were considered to be more dependent on the social and cultural setting the child is in.

#### *Teachers' personal responsibility for children's continuous learning*

The documents establish the understanding of children's learning abilities as described above as an undisputable fact. The understanding of learning and children presented above is followed up in the documents and connected to certain expectations towards teachers and their teaching in the public narratives about teaching and learning that run across the three documents. This is the second step in the construction of a narrative plot that will underwrite a teacher identity with emphasis on inclusion and adaptive teaching.

According to the narrative plot, the ability to learn as an immanent force in children will be enhanced or reduced by others. The National Curriculum for Compulsory Education puts it this way: 'To a large extent the pupils build their knowledge, learn skills and develop attitudes by themselves. This work can be encouraged and accelerated—or restrained and hindered—by others' (NCCS-97, p. 18).

In other words, children do not become reluctant or incapable to learn by 'themselves'. If pupils in the Norwegian elementary school are not learning, they are in one way or another restrained by other persons. The National Curriculum for Compulsory Education is also specific as to who these 'others' are when it states that 'Teachers decide by their way of being whether the pupils' interest persists, if the pupils feel competent and if their eager attitude continues' (NCCS-97, p. 22). This indicates that the teacher actually is in a position to destroy the pupils' interest and capacity for learning. To prevent this, the documents encourage the teacher to meet each child with care, appropriate challenges and respect.

The National Curriculum for Teacher Education from 2003 also underscores the teacher's responsibility for the maintenance of the pupils' learning when it claims:

‘No other single factor is more decisive for the quality in kindergartens and schools than the teacher’ (NCTE-03, p.5). The use of the phrases ‘no other single factor’ and ‘the teacher’ in singular form in the quote above indicates that the quality in teaching in the Norwegian school is an individual responsibility for each teacher. Although the National Curriculum for Compulsory Education claims that it is the ‘community of colleagues that share the responsibility for the pupil’s development’ (NCCE- 97, p.24), it is the *teacher’s* capacities, abilities, personality, relations and knowledge that are described to be the most significant for the pupils’ development and learning. The understanding of the teacher as the most significant element for educational quality is underscored when the National Curriculum for Compulsory Education explains differences that might occur between classes as dependent on ‘the way teachers structure the class work, their governing, their ability to follow up and support the pupils’ (NCCE-97, p. 21). There are no similar explicit descriptions of how, for example, school leadership or organizational circumstances can contribute to such differences in educational quality.

In addition to giving the individual teacher the responsibility for educational quality, quality teaching is also connected to teacher personality, here exemplified by a quote from the National Curriculum for Teacher Education from 1999: ‘To work as a teacher is closely connected to personal qualities’ (NCTE-99, p. 14). This is done in similar truth-statements across the documents and the narrative plot thereby draws the attention to the teacher as *a person*. Such a focus on the teacher as a *person* is also followed up in the National Curriculum for Compulsory Education when it describes the teacher this way: ‘The most important educative means teachers have are themselves. Therefore they must dare to recognise their own personality and individuality’ (NCCS-97, p. 22). When this quote refers to the teacher as the ‘most important educative means’ and connects this to the teacher’s personality and individuality, the teacher’s personality is significant for the way in which the pupils learn is underscored. This way, the documents add to the individualistic flair in the description of teacher responsibility.

When the documents’ focus on teachers as persons is added to the emphasis on adaptive teaching for the individual pupil, it gives the narrative plot a personal and individualistic touch. This indicates more of an individualistic than a collective focus in the way the narrative plot positions pupils learning and teachers teaching and the connection between the two.

### *The democratic enabling of the individual pupil*

The narrative plot presented so far can be summarised this way: The way the teacher accommodates and adapts teaching to suit the individual pupil’s presuppositions will have consequences for the pupil’s urge and ability to learn. If the teacher lacks the personality and/or knowledge to do this, it will diminish the pupil’s immanent urge and ability to learn.

Such a scenario will, however, also have some serious consequences, not only for the individual pupil but for the entire Norwegian community. And these consequences

are the point of departure for a series of arguments that constitutes the next element in the narrative plot that positions the teacher as inclusive and pupil-centred.

Social inequality and a low ability to understand and/or contribute to the public debate is in the Norwegian egalitarian discourse considered a threat to democracy. The individual citizen's ability to communicate, understand and learn is presented in the policy documents as a predisposition for the continuance of the Norwegian democratic community. The knowledge generated by such ability to communicate, understand and learn is described as 'the core in a national network of communication between members of a democratic community' (NCCS-97, p. 28).

The strong position the Norwegian public elementary school traditionally holds as a 'school for all' ensures that most Norwegian children attend their local public elementary school. This constitutes elementary school as the institution where almost all Norwegian citizens meet. In the policy narrative about the Norwegian society generated from analyses of the policy documents, this understanding of elementary school as a 'meeting point' is used as an argument to give the Norwegian elementary school a significant part of the responsibility for the 'preparation' of democratic Norwegian citizens. This responsibility is also made explicit in the policy documents—for example, in the way the National Curriculum for Compulsory Education defines the ultimate goal for compulsory education in Norway to be 'to encourage the individual to realise him/her self in ways that are beneficial to the community' (NCCE-97, p. 40) or when the National Curriculum for Teacher Education from 1999 claims that education should prepare the children to 'take responsibility for the life and welfare of themselves and others' (NCTE-99, p. 10) and also 'promote a moral responsibility for the society and world we live in' (NCTE-99, p. 11). These aims must be understood within the cultural frames of Norway as an egalitarian country with a high democratic self-esteem, where democratic participation, as previously described, is closely connected to knowledge, communication skills and the ability to learn. If school for some reason is not able to provide teaching that will fulfil these aims and goals, 'there will be differences in competence that might lead to undemocratic manipulation and social inequality' (NCCE-97, p. 26).

#### *The construction of the narrative plot*

The analyses of the three selected policy documents illuminated how a series of scenarios and truth claims support each other and ultimately construct a narrative plot that consists of three main elements:

- a) the belief in democracy as partly dependent on the knowledge, communication and ability to teach the children to develop in school;
- b) the need to accommodate and adapt teaching to the individual pupil's presuppositions; and
- c) the teacher's personal responsibility for the maintenance of the child's immanent urge to learn.

The narrative plot which unfolds across the documents can be summarised as follows: If pupils in elementary school do not learn, it is the individual teacher who is responsible for destroying the pupils' immanent ability and urge to learn. The pupils' progress and well-being is therefore not primarily an institutional responsibility, but something connected to the quality of individual teacher's knowledge, competence and personality. To prevent the destruction of the pupils' learning, teachers must adjust their teaching to suit and include the individual pupil. A teacher who is incapable of accommodating each child, due to his/her personality and/or knowledge, will destroy the immanent urge to learn in the child. Thereby the child's possibility to learn skills and knowledge necessary to understand and contribute to society will be diminished. This will for certain reduce the child's possibility to become a productive part of society, and thus be a threat to a well-functioning democracy.

This is a narrative plot that both presupposes and underwrites the understanding of the teacher as someone who is able to accommodate the individual child and adapt their teaching to the child's presuppositions, thus *The including and pupil-centred teacher*.

### **Narrative plots and the narrative construction of teacher identity**

The analysed documents are important means of political and administrative governing of Norwegian elementary school and teacher education. There are, however, other governing effects that appear when these documents are analysed within a discursive, narrative and poststructuralist framework, such as in the study presented in this article.

As the presented narrative plot gives room for certain intentions, expectations and demands, it also produces and/or presupposes certain subject positions and teacher identity. Thereby the narrative plot also gains what Holstein and Gubrium (2000) describe as *narrative control*. Narrative control goes beyond the most obvious descriptions of expected knowledge, functions and expectations of Norwegian elementary school teachers and refers to the way narrative plots underwrite some preferred teacher identities.

As 'changing one thing will wreck the plot's unity and impact' (Berger, 1997, p. 66), a proposal of an alternative teacher identity would demand a different narrative plot. The introduction of alternative teacher identities might also demand a production of a counternarrative that narrates teacher identity in a radically different way. Such radical counternarratives can, however, be very difficult to include in discourses. Public narratives have a strong force in themselves as they often describe complex situations and relations in a simple and meaningful way. Their ability to explain and make sense of the world makes them resistant towards 'change or modification even in the presence of contradicting empirical data' (Roe, 1994, p. 2) and the public policy narratives thereby continue to underwrite educational policy (Roe, 1994). This has consequences for how educational discourse constitutes what learning and teaching is and could be, and thereby also legitimate decisions made by policy-makers. Within this perspective the policy documents get

a governing effect beyond the administrative regulation of elementary school and teacher education.

Descriptions and illuminations of how cultural assumptions, beliefs and images are embedded in public narratives might have an enlightening and empowering force. Narrative policy analyses have the potential to make us aware of what we implicitly consider normal, right, good and valuable (Roe, 1994). Such awareness increases our ability to recognise and understand systems of power and construction of meaning within institutions and discourses. To explicate how narrative plots and public narratives about teachers underwrite educational policy is therefore important if one wishes to understand or change educational policy. The narrative approach to teacher identity and educational policy presented in this article will hopefully contribute to a more profound understanding of the Norwegian emphasis on teaching as 'a caring profession, care being understood as creating an enabling environment for all children' (Stephens *et al.*, 2004, p. 113).

## Conclusion

In this article I have presented a narrative approach to educational policy analyses. Public policy documents have specific aims and functions and in order to fulfil these in a complex world they must simplify and stabilise certain features of the world they relate to. Public policy narratives have such a simplifying and stabilising effect (Roe, 1994). The public narratives in the analysed document stabilise and fixate meaning by the establishment of narrative plots where events, elements and actions are connected to each other (Berger, 1997). In this article I have illuminated how a certain narrative plot that runs across several policy documents situates the Norwegian teacher within a certain construction of teacher identity. To trace how arguments and scenarios in different policy documents produce a narrative plot has been a fruitful approach to explicate some of the presuppositions that constitute the Norwegian teacher as 'including and pupil-centred'.

