

KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT? TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF AN L1 LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE SUBJECT CURRICULUM DOCUMENT

ANNIKEN HOTVEDT SUNDBY¹ AND KARI ANNE RØDNES²

¹*Department of Education, University of Oslo;* ²*Department of Teacher Education and School Research, University of Oslo*

Abstract

After the state-based curriculum-development process has finished, the local curriculum-making of the teachers begins. This paper empirically explores the subject curriculum from the perspectives of teachers, focusing on the Norwegian language and literature subject (L1). Using group interviews and drawing on curriculum theory and L1 research and disciplinary didactics that focus on knowledge, we examine how upper secondary school teachers engage with and understand a newly launched curriculum document in Norwegian L1. Our analysis revealed that the L1 teachers had various perspectives on what they considered important subject-matter knowledge, depending on how they read, navigated, and combined components within and across the curriculum text. In addition, the L1 teachers generally perceived a rather weak narrative about explicit subject-matter knowledge in the curriculum document. Finally, most L1 teachers felt they were being guided in terms of *how* to teach rather than *what* to teach. Our findings suggest that a consideration of teachers' voices is crucial for understanding how a formal subject curriculum text works to select content in an L1 subject and the role that knowledge plays in a competency- and future-oriented curriculum such as Norway's.

Keywords: Norwegian L1, perceived curriculum, teacher interviews, L1 content, subject-matter knowledge

1. INTRODUCTION

Any attempts to revise a subject curriculum document within a state-based curriculum-development process, as Norway has recently done, inevitably mobilise debates about content in school subjects. Various stakeholders in the public debate raise questions such as “What to include?” and “What can be taken out?” of a school subject. These questions are especially important for those who work with the curriculum in their practice: the teachers. Teachers are vital to the successful implementation of curricular reforms; they are “ultimate enactors” and “primary street-level bureaucrats” (Hübner et al., 2021, p. 802).

Researchers have identified a complex journey between curriculum intentions and realisation, however (Ball et al., 2011), and have indicated a gap between the intended and formal curriculum and the perceived and operationalised curriculum. The aim of this article is thus to explore teachers’ perspectives on the Norwegian language and literature (L1) subject curriculum document launched in Norway in 2020, paying particular attention to “the knowledge question”. “The knowledge question” relates to the formal content knowledge students should know and learn in schools (Sundby & Karseth, 2021) and can also be framed as: “what knowledge is of most worth?” (Green & Krogh, 2020, p. 23). Empirical insights into L1 teachers’ perceptions of an L1 curriculum document can inform research and teacher education in L1 subjects, as well as the broad fields of curriculum studies and development. The knowledge developed using teachers’ classroom perspectives can also bridge the theory-practice divide and assist teachers in exploring their own curriculum-making processes.

Within curriculum studies, L1 subjects are interesting because they are “an epistemological mosaic of various forms of knowledge structures” (Sundby & Karseth, 2021, p. 2). “The knowledge question”, which addresses what students need to know and learn, represents a particular challenge in L1 subjects such as English or Norwegian because, according to Yates et al. (2019), the knowledge base in these subjects is neither stable nor transferable. National identity, social conditions and globalisation intervene with L1 subjects, causing them to change over time, making the content “difficult to define in terms of purpose and content” (Davies & Sawyer, 2023, p. 3). The diffuse nature of L1 subjects means that the teachers are largely responsible for providing coherence for the students in this broad and complex mixture of a school subject. Although much research has been conducted on specific aspects of L1 subjects, coherence and correlations in this multifaceted subject have received less attention. For example, a comparative study of Nordic PhD abstracts from 2000 to 2017 addressing L1 Danish, Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian identified a research focus on *reading* and *writing* along with a focus on teaching and reading *literature* (Holmberg et al., 2019). Comparing curricular texts of L1 subjects historically within a country or across countries can be a useful way to investigate tendencies or specific aspects of L1 subjects. L1 subjects are intertwined with national contexts, histories, and cultures (Erixon & Green, 2020),

however, which could explain why studies on curricular reforms (for example) have paid relatively little attention to L1 subjects, even though in most countries, these subjects receive the most hours and are taught to students throughout their schooling.