In addition to the presented analyses and description of the narrative plot, subject positions and teacher identities, the presentations in this article raise other important questions that require further discussions and investigations. One set of questions is connected to the implications for teacher education. If teacher personality is as important as the documents presuppose for pupils' ability to learn and the future of Norwegian democracy, how can Norwegian teacher education ensure that the 'right' kind of teachers are educated? Is it just people who ascribe to certain kinds of identity who can be accepted in teacher education? Or will teacher education itself ensure that all new teachers will identify themselves with the 'right' teacher identities? Another important question to illuminate concerns what subject positions are made available for student teachers in Norwegian teacher education institutions.

Another set of questions are more directly connected to narrative teacher identity and centre around how teacher identity is narrated by other actors within the

discursive field of elementary school. What voices are most significant in the construction of public narratives about teachers? Do these narrations stabilise certain/other elements of teacher identity? What narrative plots and public narratives underwrite Norwegian teachers' practices in school? These questions are, however, beyond the scope of this article, and must be explored and discussed in a larger and more comparative analysis.

### Notes on contributor

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Appendix 1: Subject positions

Subject position	Description	Examples
<b>The teacher is concerned with the individual pupil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- see each pupil and adjust teaching and demands accordingly. Give pupils knowledge, experiences and challenges that meet their needs and level to make them feel successful and give them a possibility to develop.</li> </ul>	<p>‘They (teachers) must take time to guide the individual pupil’ (NCTE-99)</p> <p>‘The teaching shall be adjusted to suit the individual’ (NCCS-97)</p>
<b>The teacher is cooperation oriented</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- willing and able to cooperate with pupils, colleagues, parents and others in the local community.</li> </ul>	<p>‘... cooperation is central in the teaching profession’ (NCTE-99)</p>
<b>The teacher is experience oriented</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- give the pupils practical experiences of different kinds that enhance learning and develop social skills and emotions.</li> </ul>	<p>‘Today teaching and learning is teamwork’ (NCCS-97)</p> <p>‘Teaching must be connected to the practical and learning through experience’ (NCTE-99)</p> <p>‘... give room for all pupils to see the practical consequences of their choices’ (NCCS-97)</p>
<b>The teacher is emotion oriented</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- trigger different emotions in the pupils. Also teach the pupils to express/restrain/evaluate different emotions in themselves and others.</li> </ul>	<p>‘At the same time, the education must promote the joy in physical activity and the splendour of nature’ (NCCS-97)</p>
<b>The teacher is development, learning and change oriented</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- willing and able to develop oneself and the school. Also makes sure the pupils develop and are creative and new thinking.</li> </ul>	<p>‘Teachers shall ... facilitate an environment of development and learning’ (NCTE-99)</p> <p>‘... give the pupils ... urge to use and develop the things they learn’ (NCCS-97)</p> <p>‘... shall show knowledge as a creative and transformative force’ (NCCS-97)</p>
<b>The teacher is concerned with a good social climate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- develop good social relations in class/school/community. Social climate with a sense of safety and belonging. This will enhance learning and also teach the pupils social skills.</li> </ul>	<p>‘... important to contribute to the creation of a good social climate in class ....’ (NCTE-99)</p> <p>‘Classes with the best social environment are also likely to have the best learning environment ...’ (NCCS-97)</p>



Appendix 1: *Continued*

Subject position	Description	Examples
<b>The teacher is democracy oriented</b>	- see and hear each pupil. Make sure the learning environment is characterized by democracy, solidarity and equality. Help pupils develop independence, solidarity, responsibility, make choices.	'Teaching shall be funded on basic Christian and humanistic values, such as equality, humanity and solidarity' (NCTE-99) '... all humans are equal and humanity is inviolable' (NCCS-97)
<b>The teacher is subject matter/knowledge/competence oriented</b>	- teachers must know and be able to teach basic subject matter and competences, and 'solid' knowledge/scientific/research-based knowledge	'Teachers shall function as resource persons in the subjects' (NCTE-99) 'The education must contribute to solid knowledge' (NCCS-97)
<b>The teacher is a good role model</b>	- for the pupils, colleagues and parents, both in behaviour, knowledge, cooperation and working methods.	'The good teacher knows his/her subject' (NCCS-97) 'Teachers will in many situations be role models for the pupils' (NCTE-99) '... teachers shall function as ... role models for children' (NCCS-97)
<b>The teacher is a care giver</b>	- care for the pupils and make sure their needs are met.	'Teachers must be persons the pupils can trust' ... (NCTE-99)
<b>The teacher must motivate and inspire the pupils</b>	- to get the pupils to be interested in learning, to get them to develop and grow, to work hard. To make the pupils feel good/successful.	'Security is a presupposition for learning' (NCCS-97) '... an engaging environment for development and learning' (NCTE-99)
<b>The teacher is a carrier and promoter of culture</b>	- traditions, values, history, and knowledge, local, national and global.	'School must teach them to be unafraid, and to meet the new with expectation and an urge to act' (NCCS-97) '... make children and youth familiar with our common cultural heritage ...' (NCTE- 99)
<b>The teacher is a facilitator</b>	- for learning and positive experiences both practical and theoretical. Create learning enhancing environments.	'It is therefore essential that the pupils take part in the cultural heritage through their education.' (NCCS-97) '... must be able to facilitate and lead learning processes' (NCTE-99) 'Teachers must ... facilitate, give structure and direction for youngsters that learn' (NCCS-97)

Appendix 1: *Continued*

Subject position	Description	Examples
<b>The teacher is a carrier and promoter of values and ethics</b>	<p>- and teach these values and ethics to the pupils. Show concern for ethical questions in everyday life and subject matter in schools. Promote alternative values to destructive elements in a commercialized society and youth culture.</p>	<p>‘... must identify with the aims and basic values for the education’ (NCTE- 99)                      ‘The education shall promote moral and critical responsibility for the society and the world they live in’ (NCCS-97)</p>
<b>The teacher is flexible and creative</b>	<p>- use and develop different methods, technologies and materials in teaching in adjustment with the needs in class and pupils.</p>	<p>‘... the good teacher therefore uses many and different images’ (NCCS-97)                      ‘... must be able to use different pedagogical perspectives and learning strategies.’ (NCTE-03)</p>
<b>The teacher is self-confident</b>	<p>- consistent, solid, and knows her/himself and her/his knowledge/competencies. Uses his/her personality. Reflects upon own roles and functions.</p>	<p>‘... personal maturity and self-understanding’ (NCTE-03)                      ‘... must have the courage to acknowledge their own personality and distinctive character appear as robust and adult persons’ (NCCS-97)</p>
<b>The teacher is a leader</b>	<p>- both in the relations and cooperation in class and between colleagues.</p>	<p>‘... must be able to facilitate and lead learning processes’ (NCTE-99)                      ‘... must be able to lead learning and the cooperation with colleagues, parents and others’ (NCTE-03)</p>
<b>The teacher is an organizer</b>	<p>- and must plan, give structure and order, both in material/subject matter and in class/conditions for work.</p>	<p>‘It is their job to appear as clear leaders that take responsibility for the organisation of the activity’ (NCTE-99)</p>
<b>The teacher is community oriented</b>	<p>- and can see the school as a community in its own, but also as a part of a larger community. Teach children to function in the local, national and global community.</p>	<p>‘must be able to see children and youths development and learning in relation to changes in society’ (NCTE- 03)                      ‘The school must have close relations with the community surrounding the school’ (NCCS-97)</p>
<b>The teacher is curriculum/law oriented</b>	<p>- responsible for fulfilling the goals and ideals in the curriculum and in relevant laws. Equal right to equal education.</p>	<p>‘the individual teacher is under an obligation to the general aims for the education and the common values of society ...’ (NCTE-99)</p>
<b>The teacher must evaluate and reflect</b>	<p>- over the teaching, the learning environment and her/his own teaching. Must adjust teaching and him/herself.</p>	<p>‘... must be able to evaluate own and the school’s work’ (NCTE-03)</p>

## **Appendix 2: Identity constructions**

### *The including and pupil-centred teacher*

This teacher is occupied with the facilitation of learning possibilities and curriculum for the individual pupil. Inclusion is a keyword within this identity construction. All pupils are to be met in accordance with their needs and their possibilities. The teacher must take all pupils seriously and meet them with care and compassion, but also with the necessary amount of demands and challenges. This demand for every single pupil to be heard and seen opens for a democratic understanding of educational opportunities and learning possibilities.

### *The self-assured, flexible and innovative teacher*

This is the teacher that handles most challenges, when it comes to subject knowledge, children, pedagogical methods, order in the classroom and so on. She understands children and youths and is therefore able to meet them in constructive ways. She is up to date and has good knowledge about subject matter and pedagogy, which she always develops and innovates. As a consequence she has a repertoire of teaching methods and material that she juggles in her teaching.

### *The knowing teacher*

This teacher has solid subject knowledge. She knows how to get access to new knowledge and how knowledge systems are built up. Therefore she understands and teaches her knowledge domain systematically and is able to relate it to other knowledge.

### *The teacher is a bearer of the cultural heritage*

This teacher is an important keeper of culture and values in Norwegian society. The teacher is therefore some kind of ‘extended arm of society’, and is to relay the Norwegian cultural heritage and situate it in a productive context that will enable children and youth to learn, develop and use this cultural heritage. As a consequence, the teacher considers school as a place to experience and create culture, but also as a healthier alternative to youth culture, commercialization and destructive values and elements in contemporary society.

### *The socially oriented and cooperation-orientated teacher*

This teacher is socially conscious and the creator of good learning possibilities and a safe social environment for all the pupils. To be a visible leader is considered an important feature within this identity construction. In addition it is considered vital for the teacher to be able to coordinate learning activities and cooperate with pupils, colleagues, parents and other relevant partners in the local community.

# **Paper III**

## **TEACHER UNION AND TEACHER IDENTITY**

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**Abstract**

*The aim for this article is to explicate how the Union of Education Norway narrates teacher identity in their “Profession Ideals” - campaign. The study shows how the Union campaign produces counter narratives and consequently also position teachers within certain identities. This article presents one of these counter-narratives, “The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child,” and show how this is an opposition to a public narrative of educational accountability. The paper illuminates how the public narrative of “Accountability in education” thus serves as an important resource for the Union’s narrative construction of teacher identity.*

**Key words:** Narrative Identity, Teacher identity, Teacher Union, Accountability

## **Introduction**

Teacher identity has increasingly been studied from different perspectives and with different aims over the last decades (e.g. Beijaard, 2004; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Estola, 2003; Georg, Mohammed and Quamina-Aiyejina, 2003; Marsh, 2002; Roberts-Holmes, 2003; Søreide, 2006; Weber and Mitchell, 1995). My approach to teacher identity is inspired by theories about narrative identity, discourse theory and poststructuralist conceptions of subjectivity (Weedon, 1997; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001; Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001; Foucault, 2002). Studies of teacher identity with a narrative approach have predominantly focused on teachers' own narrative accounts and how these construct teacher identities. There is a lack of studies that investigate how public narratives told by other agents, such as Norwegian teacher unions, construct teacher identity. To fill this void and because the Union of Education Norway is a powerful agent in the Norwegian educational system I find it important to investigate what understandings the union currently has of teachers and teacher identity.

In 2002 two of the most central teacher unions in Norway merged into a new national union called "Union of Education Norway" ("Utdanningsforbundet"). This is the largest union for educational workers in Norway with more than 136 000 members from all levels of educational institutions. In 2004 the Union launched the "Profession Ideals"- campaign with the aim to develop some common ideals for the teaching professions in Norway. Although it was not explicitly described as an identity campaign it is preoccupied with questions and themes that are highly relevant for teacher identity, such as what ideals, values, actions and practices that is suitable for teachers. The union- campaign therefore offered a useful and interesting material source for studying the construction of teacher identity.

## **Public narratives, counter-narratives and teacher identity**

Teacher identities are constructed within discourses and partly constituted and negotiated in public narratives about teachers (Weber and Mitchell 1995, Connelly and Clandinin 1999, Zembylas 2003). *Public narratives* are narratives that are told for example by media, researchers, politicians and/or persons and "...attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual..." (Somers and Gibson, 1994, p. 62), such as groups or professions. As these public narratives explain, structure, and make sense of teachers' everyday world, they also give access to different kind of narrative resources for identity construction (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000).

How the individual teacher or groups of teachers use these narrative resources to construct their identities may vary (Holstein and Gubrium 2000, Davies and Harre 2001). In public narratives about teachers, narrative resources are combined, recognised, rejected and redefined in different ways. The narrative construction of teacher identity is thus considered a continuous process of negotiation and reconstruction of public narratives about teachers (Somers and Gibson 1994, Weedon 1997, Mishler 1999, Holstein and Gubrium 2000, Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001).

Some public teacher narratives will get a higher status, become more widespread, dominant or considered more significant than others. Such dominant public narratives are significant elements in the construction of teacher identity because they "...provide an important cultural resource which people can both draw on and resist in order to produce their own accounts" (Jones 2002, p. 121). When people or institutions produce alternative public narratives as an attempt to resist or oppose one or several of dominant cultural storylines, these narratives can be understood as *counter-narratives*. Counter-narratives that argue for certain ways to understand teachers and teaching will simultaneously position teachers within certain identity constructions.

### **The study**

My initial research question for the study of the Union campaign was quite general; "*How is teacher identity narratively constructed in the Union of Education Norway's "Profession Ideals"-campaign material*"? In my preliminary readings of the campaign material I became aware of how teachers were encouraged to be opposed to or sceptic to understandings of teachers and teaching inscribed in current educational policy changes. The Union campaign provided alternative views and thus could be perceived as an attempt to construct alternatives to dominant trends in current educational policy. I found the concept of 'counter-narrative' to be a productive point of departure for the analysis of the material and included the following research questions:

- *What understandings of teachers and teaching are considered to be negative by the union campaign?*
- *What counter-narrative(s) can be identified in the campaign material?*
- *What teacher identities are teachers positioned in by the counter narrative(s)?*



I used a narrative approach to analyse the material. The aim of the analysis was to *investigate how resistance to dominant public narratives and the construction of counter-narratives in the campaign material position teachers within certain teacher identities*. I will first provide some more information about the Union campaign and how I selected the material for analysis and then describe how the study was conducted.

### ***Collection and selection of material***

The “Profession ideals” – campaign was primarily run from the campaign’s own web-page <http://profesjonsidealer.utdanningsforbundet.no> and the Union’s official web-page <http://utdanningsforbundet.no> where members can find information about the campaign and advice on how the local branches may structure work with the development of the ideals. The results of the local discussions as well as individual members’ comments about the ideals were published on the web-page. The empirical material for the study was collected from these two Union web-sites in a period of 15 months, from the start of the campaign in November 2004, until February 2006<sup>1</sup>. During this period I browsed these web-sites for new texts 1- 2 times each month, and downloaded and printed all relevant texts.

I only selected material for analysis that was produced or published by the Union board, administration and/or leaders, because the aim for the study is to investigate how *the Union* narrates teacher identity in this campaign. The texts that were selected for analysis from the two web sites are:

- descriptions of goal and process in the campaign
- resolutions and documents relating to the case
- information about how union members and local branches should go about developing suggestions for profession ideals
- summaries and comments to the contributions from members and local branches.
- challenges in the further process of developing profession ideals.
- draft formulations of professional consciousness to be discussed during the local annual union meetings

In addition I included an interview with the Union leaders’ introduction of the “Profession ideals”- campaign in one of the Union’s journals “Bedre Skole” [Better School] (no 4, 2004).

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<sup>1</sup> As my project-period ended in the beginning of May 2006 I was unable to follow the whole campaign to its final conclusions at the Union of Education’s national annual meeting in November 2006. Most of the campaign material was however published within the time-frame of my study.

This interview clarified why the Union leaders considered the campaign necessary and what their goals and expectations were.

### *Analytical aims and readings*

The analysis of the selected material has been conducted in four readings, each with a different analytical aim and focus. The schematic overview of the analytical readings in table 1 below, offers a brief description of the aim(s) and research questions in each reading. Together the four readings will answer the overarching research question of how teacher identity is narratively constructed in this campaign

*Table 1: Overview of analytical readings*

	<b>Analytical aim(s)</b>	<b>Identification of</b>	<b>Research question</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> reading</b>	Identify disagreeing statements that will indicate counter narratives	Indication of disagreement	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> reading</b>	<b>a)</b> Identify what understandings of education, teachers and teaching the material disagrees with. <b>b)</b> Structure and synthesise findings from the former into public narrative(s)	Negated public narrative	What understandings of teachers and teaching are considered to be negative by the union campaign?
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> reading</b>	<b>a)</b> Identify what understandings of education, teachers and teaching the material offers as a alternative to the negated public narrative(es) <b>b)</b> Structure and synthesise the findings from the former into counter-narrative(s)	Counter –narrative	What <i>counter-narrative(s)</i> can be identified in the campaign material?
<b>4<sup>th</sup> reading</b>	Identify conceptions of teacher identity the counter-narrative(s) position the teacher within	Teacher identity	What teacher identities are teachers positioned within by the counter narrative(s)?

In the readings I was attentive to “...particular ways in which culturally available forms for representing oneself are *both appropriated and resisted*” (Mishler 1999, p. 25 (my emphasis)) in the campaign text. A main element of these readings was therefore to identify where the text resisted or appropriated certain ways of talking about teachers and teaching. To identify

phrases in the campaign material that explicitly opposed certain conceptions of education, teaching and teachers was therefore the point of departure for the *first analytical reading*. In the *second and third reading* I first identified what conception of teachers and teaching the campaign was *opposed to* and *in favor of*. Secondly I used these conceptions as basis for the construction of two public narratives about teachers and teaching: a) the negated “Narrative of accountability in education” and its counter-narrative b) “The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child”. In the *forth reading* I eventually identified, categorized and described different conceptions of teacher identity within the counter-narrative “The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child”.

In the following sections of this paper I present the findings of these analyses. In the presentations I will include some examples and descriptions of how the findings were generated from the material to ensure transparency and thereby enhance the reader validity of my study. I will start with the presentation of the first reading.

### **Indications to telling a counter-narrative: disagreeing statements**

A striking feature of the campaign material is the many references to changes and a great concern for what consequences these changes might have for teachers, education in Norway in general and for the Union’s possibilities for influencing educational policy. There are three main themes:

- changing government/ political regulation and control with the educational sector
- increased commercialisation of education and a market liberalist attitude to education.
- increasing pressure on teachers

The whole campaign can be understood as an answer, response to or disagreement with expectations, beliefs and understandings about teachers and teaching inscribed in these changes.

As it is possible to read disagreeing statements as an indication to telling a counter-narrative (Jones 2002), I highlighted phrases in the campaign material which explicitly stated that the whole campaign or certain opinions was meant to be an alternative, a correction or an opposition to public understanding(s) and narrative(s) about teachers. Throughout the campaign material teachers are encouraged to be opposed to or sceptic to current changes in educational policy. This encouraged scepticism is formulated in evaluative phrases in the material such as; “...we have been opposed to important elements of these changes – and we

should remain so....” and “....should be a safeguard against ideologies and suggestions that is a threat to the aims of elementary school...”.

In the interview introducing the campaign in the union journal “Bedre skole” [Better School] the union leaders say; “*There are also many trends that are introduced into the school, such as New Public Management and schools as production units.*” By describing these elements as “trends”, thus as something that will pass as all trends do; the union leaders briefly refer to current trends within educational policy and then reject them. This is another way to indicate an orientation to telling a counter-narrative (Jones 2002).

To be able to further investigate how the campaign material could be read as counter-narrative I however first had to get a better sense of exactly *what* understandings of education, teachers and teaching the campaign opposes.