Globally, curriculum frameworks tend to move from content-oriented curricula that specify subject-matter knowledge to more overarching and competency-oriented curricula. Some scholars have referred to this tendency as the “competence turn” (Ryen & Jøsok, 2021) or the “competence discourse” (Deng, 2021). In several countries, such competence-oriented curricula are structured around big ideas or key concepts: for example, described as “what matters statements” in Wales (Hizli Alkan & Priestley, 2019), “building blocks” in the Netherlands (Nieveen & Kuiper, 2021), or “core elements”, the term used in Norway’s 2020 curriculum reform. Hizli Alkan and Priestley (2019) argue that teachers may interpret new concepts in the curriculum in a manner that differs from policy intentions. In addition, an open and competency-oriented curriculum can pose challenges to teachers regarding what subject-matter knowledge to select and include in their subjects.

Norway, where our study took place, is currently implementing a new national school reform known as the LK20 reform (referring to Læreplanen Kunnskapsløftet 2020, or Knowledge Promotion Reform 2020). Norway’s new curriculum is an interesting case because it follows the international trend towards a competency-oriented curriculum, and with the new reform, global concepts such as core elements and interdisciplinary topics have been introduced in the curriculum in all subject areas. Norway has also taken steps towards online platformisation of the curriculum, since every subject curriculum from 2020 is available as an online web page with hyperlinks. Because we assume that the curriculum document’s technical design, format, and structure may affect how teachers interpret the content found in the curriculum, we have posed the following two research questions (RQs):

- 1) How do teachers in the Norwegian L1 subject read and navigate the subject curriculum document of Norwegian L1?
- 2) What are Norwegian L1 teachers’ perspectives on subject-matter knowledge based on the subject curriculum document of Norwegian L1?

In the following section, we present the context of the latest curriculum reform in Norway. We then provide a three-part literature review by addressing (1) subject-matter knowledge in L1 subjects, (2) the curriculum and teachers, and (3) subject-matter knowledge in the curriculum, respectively. Before presenting the findings, we introduce our methodological approach and the composition of the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum document. Lastly, we address issues and implications from the findings in the discussion section.

2. THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Norway has a state-based national curriculum, with curriculum work delegated to local schools. The policy process of the “renewal and improvement” of Norway’s

national curriculum started in 2013, when White Paper 20 from the Ministry of Education and Research (2013) established a government-appointed commission to assess the school subjects. At that time, seven years had passed since the previous reform, known as the Knowledge Promotion Reform 2006 (LK06). The LK06 reform represented a shift from a content-oriented to a competency-oriented curriculum (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010). Across all subjects, competence aims as well as skills such as oracy, writing, reading, numeracy, and digital skills were included. LK06 was also the first common school reform for primary and secondary education in Norway. The LK06 reform introduced a common curriculum document for all general subjects (including the Norwegian L1 subject), covering primary through upper secondary education.

Interestingly, when a government-appointed commission started its work in 2013 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013), a number of general subjects, including the Norwegian L1 subject, had recently undergone revisions to strengthen students' literacy skills. Revisions were also implemented in 2008, when reading was strengthened, and in 2010, when writing was strengthened. These changes show that the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum document has undergone several adjustments since the "competence turn" initiated by the LK06 reform. The key objectives of the new LK20 reform are the introduction of a new core curriculum (launched in 2017), as well as incorporating interdisciplinary topics and core elements and providing in-depth learning, and addressing societal challenges (Karseth et al., 2022). Further important goals include a better progression of students' learning trajectories, a stronger focus on content in school subjects, and the development of critical thinking (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016). A special responsibility was assigned to the Norwegian L1 subject for the development of oracy, writing and reading with the LK20 reform (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020).

Norway's process of developing the national curriculum involves researchers, teachers, and trade unions. One ambition of the state-based curriculum-development process was to achieve a transparent and long-term co-construction of the subject curriculum with professionals. The first report from an ongoing study (2019–2025) on the curriculum-renewal process found considerable consensus among various stakeholders that the curriculum-development process had been "a positive experience of involvement through invited responses and hearings" (Karseth et al., 2020, p. 18). As part of the ongoing study, a nationwide survey of teachers was completed in the fall of 2020. This survey showed that most teachers had a positive attitude towards the new curriculum (Vika, 2021).