### **A negated dominant public narrative: “The public narrative of accountability in education”**

In the second reading I identified descriptions of the understandings of education, teachers and teaching the campaign explicitly disagrees with. These descriptions were highlighted, as exemplified in the excerpt below;

”There are strong tensions concerning both the content and the regulations of the exertion of our profession. **There are tendencies to consider education solely as a means for increased economic growth and compatibility. As workers in this field we are in risk of becoming passive spectators - in an instrumentalist educational strategy.** We do not want that to happen. We must help each other to avoid this”.

([http://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/UdfTemplates/Page\\_\\_24706.aspx](http://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/UdfTemplates/Page__24706.aspx))

The following quotes are other examples of descriptions that the campaign signals an opposition to; “...whole field of education is being subjected to an extensive market orientation...”, and “... the quality in education is increasingly being related to different kinds of test-results”. The campaign is also concerned with how the policy makers appear to be “...aiming at a shift in the governing of education towards a combination of testing and measuring and better opportunities for the population to choose freely between options”.

The identified, highlighted and excerpted phrases were categorised thematically. This process revealed three thematic foci areas in the negated descriptions: a) the New Public Management-approach to governmental and political regulation and control with the

educational sector, b) the increased commercialisation and market liberalist attitude towards education, and c) a conception of teachers as obedient public servants. These themes appeared to be congruent with current global changes in educational policy, inspired by a neo-liberalist conception of education as a commodity and an emphasis on market accountability and parental choice (Vidovich and Slee, 2001; Day, 2002; Woods and Jeffrey 2002; Ranson, 2003; Biesta, 2004; Angus, 2004; Hurst, 2005; Webb, 2006). The three themes mentioned above are intertwined into a public narrative about educational policy, governing of schools and teachers and quality assurance that I have called “The public narrative of accountability in education”, where the rationale is:

To meet a public concern with teachers’ tradition of autonomy and the general loss of trust in the society towards the public sector, teachers (as other public employees) must be held accountable for their use of resources and the quality of their work. Policy makers therefore create national curricula, which consist of or are transformed into performance indicators. These indicators are used as criteria of educational quality. Local schools and teachers however still retain some autonomy since schools are free to allocate their resources and teachers to choose a pedagogy they believe will enable them to meet the prescribed criteria. The quality of the schools’ work is evaluated according to the established standards and performance criteria. The rationale is that if schools do their work well, their students will perform well on standardised (national or international) tests. The results of these tests must be made accessible to the public. The publication of results has three consequences. Firstly it ensures transparency in the public use of money, so that tax payers can see that schools use their human and financial resources in the most efficient way to ensure a maximum result. Secondly, the publication of results will give parents and students a good opportunity to compare schools’ results and thereby make an informed choice of school. Finally this kind of transparency will induce teachers to work in a more productive and efficient way that consequently will improve education and raise the educational standards.

This narrative and its conception of teachers is continuously rejected and negated in the Union of Education Norway’s campaign material. Within the public narrative about accountability in education, the Union of Education Norway perceives teachers to be “under pressure” and in risk of becoming subjected to “... an instrumentalist educational strategy” that will turn them in to obedient civil servants. Such a development will make teachers’ professional judgement and knowledge less significant, which again will reduce educational quality. In the next section I will present the campaign material’s *alternative* conceptions of education, teachers and teaching that are created to counteract the accountability narrative.

### **The counter-narrative of “The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child”**

In the third reading I identified descriptions of such alternative conceptions about education, teaching and teachers. The highlights in the following quote are an example of this;

“We are active agents, and not passive spectators. When we meet children, pupils and students we are active and free. We use our professional judgement in the planning and facilitating of our work.”

The highlighted parts of this quote positions teachers as *more than* just passive spectators to an implementation of economic and neo-liberal educational policy. The quote also describes teachers as something *apart from* an obedient civil servant or *mere means* for the fulfilment of politically determined objectives. Hence, an alternative to the obedient and accountable teacher highlighted in the “The public narrative about accountability in education”. I identified similar alternative statements in the whole campaign material. In the following I will show how these descriptions of education, teachers and teaching are intertwined into the counter-narrative of the “Teacher as responsible and loyal to the child”. I will also illuminate how this narrative process simultaneously positions the teacher within three teacher identities, namely “The caring and loyal teacher”, “The conscious, stable and engaged teacher” and “The responsible teacher with a unique competence”.

#### ***“We use our professional judgement...”***

As most Norwegian elementary schools are public, most Norwegian teachers are public employees, and thereby given some obligations and responsibilities from the state. In the selected campaign material teachers are encouraged to acknowledge their responsibilities, meet their obligations and show their loyalty to them. According to the campaign material teachers and school leaders show this loyalty through “...*the professional exercise of their job...*”.

The professionalism the campaign material here refers to is closely connected to teachers’ competence. As professionals with unique knowledge, teachers are experts on school, pedagogy, teaching, pupils and subject matter. As a consequence teachers’ competence is by the campaign material described as “..... *a competence that gives us exclusive rights to a series of responsibilities within the educational system*” .

In addition the campaign material claims that teachers must be able to “...*forward their own professional reasons for their practice...*” without “...*reference to centrally defined rules and regulations*”. Through such statements, the Union of Education Norway describes the professional teacher as someone who can verbalise his or her tacit knowledge, competence and values, and thereby give explicit reasons for the things s/he does that goes beyond formal rules and regulations. When the campaign material combines teachers’ explicitness with a unique competence, they get an autonomous status that enables them to evaluate, decide, choose and work in accordance with their independent and individual professional judgement. According to the material, the teacher can therefore also take full responsibility for his or her actions, decisions and results, and thus be accountable for the professional exercise of their job. Through such descriptions the campaign material position the teacher within a teacher identity we might call “*The responsible teacher with a unique competence*”.

**“... *show resistance when needed*”**

The uniqueness of teacher competence, their professional judgement and responsibility is connected to a second thematic element in the counter-narrative of “The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child”. This second element emphasises the teacher as a conscious and stable protector of core values and is a description of a responsible and dedicated teacher. The teacher is self-conscious and self confident in the sense that s/he really knows what the most important values of school and teaching are, and is able to hold on to these values through changes, due to their unique competence and ability to conduct professional judgement. Such a description positions the teacher within an identity construction we might call “*The conscious, stable and engaged teacher*”.

The union campaign carefully underscores that teachers should “...*not resist changes, but will be more confident concerning what we consider important to preserve along the way*”. Nevertheless, the campaign encourages teachers to “...*show resistance towards the [school] owners’ demand for efficiency...*” and to “...*hold on to the core values of teaching*”. This encouragement seems to be legitimised in teachers’ knowledge of the complexity of learning processes and their engagement in educational policy. According to the campaign material, this ability to stabilise and hold on to educational values makes the teacher resist haphazard pedagogical and political trends, such as the ones implicit in the accountability narrative. This teacher will not be “pushed around” by policy demands if these demands are in contradiction to the fundamental values of teaching, education and the teachers’ own professional judgement. The point that although most teachers are state employees, they are



not to be considered as obedient civil servants, is carefully underscored several times in the campaign material through phrases such as; *"Teachers are not just an extended arm of the state"*, and *"... when we meet children, pupils and students we are active and free"*.

***"...loyalty with and respect for the child as the most important value..."***

Although the campaign material underscores that teachers must be loyal to their responsibilities, the state and the broader Norwegian community, the teachers' main loyalty is supposed to be reserved for the pupil. In phrases such as *"...the main value is to be loyal to the wellbeing of the child, pupil, student..."* and *"... stand fast to central values and continuously remain the loyalty to [...] the pupil"*, the campaign material establish loyalty to the child as one of the most fundamental values of teaching.

This element of loyalty is connected to the two previously described elements and thus creates a narrative of a teacher that will take action if political decisions, curriculum, other people or circumstances puts the child's best at jeopardy. The campaign material positions teachers as defenders of the wellbeing of the pupil as a contrast to the image of the teacher as an efficient state servant with a competitive focus on learning results.

The campaign material emphasis the importance of teachers interest in the pupils in phrases such as; *" ... teachers genuine interest for children and youth is one of the most significant factors of good education..."* This emphasis combined with the loyalty to the child as a core value; position the teacher within the identity construction *"The caring and loyal teacher"*. This teacher cares for the pupils and make sure their needs are met. As s/he has a genuine interest in the pupils, s/he builds the relation to the pupils on trust, equality and respect and also has the ability to see the potential in every child. This teacher identity is very much in keeping with a prominent discourse within the Norwegian elementary school, where teachers are considered as caregivers and concerned with the inclusion of each child (Stephens, Tonnesen & Kyriacou, 2004; Søreide, 2006; Søreide, 2007).

### **Dichotomised narratives and teacher identity**

The counter-narrative of "The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child" presented above, gives an image of the Norwegian elementary school teacher that due to his/her professional judgement and competence will hold on to central professional values and take the responsibility and actions necessary to protect pupils from dangerous political, educational



and theoretical trends. Market accountability and neo-liberalist informed policies are obviously considered to be such dangerous trends.

The neo-liberal “Narrative of accountability in education” holds a strong position and currently underwrites educational policy in several countries. This is especially visible in England and the US (Day, 2002; Hurst, 2005; Tolofari, 2005; Sloan, 2006). Through the texts in the “Profession ideals” campaign the Union expresses a concern that Norwegian teachers and the educational sector might experience something similar in the near future. “The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child” is a very ideologically reasonable attempt to show opposition to an increased future influence of neo-liberal accountability-thinking in Norwegian education.

The Union appears to consider the future position of teachers as uncertain, under pressure and threatened. A way of dealing with external pressure, uncertainty and changes is to categorise and dichotomise values, ideas and standpoints. Throughout the campaign, commercial interests, management by objectives and competition are posed as running counter to care for pupils, education for all and democracy. How the Union understand this dichotomous relationship draws heavily on a dominant discourse of accountability as “all bad” found in much educational research (Sloan 2006). Within this discourse, accountability is considered to be disruptive of teachers’ possibilities of good teaching. Good teaching is closely linked to “...the creation of socially productive and inclusive classrooms” (Sloan 2006, p. 121) and “...more child focused instruction” (Sloan 2006, p. 120), and such values are expected to have less room in a school where accountability-thinking is prominent. When the relationship between the public narratives of “accountability in education” and “the responsible and loyal teacher” are dichotomised, the two narratives are made mutually excluding. In other words, if teachers identify positively with one narrative, they are simultaneously forced to reject the other, and vice versa.