3. SUBJECT-MATER KNOWLEDGE IN L1 SUBJECTS

From an L1 disciplinary didactic perspective, researchers and practitioners have long questioned and discussed subject-matter knowledge. L1 research includes subfields such as for example literacy, oracy, language and literature. Interestingly, the

starting point for discussions within L1 research and L1 disciplinary didactics in Norway has often been modified curriculum design and shifting curricular components and content in the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum. For example, Ongstad (2020), who examined the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum from 1939 to 2020, found that there has been a shift from national to international focus. Another example is that the concept and inclusion of multimodal texts in the Norwegian L1 subject in LK06 sparked debates on *why* and *how*. The same reform led to controversy when author names and the titles of novels, short stories, and poems disappeared from the curriculum text. As mentioned earlier, the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum document was revised in 2008, 2010 and 2013, and debates about content in this subject were present throughout the curriculum development process towards the renewed curriculum in 2020. While for the last 40 to 50 years, motivations in Norway for discussions of the Norwegian L1 subject can be summarised in two main types of discourses, “student-centred” and “society-centred,” based on different views on students’ role in the learning process and the subject’s role in society (Aase, 2019). Ongstad (2004, 2015), in contrast, characterises L1 research as a field with a strong “didactisation”, meaning that research under this umbrella generally is normative and practical, including possibilities of how a specific content aspect *can* and *should* be taught in L1 subjects. This approach is often exemplified by focusing on “best practice” methods, pedagogical approaches, and practical contexts.

Across countries, *language learning*, *classical literature*, and *cultural history* have formed the foundation of L1 subjects. *Writing* and *reading* abilities and *oral skills* have an obvious place in L1 subjects, and today reading, writing, and oral skills are often referred to as *literacy*. Due to the global digital multimodal text universe that students must navigate today, *critical literacy* has also received much attention. One study of learning materials used in Danish L1 defined 19 categories of content, from *handwriting* to *Scandinavian languages* (Bundsgaard et al., 2020, pp. 10-11). A similar number of categories can be assumed for most other L1 subjects.

L1 subjects can be considered a toolkit or support for all the other school subjects because of their focus on reading and writing skills. Macken-Horarik (2011, p. 198) notes that “English is not simply a school subject but the portal to the spoken and written language of school learning. It is the subject that inducts children into language across the curriculum,” while Diamond and Bulfin (2021, p. 33) argue that in today’s English L1 subject, “Everything is potentially in play—from the specialised to the mundane, from literacy texts to social media and advertising, from the language of Shakespeare to the language of homes and communities.” In this mixed context, selecting and working with texts are prominent issues. As Yates et al. (2019, p. 60) describe:

What is it assumed that teachers are doing or developing with these texts—is it about meaning making, is it about technical (disciplinary) knowledge, is it about helping to develop students’ “literacy”? Do the qualities of the texts themselves matter—and if so, what is it that matters? How much are the debates about text selection simply

expressions of personal preference or political values or of a teacher's experience of what has "worked" or not worked with a particular group of students.

Due to the complexity of L1 subjects, L1 researchers have tended to focus on specific phenomena or aspects of the subject, including *literacy* (Löfgren & Erixon, 2022), *genre writing* (Piekut, 2018), *grammar* (Brøseth & Nygård, 2023; Myhill, 2018), or *literature* (Johansson, 2021; Kähkölä & Rättä, 2021; Myren-Svelstad & Grüters, 2022). In some studies, the curriculum document is the main object of analysis: for example, the aspect of *rhetoric* in the national language subject across Scandinavia (Hogarth et al., 2021) or *literature* education across the broader Nordic countries (Gourvenec et al., 2020). Some L1 research use L1 curriculum documents as context descriptions to initiate or justify research on a specific aspect of an L1 subject.

4. CURRICULUM AND TEACHERS

The concept of curriculum has many connotations. Young (2014a, p. 7) notes that "much writing and research about the curriculum is devoted to saying what it ought to do, and what its aims are, with less regard for what exactly a curriculum is." Definitions of this concept commonly distinguish between the ideal, formal, perceived, operational, and experienced curriculum (Goodlad, 1979). The ideal and formal curriculum can be described as the "indented" curriculum, typically including policy documents, while the perceived and operational curriculum can be characterised as the enacted curriculum in schools. The experienced curriculum is what students have learned.

Others have approached the curriculum as a collection of social practices, focusing on what happens across multiple layers of activity (Priestley et al., 2021). In this article, we consider the level at which teachers operate. We focus on the curriculum as a written text, the intentional aspect, and examine how teachers perceive it as a predetermined framework for teaching.

Several lenses are available for investigating the relationship between teachers and the curriculum. For example, contemporary research and curriculum studies have used the concept of "teacher agency", a teacher's ability and willingness to act (or not), to investigate teachers' curriculum-making (Bergh & Wahlström, 2018; Hughes & Lewis, 2020; Priestley et al., 2012). Zooming into *content* in teaching and school subjects, numerous fields and studies have featured sources of *teacher knowledge*, a concept that Shulman (1986) developed within teacher education. Shulman divided teacher knowledge into three related categories: *content knowledge*, *pedagogical content knowledge*, and *curricular knowledge*. But even though researchers and practitioners have widely used and theoretically developed Shulman's three categories, they have also criticised them for being hard to distinguish. For example, Hopmann (2007) questioned whether using pedagogical content knowledge as a framework works when analysing subject matter in school subjects. According to Deng (2018), Shulman and associates tend to overlook the construction of a school subject, since Shulman's pedagogical content knowledge is

more focused on the enacted and operational curriculum in the classroom; Deng notes that “the content in the institutional curriculum remains largely unexplored and undertheorized” (2018, p. 156). Deng (2018, 2021) calls for a curriculum analysis in which teachers identify the *educational potential of content* included in curriculum texts.

5. SUBJECT-MATTER KNOWLEDGE IN THE CURRICULUM

As discussed earlier, the “competence turn” represents a more open curriculum in terms of content prescriptions. Curriculum theory has criticised the competency orientation for “stripping the knowledge out of the curriculum” (Priestley & Biesta, 2013, p. 5). According to Young (2014b), a curriculum that is not subject-based blurs distinctions, lacks coherence, and limits student progression. Muller (2022) notes that the claim regarding the importance of a subject-based curriculum and the idea of “powerful knowledge” in school subjects is rooted “in neo-Bernsteinian social realism” (p. 2). Bernstein (1999, 2000) developed a theory of knowledge in which he outlined different forms of knowledge discourses and argued that knowledge (i.e., the content) of the curriculum is a matter of recontextualising processes.

From a curriculum theory perspective “powerful knowledge” refers to particular knowledge included in the curriculum. Young (2008, p. 14) notes that “schooling, from this perspective, is about providing access to the specialized knowledge that is embodied in different knowledge domains.” According to Muller and Young (2019), powerful knowledge has three characteristics. Such knowledge is *differentiated*, meaning it is something other than the everyday knowledge that people acquire through their families or communities. Second, it is *systematic* and *generalisable*, meaning that subject-matter knowledge is interconnected and related to one another and not tied to a specific context or experience. Finally, it is *specialised*, meaning connections exist between academic disciplines and school subjects. Specialised knowledge is closely connected to Bernstein’s recontextualisation concept and how educational knowledge, through processes of reformulation, is transformed into the pedagogical context of teaching and learning.

Scholars, from within and outside curriculum theory, have debated how best to understand the concept and the implications of powerful knowledge (Sundby & Karseth, 2021). White (2018) notes that most school subjects, especially those in the humanities and the arts, fall short of the key characteristic of *systematic* relations between concepts. Others, including Carlgren (2020), argue that knowledge should be widened to include tacit knowledge. Rudolph et al. (2018) called on scholars and practitioners working with powerful knowledge to address hegemonic knowledge in disciplinary specialisation more fully.

Several researchers have questioned *if* and *how* the idea of powerful knowledge can be separated from pedagogical concerns. Alderson (2020) argues that the dichotomies or characteristics of powerful knowledge are unhelpful in actual school settings because teachers’ curriculum-making efforts involve different

considerations and dimensions, including pedagogical considerations and questions of best-suited content. Similarly, other scholars have argued that the concept of powerful knowledge does not fully explain how to conceptualise practice or select specific content (Deng, 2022; Hordern, 2022). The idea of powerful knowledge is more orientated towards explaining the formal curriculum and reminding those who develop the curriculum that knowledge matters. Researchers have explored the operationalisation of powerful knowledge in some school subjects, however, investigating history (Puustinen & Khawaja, 2020; Wood & Sheehan, 2020) and geography (Roberts, 2022; Virranmäki et al., 2019) in greater depth than other subjects.

So far, L1 subjects have received less attention in the powerful knowledge debate. In this study, we seek to examine the curriculum of the Norwegian L1 subject by adopting a holistic approach in which we investigate “the knowledge question” within this multifaceted school subject. Focusing on the perceived curriculum and the intentional aspect—what Deng (2018, 2021) refers to as the educational potential—we see curriculum-making not as a linear process but as a dynamic process of interpretation. We contend that when teachers engage with a specific subject’s formal curriculum text (in our case Norwegian L1), subject-matter knowledge is made. When knowledge is “moved”—what Bernstein (2000) refers to as *recontextualisation*—from a government-prescribed subject curriculum document into the field of “reproduction” (i.e., the actual school setting), the content of a school subject comes into play.