As the previous section of this paper show, dichotomising processes also position teachers within certain identity constructions, which again have consequences for the range of actions, practices and value systems teachers can subscribe to. As negotiation between binary positions is an important element of a narrative construction of teacher identities (Søreide, 2006), it is the *relationship* between the different conceptions of teachers and teaching that has constitutive force. When the narratives of “accountability in education” and “the responsible and loyal teacher” are developed in a dichotomous *relationship*, each narrative is defined by the existence of the other. The narratives are thereby inscribed into each other and the binaries are thus not only mutually excluding, but also parts of the same phenomenon.

Consequently the public narrative of “Accountability in education” serves as an important resource for the Union of Education Norway’s positioning of teachers as loyal and concerned with the pupils best interests.

### **Concluding comments**

Questions of teacher identity need to be approached from different perspectives and with different methods, as this eventually will give a rich description of the field. In this article I have showed how narrative analysis can be a fruitful way to approach teacher identity. The aim for this paper has been to explore how teacher identity is narratively constructed in the Union of Education Norway’s “Profession Ideals”- campaign. Through analysis and discussions I have clarified how the public narrative of “The teacher as responsible and loyal to the child” is produced as a counter-narrative to the dominant public “Accountability in education” – narrative. In addition I have explicated how this counter-narrative positions the teacher within certain teacher identities, as for example “*The caring and loyal teacher*”.

In a Nordic educational model, inclusion, adaptive learning and equality has been significant for decades (Telhaug et al, 2006; Arnesen and Lundahl, 2006; Carlgren et al, 2006). The teacher as engaged in adaptive learning and care for the individual pupil is one prominent teacher identity within the Norwegian educational discourse (Stephens, Tønnessen & Kyriacu, 2004; Søreide, 2006; Carlgren et al, 2006; Arnesen and Lundahl, 2006; Søreide, 2007). Public narratives about teachers that circulate in our society influence our conceptions of what teachers and teaching are and should be. The identification of dichotomies inscribed in these narratives and a close investigation of the identity constructions they produce, is essential in order to achieve a nuanced understanding of teacher identity. Explication and analysis of public teacher narratives told by a variety of actors, as I have done in this article, is therefore crucial in order to obtain a broad and more accurate understanding of how teacher identity is constructed, negotiated, maintained and altered.

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*Bedre Skole* [Better School], no 4, 2004, pp. 32 -34.

<http://profesjonsidealer.utdanningsforbundet.no>

<http://utdanningsforbundet.no>

# Appendix I

## Information about the project to headmasters - study 1

Gunn Elisabeth Søreide  
Hovedfag i Pedagogikk  
Universitetet i Bergen

Bergen 10.04.02

Takk for hyggelig samtale på telefon. Jeg er svært takknemlig for at du er villig til å videreformidle denne forespørselen til lærerne ved din skole. Som jeg sa på telefonen så er mitt navn Gunn Elisabeth Søreide og jeg er doktorgradsstipendiat ved Hovedfag i pedagogikk v/ Universitetet i Bergen. I løpet av min stipendiatperiode skal jeg gjennomføre et forskningsprosjekt med tittelen: "Grunnskolelæreres yrkesidentitet". Formålet med prosjektet er å synliggjøre hvordan læreres yrkesidentitet konstrueres.

For å samle inn materiale / data til dette prosjektet er jeg avhengig av personer som frivillig ønsker å bidra med skriftlig materiale (se vedlagt orientering) og som er villig til å delta i ett eller to oppfølgingsintervju. Dette brevet er altså en forespørsel om det er noen lærere ved din skole som ønsker å bidra som informanter i denne undersøkelsen.

For at materialet jeg samler inn skal være håndterlig og sammenlignbart har jeg måtte sette noen kriterier for evt informanter i prosjektet:

- Personene må ha lærerutdanning fra lærerskole/høgskole (ikke universitetsutdannet).
- Personene må i dag jobbe som lærer (ikke inspektør/rektor) i grunnskolens 1. – 7. klasse (ikke på ungdomstrinnet).
- Noen kvinner og noen menn.
- Jeg trenger informanter med minimum 5 års arbeidserfaring i grunnskolen.

Dersom noen av lærerne ved skolen er interessert i å bidra i prosjektet kan de føre opp navn og telefonnummer på vedlagt liste, slik at jeg personlig kan ta kontakt med den enkelte. Jeg vil også ta kontakt med deg pr. telefon eller e-post innen en uke etter at du har mottatt informasjonen, for å få en tilbakemelding fra deg om det er noen som er interessert i å delta i prosjektet.

Dersom noen ønsker mer informasjon om prosjektet eller har andre spørsmål og kommentarer kan disse rettes til meg på telefon, e-post eller pr. brev

Tusen takk for hjelpen.

Med vennlig hilsen  
Gunn Elisabeth Søreide  
Hovedfag i Pedagogikk  
Universitetet i Bergen  
Christiesgate 13  
5020 Bergen  
tlf: 55 58 39 75  
e-post : [gunn.soreide@psyph.uib.no](mailto:gunn.soreide@psyph.uib.no)

## Information about the project to participants– study 1

### Grunnskolelæreres yrkesidentitet

#### Vil du være deltaker i forskningsprosjektet ”Grunnskolelæreres yrkesidentitet”?

**Formålet** med prosjektet er å synliggjøre hvordan læreres yrkesidentitet konstrueres. For å kunne gjennomføre dette forskningsprosjektet er jeg avhengig av å samle inn relevant datamateriale fra lærere i grunnskolen. Dette materialet vil jeg så analysere, hvorpå det vil danne utgangspunkt for drøftinger i min avhandling.

**Deltagelsen** i denne undersøkelsen er frivillig, og du kan trekke deg og ditt bidrag fra undersøkelsen når som helst. Det du bidrar med vil bli anonymisert, slik at det du sier ikke kan tilbakeført til deg eller skolen du arbeider på. Jeg vil heller ikke bruke eller sitere fra materialet uten din tillatelse. I hele prosjektet vil jeg følge retningslinjer fra datatilsynet for denne type undersøkelser.

Du vil nok muligens spørre deg selv om er hva du som deltaker har igjen for å delta i et slikt prosjekt. Det som tilsvarende forskningsprosjekter tydelig har vist, er at deltakerne opplever det som utfordrende, men *svært* utviklende både personlig og yrkesmessig å være med. Jeg vil tro at det å reflektere og samtale rundt egen yrkesidentitet vil være et spennende og fruktbart utgangspunkt for videre utvikling av egen yrkesrolle og –identitet.

#### Hva ?

Du må være villig til å **delta i en samtale / intervju** med meg hvor hovedtema vil være:

- Din opplevelse av lærerjobben.
- Utdannelse og yrkesvalg.
- Idealer og forbilder.

Samtalen/intervjuet vil vare i ca. 1 – 2 timer (etter avtale).

Dine og andre læreres intervjuer vil danne grunnlaget for et **oppfølgingsintervju** i løpet av høsten 2002/ våren 2003. Du vil bli forespurt spesielt om dette.

#### Hvem ?

Er du **lærer med utdanning fra lærerskoler / høgskole og har du jobbet som lærer i grunnskolens 1. – 7. klasse i minimum 3 år** er jeg svært interessert i å komme i kontakt med deg.

Dersom du er interessert i å delta i prosjektet kan du skrive deg opp på vedlagt liste, så tar jeg kontakt med deg personlig om kort tid. Har du spørsmål om prosjektet kan de rettes til meg på telefon og/eller pr. e-post.

Vennlig hilsen \_\_\_\_\_

Gunn Elisabeth Søreide

Tlf: 55 58 39 75 (a) / 55 12 60 84 (p) e-post : [gunn.soreide@psyph.uib.no](mailto:gunn.soreide@psyph.uib.no)



**Informed consent - Study I:**

**Tillatelse til å bruke materiale i doktorgradsprosjektet:  
"Grunnskolelæreres yrkesidentitet"**

Jeg gir med dette Gunn Elisabeth Søreide tillatelse til å:

\_\_\_\_\_ bruke samtale / intervju med meg som data-grunnlag / analysemateriale i prosjektet "Grunnskolelæreres yrkesidentitet".

\_\_\_\_\_ sitere fra samtale / intervju i artikler / avhandling (sitater blir anonymisert og evt personlige forhold omskrevet slik at ingen kan kjenne igjen enkeltpersoner eller skoler).

\_\_\_\_\_ bruke samtalen / intervjuet som grunnlag / utgangspunkt for oppfølgingsintervjuer.