A combination of curriculum theory and L1 research and disciplinary didactics is used to investigate the design and content of the subject curriculum of Norwegian L1. In contrast to curriculum theory, which is mainly orientated towards the ideological and formal curriculum based on historical and social conditions and power, L1 research and disciplinary didactics are more concerned with the operational curriculum and teachers’ reflective and subject-teaching practices. *What to teach, how to teach it, and why to teach this content in a specific subject* are central questions in didactics. Hopmann (2015) elaborates that multiple issues may arise when curriculum theory and didactics are connected, while Muller (2022) argues that the extensive pedagogy field, which includes didactic and curriculum studies, has long been disunited, with the two traditions often talking past each other in mutual misperception.

Thus, we are in line with Green and Krogh (2020), who claim that L1 education presents a “unique context for engaging” (p. 18) curriculum theory and didactics. Combining curriculum theory and didactics can be a potential avenue moving forward, since both traditions are concerned with selecting educational content in schooling. Focusing on what L1 teachers view as important subject-matter knowledge in relation to the formal and national curriculum for Norwegian L1, we use the three characteristics of powerful knowledge—*specialised, differentiated, and systematic* knowledge (Muller & Young, 2019)—to discuss the findings related

to the views of the teachers we interviewed on “the knowledge question” in Norwegian L1.

6. METHODS

6.1 Participants and data collection

This study uses a qualitative approach based on semi-structured group interviews with teachers at Norwegian upper secondary schools. We were interested in the teachers' explorative and reflective thinking, and the use of groups allowed for dynamic interactions that could elicit multiple views and opinions during the same interview (Creswell, 2018,). Group interviews are generally characterised by a non-directive interview style with no intention of reaching agreement (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019).

To recruit volunteer participants, we emailed the middle managers responsible for the Norwegian subject in different parts of Norway, including 21 upper secondary schools. Eighteen teachers from seven different schools across five municipalities were interviewed (see Table 1). Five of the group interviews involved two teachers, and two interviews involved four teachers. The teachers were randomly selected according to their availability and willingness to participate. Although the group interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the teachers participated physically in the interviews, which were held at their schools and lasted for 60–80 minutes. The teachers were in the early phase of rethinking their understanding of how and what to teach, according to the new subject curriculum. Three teachers led curriculum-development processes in their municipality or school. All seven schools were in central urban areas and, by Norwegian standards, were large schools.

Table 1. Informants' affiliations with schools and years of teaching experience

<i>Schools</i> <i>Years teaching Norwegian</i>	<i>School A</i>	<i>School B</i>	<i>School C</i>	<i>School D</i>	<i>School E</i>	<i>School F</i>	<i>School G</i>
<i>Teacher 1</i>	15 years	12 years	3 years	26 years	2 years	14 years	3 years
<i>Teacher 2</i>	22 years	10 years	8 years	17 years	6 years	2 years	6 years
<i>Teacher 3</i>			16 years			20 years	
<i>Teacher 4</i>			12 years			3 years	

6.2 Data analysis

The interview guide included questions about the format, structure, and understanding of concepts and subject-matter knowledge in the curricular text. We performed a multi-stage analysis inspired by thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) as well as collective qualitative analysis (Eggebø, 2020). Once transcribed, the data set was shared between the two researchers, and we individually made an abstract of each of the seven group interviews. In total, the recordings of the interviews amounted to eight hours and 41 minutes. They were transcribed in full, resulting in 128 Word pages. Writing an abstract of each of the seven group interviews was a way of reducing the volume of the data while simultaneously focusing on the two RQs. In collaboration, we then conducted a joint workshop in which we in dialogue developed themes based on the abstracts to capture the respondents' understandings and explanations.

We generated two themes: (1) the *format* and how the teachers navigated the curriculum document, and (2) the *content*. We divided the second theme into *subject-matter knowledge* and *how to teach* according to the subject curriculum text. After sorting the data into these themes, we returned to the material and systematically searched for illustrative quotations that were either typical or showed contradictions. The quotations were translated from Norwegian to English by the authors. When translating the teachers' utterances, we aimed to stay as close to the original formulations as possible. To provide clarity, however, we focused on meaning rather than word-by-word translation.

6.3 The subject curriculum document: A brief introduction

The governing categories introduced by the LK06 reform in 2006 include Basic Skills (see Table 2) and Competence Aims (examples shown in Figure 1). The LK20 reform retained these components and also includes new components, such as Subject Relevance and Central Values, Core Elements (see Table 2), Interdisciplinary Topics (see Table 2), and Assessment (formative and summative).

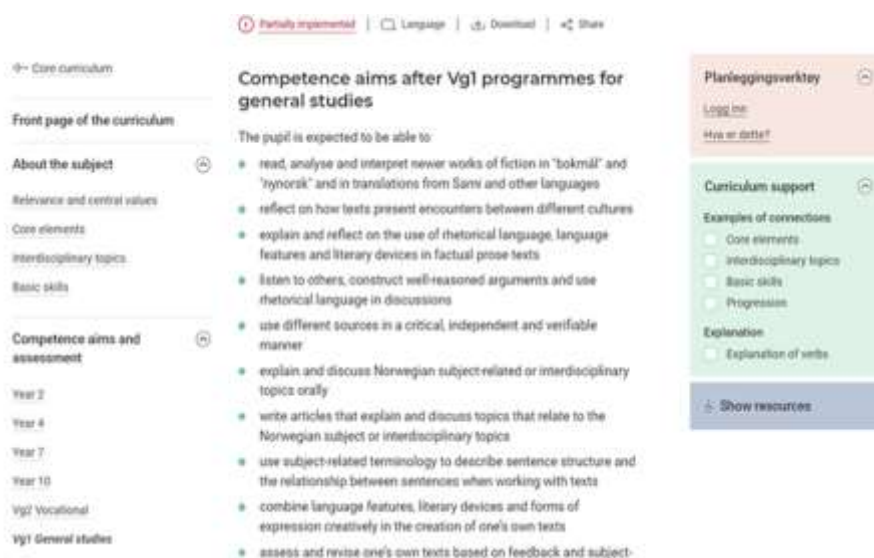
Table 2. Core elements, interdisciplinary topics, and basic skills in the Norwegian subject

	Core Elements	Interdisciplinary Topics	Basic Skills
1	Text in context	Health and life skills	Oral skills
2	Critical approach to text	Democracy and citizenship	Writing
3	Oral communication	Sustainability	Reading
4	Written text creation		Digital skills
5	Language as a system and opportunity		
6	Linguistic diversity		

The Norwegian L1 curriculum document's printout version from 2020 is a 17-page Microsoft Word or PDF file; the document is also available online as a web page with

hyperlinks. Whether the teachers read the printout or the online version and clicked on hyperlinks (which point to another location within the subject curriculum) thus might have influenced their understanding of the curriculum. Figure 1 provides an illustrative example of the online interactive curriculum for the Norwegian L1 subject. This screenshot contains examples of Competence Aims for the first year (Vg1) of general studies at the upper secondary level. Competence Aims are the only components in the curriculum that are presented as bullet points; the rest of the components are written in full paragraphs.

Figure 1. Screenshot of the digital interactive multimodal subject curriculum (Source: Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training)



7. FINDINGS

In this section we present our findings. We start by describing how the teachers use and navigate the curricular *format*. Then we address the teachers' perspectives on *content* in the L1 curriculum. Perspectives on content are divided into two subsections, accounting first for the teachers' views on important subject-matter knowledge, and second, for their views on how to teach according to the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum.

7.1 Navigating the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum

A clear majority of the teachers we interviewed reported using the clickable online version, while a minority visited the web page only to get a printout version of the

curriculum. Two divergent views emerged about the online version. Approximately half of the teachers perceived this version's additional support and hyperlinks to be helpful. As one informant put it, "I click on the explanations if I need to connect something in the curriculum. I think it's ingenious, making navigating the entire curriculum easier" (E, 2). A contrasting perception of the online version emerged among the other half of the teachers, who answered that the clickable online version did not add much to the understanding of the curriculum. As one representative of this view said, "I've clicked on this and that, but it gives me nothing. I understand which parts belong to what" (F, 1).

The teachers had varying views about the format and structure, regardless of whether they used the static printout or the online version. A majority expressed concerns about the coherence of the subject curriculum document. As one teacher noted, "It's a very complicated structure, with many levels below and above each other. And sometimes, you're not quite sure what level you're on. Maybe something's on multiple levels?" (B, 1). Similarly, another teacher noted, "As for the practical use of the curriculum, I'm not sure if the structure really helps me. I have to go through levels to really find what I'm looking for" (B, 2). These comments problematise the new format and how the subject curriculum is put together (e.g., the total number of categories such as Relevance and Central Values, Core Elements, Interdisciplinary Topics, Basic Skills, and Competence Aims and Assessment). The teachers who perceived the format as complicated talked about the various strategies they used to overcome or handle the challenges, such as "skip some parts," "go where I want," "take some shortcuts," and "focus on the text that's framed as bullet points and short." Contrary to these views, a small number of informants underlined that they found the format to be systematic and that the curriculum text was an easy-to-read policy document: "In some ways, all the components capture the complexity of the Norwegian L1 subject. The structure indicates that the subject is dynamic" (A, 1).