Sted \_\_\_\_\_ dato \_\_\_\_\_ navn \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Jeg er interessert i å bli forespurt om å delta i oppfølgingsintervju

Returneres til:

GUNN ELISABETH SØREIDE  
HOVEDFAG I PEDAGOGIKK  
UNIVERSITETET I BERGEN  
CHRISTIESGATE 13  
5020 BERGEN

## Interview guide - study I:

<p><b>Innledning</b> (uten båndopptaker)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeg tenker at dette skal være en samtale mellom oss, men hvor du snakker mest. Jeg stiller noen spørsmål og så svarer du på dem så lang eller kort som du vil.</li> <li>• Ikke tenk "hva er det egentlig hun vil vite" / "Hva vil hun at jeg svarer på dette?" Du svarer på det som du hører at jeg sier... OK?</li> <li>• Dersom det er noe du ikke forstår / noe du ikke vil snakke om/fortelle, så må du si i fra. Du kan la vær å svare/fortelle.</li> <li>• Du kan avbryte når som helst nå i løpet av intervjuet, og du kan også trekke intervjuet fra hele prosjektet. Det blir mitt problem, ikke ditt.....</li> <li>• Jeg kommer til å bruke en kassettspiller/minidisc for å ta opp det som blir sagt. Det er bare jeg som kommer til å høre på dette etterpå og kassetten/disken blir oppbevart på en slik måte at andre ikke får tilgang til den.</li> <li>• Jeg kommer ikke til å noter noe, men det kan hende at jeg blir litt i papirene mine. Det er bare min egen intervjuguide.</li> <li>• Er det noe du lurer på før vi skrur på opptakeren?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tema 1:</b> Utdannelse og forventninger</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hvordan gikk det til at du ble lærer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Hvorfor valgte du lærerutdanning? Tilfeldig eller bevisst? Hva skjedde?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Er det noen situasjoner / møter med medstudenter / elever/ lærere som du husker særlig godt fra studietiden /som gjorde særlig inntrykk på deg i studietiden?</li> <li>• Hvordan opplevde du det å begynne å jobbe som lærer (første jobben).</li> <li>• Hvordan forestilte du deg selv som lærer da du utdannet deg? Hvordan tenkte du at du skulle bli som lærer? Har dette endret seg? Hvordan? Fortell!</li> <li>• Hva tror du andre som ikke er lærere tenker om det å være lærer?</li> <li>• Hvilke reaksjoner får du fra mennesker du møter / blir kjent med når du forteller at du er lærer i grunnskolen</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tema 2:</b> Jobben som lærer i dag (konkret)</p>	<p><b>Kolleger:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Har du noen gang opplevd å "trampe i salaten"/at du har gjort/sagt noe som tydeligvis har vært av typen "sånn gjør vi ikke her" overfor kolleger?</li> <li>• Er det noe du ikke kan spørre kolleger om/be om hjelp til/diskutere?</li> <li>• Har du noen gang opplevd samarbeid med kolleger (uten å nevne navn) som spesielt godt eller spesielt dårlig?</li> </ul> <p><b>Elevene:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenk på klassen du er i nå / hadde sist; hva mener du selv er det viktigste du gjør/den viktigste oppgaven du har som lærer i akkurat <i>denne</i> klassen? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ kan du gi noen eksempler / fortelle om situasjoner</li> </ul> </li> <li>• I de(n) klassen(e) du er i nå / hadde i år / er mest i, har du opplevd situasjoner som setter i gang følelser og tanker du bruker mye energi på? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Positivt eller negativt?</li> <li>◦ Tenker på hjemme/om natten?</li> <li>◦ Kan du fortelle om en konkret episode du brukte mye slik energi på?</li> <li>◦ Hva synes du selv om at du bruker mye energi på denne type situasjoner?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Tema 3:</b> Jobben som lærer  Ideal, forbilder, vurderinger</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Har du noen forbilder som lærer?</li> <li>• Hvor ligger din lojalitet som lærer? (elever, skolen, fag, foreldre, kolleger...)</li> <li>• Kan du fortelle om en dag/ time/ situasjon/semester du selv opplevde at du gjorde en god jobb som lærer?</li> <li>• Kan du fortelle om en dag/ time/ situasjon/semester du selv opplevde at du gjorde en dårlig jobb som lærer?</li> <li>• Hva er den viktigste grunnen til at du er lærer i dag?</li> <li>• Hva er det beste med å være lærer?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Avslutning:</b> (uten båndopptaker)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tusen takk, det var spennende å høre deg fortelle.....</li> <li>• Er det noe du vil kommentere eller si noe mer om? Er det noe du vil fortelle/utdype?</li> <li>• Dersom du kommer på noe mer du vil fortelle eller kommentere, så kan du enten skrive det ned og sende det til meg, eller så kan vi ta en ny prat.</li> <li>• Hva tenker du om intervjuet nå?</li> <li>• (Presentere og signere skjema om tillatelse til å bruke intervjuet + om resp er villig til å bli spurt om eventuelt oppfølgingsintervju)</li> </ul>

## **Appendix II**

## Identity constructions – Study 3

### The Union of Education Norway “Profession Ideals Campaign”

Identity construction	Description
<b>The caring and loyal teacher</b>	This teacher cares for the pupils and make sure their needs are met. He/she also has the ability to se the potential in every child, as he/she has a genuine interest in their pupils. Their relation to their pupils is built on trust, equality and respect. This teacher is loyal to the child and will take action if political decisions, curriculum, other people or circumstances puts the child’s best at jeopardy
<b>The responsible teacher with a unique competence</b>	This teacher has unique competence and knowledge that makes him/her an expert on school, pedagogy, teaching, pupils and subject matter. This teacher can verbalise his or her tacit knowledge, competence and values, and thereby give explicit grounds for the things he/she does that goes beyond formal rules and regulations. The unique competence also gives this teacher an autonomic status that enables him/her to evaluate, decide, choose and work in accordance with his/her independent and individual professional judgement.
<b>The conscious, stable and engaged teacher</b>	This teacher is responsible and dedicated to the job. He/she knows what the important values of school and teaching is, and is able to hold on to these through changes. This teacher’s self-consciousness and self confidence makes him/her resistant against haphazard pedagogical and political trends. He/she connects knowledge and values to his/her everyday praxis and is also engaged in the public and political debates about quality in school and education.
<b>The developing and changing teacher</b>	This teacher knows that humans learn in many situations and in many ways and that it is important for teachers to have access to different ways to enhance the pupils learning. This teacher is therefore willing and able to continuously develop, learn and change themselves and their teaching. He/she has high demands to her-/him-self and reflects over praxis and ethical issues continually.
<b>The public teacher</b>	This teacher operates on a public mandate and as some sort of “extended arm” of the society and the government. The teacher therefore must act upon public demands such as curriculum plans and public school policy. He/she must also be open to cooperation and dialogue with external partners to the school. This teacher also acknowledges that external parties understand, have opinions of, and must get access to the things that happen in schools.
<b>The cooperating and open minded teacher</b>	This teacher understands that teaching is not an individualistic job and that cooperation with colleagues is necessary to reach educational goals and to develop the school as an organisation. This teacher believes in equality, fellowship, diversity and multiculturalism and therefore has room for and accepts other people’s opinions, cultures and perspectives. He/ she meet colleagues and parents in dialogues and cooperation with respect and without dominance, control and misuse of power.
<b>The knowing teacher</b>	This teacher knows his/her subject matter thoroughly and is able to teach basic subject matter and competences. This teacher is also concerned with learning results and knows about different ways to enhance the pupils learning. He/she does not consider learning of subject matter and pedagogical knowledge as oppositions.

### Subject positions – Study 3

#### The Union of Education Norway “Profession Ideals Campaign”

<b>SUBJECT POSITION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>The teacher gives professional and explicit grounds for praxis</b>	Can justify and give basis for the things he/she does that goes beyond formal rules and regulations.
<b>The teacher is explicit about own competence and values</b>	Can verbalise his or her tacit knowledge and competence.
<b>The teacher has unique competence and knowledge</b>	Teachers are experts on school. This uniqueness gives teachers ownership over chores and jobs in the educational system.
<b>The teacher has autonomy</b>	Teachers work in accordance with their independent, autonomous professional judgement.
<b>The teacher is given a public responsibility</b>	Teachers are the “extended arm of the society” and are employed to do a job on behalf of the society.
<b>The teacher is visible in the public and political debate about school and education</b>	Participate in debates and definition of quality in school and education
<b>The teacher is loyal to the child</b>	Have a genuine interest in the pupils and takes action if the child’s best is at jeopardy. The relation to their pupils is built on trust, equality and respect.
<b>The teacher is development and change oriented</b>	Continuously development, learn and change themselves and their teaching
<b>The teacher is oriented towards shared responsibility and cooperation –</b>	Being a teacher is not an individualistic job. Cooperation with colleagues, parents and others outside school is necessary
<b>Teachers believe in equality and fellowship</b>	This is the fundamental values for the school. Teachers are against market liberalisation and -orientation in education.
<b>The teacher is subject matter/knowledge/competence oriented:</b>	Teachers have thorough knowledge of, and are able to teach, basic subject matter and competences.
<b>The teacher is a care giver</b>	Teachers care for the pupils and make sure their needs are met
<b>The teacher is concerned with the pupil’s social competence and socialisation</b>	Teachers raise children and help them develop social competence
<b>The teacher is learning oriented</b>	Concerned with learning results. Knows that humans learn in many situations and in many ways and that safety, care and pedagogical knowledge are presuppositions for learning
<b>The teacher reflects and is self-critical</b>	Reflect on ethical questions and ones own teaching. Have high ethical demands to themselves
<b>The teacher is self-conscious and self confident</b>	Is aware of own personal strengths as a teacher.
<b>The teacher is responsible</b>	Teachers are responsible and take their job and their challenges seriously.
<b>The teacher is open-minded</b>	Accepts other people’s opinions, cultures and perspectives. Diversity and multiculturalism is a good thing. Meet colleagues and parents in dialogues with respect and without dominance, control and misuse of power
<b>The teacher is conscious of and true to the core values of school</b>	Teachers know what the important and right values of school and teaching is, and is able to hold on to these through changes.
<b>The teacher is everyday- and practice oriented</b>	The teacher’s main issue is the everyday-life in school and their day-to-day exertion of their job.
<b>The teacher is dedicated</b>	teachers are strong and proud and believe they have a wonderful job



**Doctoral Theses at The Faculty of Psychology,**  
**University of Bergen**

<b>1980</b>	Allen, H.M., Dr. philos.	Parent-offspring interactions in willow grouse ( <i>Lagopus L. Lagopus</i> ).
<b>1981</b>	Myhrer, T., Dr. philos.	Behavioral Studies after selective disruption of hippocampal inputs in albino rats.
<b>1982</b>	Svebak, S., Dr. philos.	The significance of motivation for task-induced tonic physiological changes.
<b>1983</b>	Myhre, G., Dr. philos.	The Biopsychology of behavior in captive Willow ptarmigan.
	Eide, R., Dr. philos.	PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS AND INDICES OF HEALTH RISKS. The relationship of psychosocial conditions to subjective complaints, arterial blood pressure, serum cholesterol, serum triglycerides and urinary catecholamines in middle aged populations in Western Norway.
	Værnes, R.J., Dr. philos.	Neuropsychological effects of diving.
<b>1984</b>	Kolstad, A., Dr. philos.	Til diskusjonen om sammenhengen mellom sosiale forhold og psykiske strukturer. En epidemiologisk undersøkelse blant barn og unge.
	Løberg, T., Dr. philos.	Neuropsychological assessment in alcohol dependence.
<b>1985</b>	Hellesnes, T., Dr. philos.	Læring og problemløsning. En studie av den perseptuelle analysens betydning for verbal læring.
	Håland, W., Dr. philos.	Psykoterapi: relasjon, utviklingsprosess og effekt.
<b>1986</b>	Hagtvet, K.A., Dr. philos.	The construct of test anxiety: Conceptual and methodological issues.
	Jellestad, F.K., Dr. philos.	Effects of neuron specific amygdala lesions on fear-motivated behavior in rats.
<b>1987</b>	Aarø, L.E., Dr. philos.	Health behaviour and socioeconomic Status. A survey among the adult population in Norway.
	Underlid, K., Dr. philos.	Arbeidsløyse i psykososialt perspektiv.
	Laberg, J.C., Dr. philos.	Expectancy and classical conditioning in alcoholics' craving.
	Vollmer, F.C., Dr. philos.	Essays on explanation in psychology.
	Ellertsen, B., Dr. philos.	Migraine and tension headache: Psychophysiology, personality and therapy.
<b>1988</b>	Kaufmann, A., Dr. philos.	Antisocial atferd hos ungdom. En studie av psykologiske determinanter.

	Mykletun, R.J., Dr. philos.	Teacher stress: personality, work-load and health.
	Havik, O.E., Dr. philos.	After the myocardial infarction: A medical and psychological study with special emphasis on perceived illness.
<b>1989</b>	Bråten, S., Dr. philos.	Menneskedyaden. En teoretisk tese om sinnets dialogiske natur med informasjons- og utviklingspsykologiske implikasjoner sammenholdt med utvalgte spedbarnsstudier.
	Wold, B., Dr. psychol.	Lifestyles and physical activity. A theoretical and empirical analysis of socialization among children and adolescents.
<b>1990</b>	Flaten, M.A., Dr. psychol.	The role of habituation and learning in reflex modification.
<b>1991</b>	Alsaker, F.D., Dr. philos.	Global negative self-evaluations in early adolescence.
	Kraft, P., Dr. philos.	AIDS prevention in Norway. Empirical studies on diffusion of knowledge, public opinion, and sexual behaviour.
	Endresen, I.M., Dr. philos.	Psychoimmunological stress markers in working life.
	Faleide, A.O., Dr. philos.	Asthma and allergy in childhood. Psychosocial and psychotherapeutic problems.
<b>1992</b>	Dalen, K., Dr. philos.	Hemispheric asymmetry and the Dual-Task Paradigm: An experimental approach.
	Bø, I.B., Dr. philos.	Ungdoms sosiale økologi. En undersøkelse av 14-16 åringers sosiale nettverk.
	Nivison, M.E., Dr. philos.	The relationship between noise as an experimental and environmental stressor, physiological changes and psychological factors.
	Torgersen, A.M., Dr. philos.	Genetic and environmental influence on temperamental behaviour. A longitudinal study of twins from infancy to adolescence.
<b>1993</b>	Larsen, S., Dr. philos.	Cultural background and problem drinking.
	Nordhus, I.H., Dr. philos.	Family caregiving. A community psychological study with special emphasis on clinical interventions.
	Thuen, F., Dr. psychol.	Accident-related behaviour among children and young adolescents: Prediction and prevention.
	Solheim, R., Dr. philos.	Spesifikke lærevansker. Diskrepanskriteriet anvendt i seleksjonsmetodikk.
	Johnsen, B.H., Dr. psychol.	Brain asymmetry and facial emotional expressions: Conditioning experiments.
<b>1994</b>	Tønnessen, F.E., Dr. philos.	The etiology of Dyslexia.
	Kvale, G., Dr. psychol.	Psychological factors in anticipatory nausea and vomiting in cancer chemotherapy.
	Asbjørnsen, A.E., Dr. psychol.	Structural and dynamic factors in dichotic listening: An interactional model.



	Bru, E., Dr. philos.	The role of psychological factors in neck, shoulder and low back pain among female hospitale staff.
	Braathen, E.T., Dr. psychol.	Prediction of excellence and discontinuation in different types of sport: The significance of motivation and EMG.
	Johannessen, B.F., Dr. philos.	Det flytende kjønnet. Om lederskap, politikk og identitet.
<b>1995</b>	Sam, D.L., Dr. psychol.	Acculturation of young immigrants in Norway: A psychological and socio-cultural adaptation.
	Bjaalid, I.-K., Dr. philos	Component processes in word recognition.
	Martinsen, Ø., Dr. philos.	Cognitive style and insight.
	Nordby, H., Dr. philos.	Processing of auditory deviant events: Mismatch negativity of event-related brain potentials.
	Raaheim, A., Dr. philos.	Health perception and health behaviour, theoretical considerations, empirical studies, and practical implications.
	Seltzer, W.J., Dr.philos.	Studies of Psychocultural Approach to Families in Therapy.
	Brun, W., Dr.philos.	Subjective conceptions of uncertainty and risk.
	Aas, H.N., Dr. psychol.	Alcohol expectancies and socialization: Adolescents learning to drink.
	Bjørkly, S., Dr. psychol.	Diagnosis and prediction of intra-institutional aggressive behaviour in psychotic patients
<b>1996</b>	Anderssen, N., Dr. psychol.	Physical activity of young people in a health perspective: Stability, change and social influences.
	Sandal, Gro Mjeldheim, Dr. psychol.	Coping in extreme environments: The role of personality.
	Strumse, Einar, Dr. philos.	The psychology of aesthetics: explaining visual preferences for agrarian landscapes in Western Norway.
	Hestad, Knut, Dr. philos.	Neuropsychological deficits in HIV-1 infection.
	Lugoe, L.Wycliffe, Dr. philos.	Prediction of Tanzanian students' HIV risk and preventive behaviours
	Sandvik, B. Gunnhild, Dr. philos.	Fra distriktsjordmor til institusjonsjordmor. Fremveksten av en profesjon og en profesjonsutdanning
	Lie, Gro Therese, Dr. psychol.	The disease that dares not speak its name: Studies on factors of importance for coping with HIV/AIDS in Northern Tanzania
	Øygard, Lisbet, Dr. philos.	Health behaviors among young adults. A psychological and sociological approach
	Stormark, Kjell Morten, Dr. psychol.	Emotional modulation of selective attention: Experimental and clinical evidence.
	Einarsen, Ståle, Dr. psychol.	Bullying and harassment at work: epidemiological and psychosocial aspects.

<b>1997</b>	Knivsberg, Ann-Mari, Dr. philos.	Behavioural abnormalities and childhood psychopathology: Urinary peptide patterns as a potential tool in diagnosis and remediation.
	Eide, Arne H., Dr. philos.	Adolescent drug use in Zimbabwe. Cultural orientation in a global-local perspective and use of psychoactive substances among secondary school students.
	Sørensen, Marit, Dr. philos.	The psychology of initiating and maintaining exercise and diet behaviour.
	Skjæveland, Oddvar, Dr. psychol.	Relationships between spatial-physical neighborhood attributes and social relations among neighbors.
	Zewdie, Teka, Dr. philos.	Mother-child relational patterns in Ethiopia. Issues of developmental theories and intervention programs.
	Wilhelmsen, Britt Unni, Dr. philos.	Development and evaluation of two educational programmes designed to prevent alcohol use among adolescents.
	Manger, Terje, Dr. philos.	Gender differences in mathematical achievement among Norwegian elementary school students.
<b>1998</b>		
V	Lindstrøm, Torill Christine, Dr. philos.	«Good Grief»: Adapting to Bereavement.
	Skogstad, Anders, Dr. philos.	Effects of leadership behaviour on job satisfaction, health and efficiency.
	Haldorsen, Ellen M. Håland, Dr. psychol.	Return to work in low back pain patients.
	Besemer, Susan P., Dr. philos.	Creative Product Analysis: The Search for a Valid Model for Understanding Creativity in Products.
H	Winje, Dagfinn, Dr. psychol.	Psychological adjustment after severe trauma. A longitudinal study of adults' and children's posttraumatic reactions and coping after the bus accident in Måbødalen, Norway 1988.
	Vosburg, Suzanne K., Dr. philos.	The effects of mood on creative problem solving.
	Eriksen, Hege R., Dr. philos.	Stress and coping: Does it really matter for subjective health complaints?
	Jakobsen, Reidar, Dr. psychol.	Empiriske studier av kunnskap og holdninger om hiv/aids og den normative seksuelle utvikling i ungdomsårene.
<b>1999</b>		
V	Mikkelsen, Aslaug, Dr. philos.	Effects of learning opportunities and learning climate on occupational health.
	Samdal, Oddrun, Dr. philos.	The school environment as a risk or resource for students' health-related behaviours and subjective well-being.
	Friestad, Christine, Dr. philos.	Social psychological approaches to smoking.
	Ekeland, Tor-Johan, Dr. philos.	Meining som medisin. Ein analyse av placebofenomenet og implikasjoner for terapi og terapeutiske teoriar.
H	Saban, Sara, Dr. psychol.	Brain Asymmetry and Attention: Classical Conditioning Experiments.

	Carlsten, Carl Thomas, Dr. philos.	God lesing – God læring. En aksjonsrettet studie av undervisning i fagtekstlesing.
	Dundas, Ingrid, Dr. psychol.	Functional and dysfunctional closeness. Family interaction and children's adjustment.
	Engen, Liv, Dr. philos.	Kartlegging av leseferdighet på småskoletrinnet og vurdering av faktorer som kan være av betydning for optimal leseutvikling.
<b>2000</b>		
V	Hovland, Ole Johan, Dr. philos.	Transforming a self-preserving "alarm" reaction into a self-defeating emotional response: Toward an integrative approach to anxiety as a human phenomenon.
	Lillejord, Sølvi, Dr. philos.	Handlingsrasjonalitet og spesialundervisning. En analyse av aktørperspektiver.
	Sandell, Ove, Dr. philos.	Den varme kunnskapen.
	Oftedal, Marit Petersen, Dr. philos.	Diagnostisering av ordavkodingsvansker: En prosessanalytisk tilnæringsmåte.
H	Sandbak, Tone, Dr. psychol.	Alcohol consumption and preference in the rat: The significance of individual differences and relationships to stress pathology
	Eid, Jarle, Dr. psychol.	Early predictors of PTSD symptom reporting; The significance of contextual and individual factors.
<b>2001</b>		
V	Skinstad, Anne Helene, Dr. philos.	Substance dependence and borderline personality disorders.
	Binder, Per-Einar, Dr. psychol.	Individet og den meningsbærende andre. En teoretisk undersøkelse av de mellommenneskelige forutsetningene for psykisk liv og utvikling med utgangspunkt i Donald Winnicotts teori.
	Roald, Ingvild K., Dr. philos.	Building of concepts. A study of Physics concepts of Norwegian deaf students.
H	Fekadu, Zelalem W., Dr. philos.	Predicting contraceptive use and intention among a sample of adolescent girls. An application of the theory of planned behaviour in Ethiopian context.
	Melesse, Fantu, Dr. philos.	The more intelligent and sensitive child (MISC) mediational intervention in an Ethiopian context: An evaluation study.
	Råheim, Målfrid, Dr. philos.	Kvinnens kroppserfaring og livssammenheng. En fenomenologisk – hermeneutisk studie av friske kvinner og kvinner med kroniske muskelsmerter.
	Engelsen, Birthe Kari, Dr. psychol.	Measurement of the eating problem construct.
	Lau, Bjørn, Dr. philos.	Weight and eating concerns in adolescence.
<b>2002</b>		
V	Ihlebak, Camilla, Dr. philos.	Epidemiological studies of subjective health complaints.
	Rosén, Gunnar O. R., Dr. philos.	The phantom limb experience. Models for understanding and treatment of pain with hypnosis.

	Høines, Marit Johnsen, Dr. philos.	Fleksible språkrom. Matematikklæring som tekstutvikling.
	Anthun, Roald Andor, Dr. philos.	School psychology service quality. Consumer appraisal, quality dimensions, and collaborative improvement potential
	Pallesen, Ståle, Dr. psychol.	Insomnia in the elderly. Epidemiology, psychological characteristics and treatment.
	Midthassel, Unni Vere, Dr. philos.	Teacher involvement in school development activity. A study of teachers in Norwegian compulsory schools
	Kallestad, Jan Helge, Dr. philos.	Teachers, schools and implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program.
H	Ofte, Sonja Helgesen, Dr. psychol.	Right-left discrimination in adults and children.
	Netland, Marit, Dr. psychol.	Exposure to political violence. The need to estimate our estimations.
	Diseth, Åge, Dr. psychol.	Approaches to learning: Validity and prediction of academic performance.
	Bjuland, Raymond, Dr. philos.	Problem solving in geometry. Reasoning processes of student teachers working in small groups: A dialogical approach.
<b>2003</b>		
V	Arefjord, Kjersti, Dr. psychol.	After the myocardial infarction – the wives' view. Short- and long-term adjustment in wives of myocardial infarction patients.
	Ingjaldsson, Jón Þorvaldur, Dr. psychol.	Unconscious Processes and Vagal Activity in Alcohol Dependency.
	Holden, Børge, Dr. philos.	Følger av atferdsanalytiske forklaringer for atferdsanalysens tilnærming til utforming av behandling.
	Holsen, Ingrid, Dr. philos.	Depressed mood from adolescence to 'emerging adulthood'. Course and longitudinal influences of body image and parent-adolescent relationship.
	Hammar, Åsa Karin, Dr. psychol.	Major depression and cognitive dysfunction- An experimental study of the cognitive effort hypothesis.
	Sprugevica, Ieva, Dr. philos.	The impact of enabling skills on early reading acquisition.
	Gabrielsen, Egil, Dr. philos.	LESE FOR LIVET. Lesekompetansen i den norske voksenbefolkningen sett i lys av visjonen om en enhetsskole.
H	Hansen, Anita Lill, Dr. psychol.	The influence of heart rate variability in the regulation of attentional and memory processes.
	Dyregrov, Kari, Dr. philos.	The loss of child by suicide, SIDS, and accidents: Consequences, needs and provisions of help.
<b>2004</b>		
V	Torsheim, Torbjørn, Dr. psychol.	Student role strain and subjective health complaints: Individual, contextual, and longitudinal perspectives.
	Haugland, Bente Storm Mowatt Dr. psychol.	Parental alcohol abuse. Family functioning and child adjustment.

	Milde, Anne Marita, Dr. psychol.	Ulcerative colitis and the role of stress. Animal studies of psychobiological factors in relationship to experimentally induced colitis.
	Stornes, Tor, Dr. philos.	Socio-moral behaviour in sport. An investigation of perceptions of sportspersonship in handball related to important factors of socio-moral influence.
	Mæhle, Magne, Dr. philos.	Re-inventing the child in family therapy: An investigation of the relevance and applicability of theory and research in child development for family therapy involving children.
	Kobbeltvedt, Therese, Dr. psychol.	Risk and feelings: A field approach.
H	Thomsen, Tormod, Dr. psychol.	Localization of attention in the brain.
	Løberg, Else-Marie, Dr. psychol.	Functional laterality and attention modulation in schizophrenia: Effects of clinical variables.
	Kyrkjebø, Jane Mikkelsen, Dr. philos.	Learning to improve: Integrating continuous quality improvement learning into nursing education.
	Laumann, Karin, Dr. psychol.	Restorative and stress-reducing effects of natural environments: Experiential, behavioural and cardiovascular indices.
	Hølgersen, Helge, PhD	Mellom oss - Essay i relasjonell psykoanalyse.
<b>2005</b>		
V	Hetland, Hilde, Dr. psychol.	Leading to the extraordinary? Antecedents and outcomes of transformational leadership.
	Iversen, Anette Christine, Dr. philos.	Social differences in health behaviour: the motivational role of perceived control and coping.
H	Mathisen, Gro Ellen, PhD	Climates for creativity and innovation: Definitions, measurement, predictors and consequences.
	Sævi, Tone, Dr. philos.	Seeing disability pedagogically – The lived experience of disability in the pedagogical encounter.
	Wiium, Nora, PhD	Intrapersonal factors, family and school norms: combined and interactive influence on adolescent smoking behaviour.
	Kanagaratnam, Pushpa, PhD	Subjective and objective correlates of Posttraumatic Stress in immigrants/refugees exposed to political violence.
	Larsen, Torill M. B. , PhD	Evaluating principals` and teachers` implementation of Second Step. A case study of four Norwegian primary schools.
	Bancila, Delia, PhD	Psychosocial stress and distress among Romanian adolescents and adults.
<b>2006</b>		
V	Hillestad, Torgeir Martin, Dr. philos.	Normalitet og avvik. Forutsetninger for et objektivt psykopatologisk avviksbegrep. En psykologisk, sosial, erkjennelsesteoretisk og teorihistorisk framstilling.
	Nordanger, Dag Øystein, Dr. psychol.	Psychosocial discourses and responses to political violence in post-war Tigray, Ethiopia.

	Rimol, Lars Morten, PhD	Behavioral and fMRI studies of auditory laterality and speech sound processing.
	Krumsvik, Rune Johan, Dr. philos.	ICT in the school. ICT-initiated school development in lower secondary school.
	Norman, Elisabeth, Dr. psychol.	Gut feelings and unconscious thought: An exploration of fringe consciousness in implicit cognition.
	Israel, K Pravin, Dr. psychol.	Parent involvement in the mental health care of children and adolescents. Empirical studies from clinical care setting.
	Glasø, Lars, PhD	Affects and emotional regulation in leader-subordinate relationships.
	Knutsen, Ketil, Dr. philos.	HISTORIER UNGDOM LEVER – En studie av hvordan ungdommer bruker historie for å gjøre livet meningsfullt.
	Matthiesen, Stig Berge, PhD	Bullying at work. Antecedents and outcomes.
H	Gramstad, Arne, PhD	Neuropsychological assessment of cognitive and emotional functioning in patients with epilepsy.
	Bendixen, Mons, PhD	Antisocial behaviour in early adolescence: Methodological and substantive issues.
	Mrumbi, Khalifa Maulid, PhD	Parental illness and loss to HIV/AIDS as experienced by AIDS orphans aged between 12-17 years from Temeke District, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: A study of the children's psychosocial health and coping responses.
	Hetland, Jørn, Dr. psychol.	The nature of subjective health complaints in adolescence: Dimensionality, stability, and psychosocial predictors
	Kakoko, Deodatus Conatus Vitalis, PhD	Voluntary HIV counselling and testing service uptake among primary school teachers in Mwanza, Tanzania: assessment of socio-demographic, psychosocial and socio-cognitive aspects
	Mykletun, Arnstein, Dr. psychol.	Mortality and work-related disability as long-term consequences of anxiety and depression: Historical cohort designs based on the HUNT-2 study
	Sivertsen, Børge, PhD	Insomnia in older adults. Consequences, assessment and treatment.
<b>2007</b>		
V	Singhammer, John, Dr. philos.	Social conditions from before birth to early adulthood – the influence on health and health behaviour
	Janvin, Carmen Ani Cristea, PhD	Cognitive impairment in patients with Parkinson's disease: profiles and implications for prognosis
	Braarud, Hanne Cecilie, Dr. psychol.	Infant regulation of distress: A longitudinal study of transactions between mothers and infants
	Tveito, Torill Helene, PhD	Sick Leave and Subjective Health Complaints
	Magnussen, Liv Heide, PhD	Returning disability pensioners with back pain to work

Elin Marie Thuen, Dr.philos.

Learning environment, students' coping styles and emotional and behavioural problems. A study of Norwegian secondary school students.

Ole Asbjørn Solberg, PhD

Peacekeeping warriors – A longitudinal study of Norwegian peacekeepers in Kosovo