When asked which curriculum components they accessed when planning their lessons, all the teachers replied that they consulted the Competence Aims (see Figure 1 for examples). As one teacher stated:

My instinct is to go straight to the competence aims, which is the distilled version of the curriculum. And that instinct is strong enough for me to do it. I have to remind myself to read other parts of the curriculum as well. (G, 1)

A typical explanation was that the category of Competence Aims was familiar (it was introduced as a category with the previous reform in 2006) and that each grade level had specific Competence Aims. But one teacher noted that, since these aims were more open and less specific, "I don't check the Competence Aims like I used to" (F, 3).

To summarise, the majority of the teachers used the clickable online version of the curriculum, and a common view among the teachers was that the design of the curriculum document was rather complex due to its number of categories and levels.

A clear tendency for all the informants was to rely heavily on the components of the Competence Aims when planning their teaching.

7.2 What to teach: Subject-matter knowledge in the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum

In the interviews, the teachers were asked to express their opinions of what they interpreted to be important subject-matter knowledge, according to the subject curriculum document for Norwegian L1. One striking finding was that the majority of the teachers had difficulty discussing “the knowledge question.” They were more comfortable discussing the overall purposes and *why* the subject was important. When answering this question, the teachers also expressed a variety of perspectives. Some suggested “critical thinking or literacy” or “rhetoric,” while others identified “grammar and language,” “meta-language about language,” or “text in context.” One teacher, who expressed that “the knowledge question” was challenging, said:

This is the most difficult question. We just have to talk it through. Knowledge of language, texts, different genres, how to write an article, and literature. So ... knowledge about a lot. Rhetoric knowledge? I feel that this is important in this curriculum. There aren't any new big topics? But [students] need to be critical readers. Critical literacy, I think. (G, 1)

In general, teachers used words and phrases such as “expressed in broad terms” and “camouflaged” when referring to subject-matter knowledge. As one teacher commented, “This curriculum is quite vague for a teacher with less experience, isn't it?” (E, 2). Some teachers expressed a concern that explicit content descriptions of subject-matter knowledge were backgrounded. Reflecting on the Competence Aim “Read Old Norse texts in translation and compare them to texts from more recent times” (Vg2, second year of general studies), one teacher commented:

We had a subject meeting to discuss how to frame teaching Old Norse literature this year. Then I was a bit troubled. Before the students will be able to see the relevance of Old Norse for today, how much knowledge will they need about this topic? Because they need knowledge about Old Norse literature before they can compare. When actualisation comes at once—I might be a little worried about whether they know enough. (B, 2)

Several teachers indicated that students must have acquired some subject-matter knowledge before they could compare, see the relevance of texts, and write texts in the Norwegian L1 subject. As one teacher expressed, “You need to have knowledge of a topic to produce a good text; the text needs some content. If it's a text about historical conditions, [the students] must know some of the history” (C, 4). In this line, according to some teachers, much tacit subject-matter knowledge was implicitly expressed in the curriculum text. As one teacher stated:

My opinion is that the curriculum should've been more explicit. For example, the mentions of realist and modernist traditions, as well as literature from the 15th to 18th centuries, were left out in the development process but are now, to some extent,

included in the final version of the curriculum. From my perspective, some more defined explicit topics would've been helpful in keeping track of the development of the subject. (F, 1)

Several of the teachers expressed concerns about the openness of the curriculum:

I must say, I miss a more specific content component in the Norwegian L1 subject. I don't think it's easy to spot the content progression from one year to the next. (F, 3)

The "space" is simply larger. So in a way, you can choose to read it in an entirely new way. Skip all the old topics. Take an in depth-approach and focus on other new topics. But it can also be that the neighbouring class next door is doing things just like before, in line with R94 or LK06 [previous reforms], because there's room for that as well. (D, 2)

Overall, the teachers indicated that subject-matter knowledge was less specific in the curriculum text. When trying to pin down important subject-matter knowledge, we noted that although the teachers reported Competence Aims as a governing category, they also turned to other components in the curriculum text in their search for content. The teachers generally agreed that the component Core Elements (see Table 2) captured the various aspects and knowledge of the Norwegian L1 subject. As one teacher put it, the Core Elements "embrace [the subject]. I don't think anything is missing. I think they frame the subject in a good way" (G, 1). Similarly, another teacher stated, "They're within the comfort zone, way within, for the Norwegian L1 subject" (D, 2). Some teachers did express concerns about the Core Elements:

I was going to say that what I interpret as perhaps the clearest knowledge requirement—perhaps—lies in the purpose of the subject and in the Core Elements. But the content and the language in these components are written in very broad terms and can almost be perceived as buzzwords and not something we can take with us in our daily practice. So, I think it's more difficult than before to pin down what's the most significant subject-matter knowledge in the Norwegian L1 subject. (F, 4)

In addition to referring to the Core Elements, several teachers mentioned Interdisciplinary Topics (see Table 2) and that the descriptions of these topics provided subject-matter knowledge and a kind of direction in the Norwegian L1 subject. When discussing how all three Interdisciplinary Topics were included in the Norwegian L1 subject, one teacher stated that "topics such as democracy and citizenship and sustainability have helped us to gain a fresh perspective on the subject" (A, 2). As another teacher commented:

I'm very enthusiastic about Interdisciplinary Topics. I think they've helped me as a Norwegian teacher to understand the relevance of texts. For example, you can read Hamsun [a famous Norwegian writer, 1859–1952] based on the topic of Sustainability. (E, 1)

These two teachers saw opportunities for subject-matter knowledge when Interdisciplinary Topics were included in the subject. Other teachers underlined that the inclusion of Sustainability in the Norwegian L1 subject made connecting with other school subjects easier. Other teachers offered different perspectives on this issue; as one teacher stated, "It's a bit unclear what kind of expectations are

associated with these Interdisciplinary Topics. Are we expected to work with all three topics every year, or is it optional?" (F, 2)

One teacher, who had checked the clickable online version to see how many of the Competence Aims were related to the Interdisciplinary Topics in the first year of upper secondary school, found that "few connections are made in the online version" (B, 1). The teachers who expressed concerns about the Interdisciplinary Topics in the Norwegian L1 subject focused especially on Sustainability and were uncertain of what this topic involved in relation to the Norwegian L1 subject context. They believed that Sustainability was not a natural aspect of the Norwegian L1 subject. As one reflected, "Symbolic politics comes to mind when I'm thinking about these Interdisciplinary Topics. I think some Interdisciplinary Topics are better suited to the Norwegian subject than others. Maybe Sustainability is an extra add-on topic in the Norwegian subject?" (F, 3). Some teachers claimed that collaborating with other school subjects could be a solution for dealing with Sustainability, although they emphasised that this strategy had a possible downside because the Norwegian L1 subject text does not overly specify the subject-matter knowledge relevant to this issue. As one teacher noted:

Sustainable development? A bit difficult to see the direct link. This isn't because it isn't an important topic but because interacting with other school subjects working with this topic might turn the Norwegian subject into a skill-based subject instead of a subject that contributes relevant content. (G, 1)

Some argued that if collaborating with subjects such as Natural Science, for example, then that subject would be the leading content provider, while the Norwegian L1 subject would put the knowledge of rhetoric, critical literacy, and text composition to the table. In contrast, others considered that when Sustainability was included and described in the curriculum document of Norwegian L1, then the L1 teachers would have a rationale to set the conditions for content about that topic.

Overall, the L1 teachers perceived the Norwegian L1 curriculum to present both opportunities and challenges regarding subject-matter knowledge. They conceded that the Norwegian L1 subject was highly recognisable, and even "refreshing" to some. The contextualisation offered by the new components (Core Elements and Interdisciplinary Topics) provided some new perspectives. The most salient challenge seemed to be the vagueness concerning *what* to teach, which was evident in several teachers' accounts.

7.3 How to teach: Methods and strategies in the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum

While the teachers perceived great openness related to subject-matter knowledge, they often mentioned stronger input regulation of the explicit methods, skills, and strategies to be used for teaching the Norwegian L1 subject, as was evident in the following two comments: "There's some input regulation on subject-matter knowledge, but I think there are more explicit input regulations on methods" (E, 2), and "This curriculum regulates more than before what kinds of methods you're

supposed to use” (B, 2). When asked about subject-matter knowledge, several of the teachers switched to discussing the competence orientation of the curriculum text. One teacher’s reaction to this question was as follows: “I get the impression that the most important thing is not knowledge. The most important thing is competence” (C, 2). In line with this view, the following dialogue occurred at School F:

- I think it’s an obvious shift from being able to know something towards having competencies you can use. I can’t see that there’s that much knowledge in this curriculum. Much of the knowledge that used to be in the Norwegian L1 subject has “disappeared” or should be addressed in another manner. (F, 2)
- I think the concept of knowledge has been replaced by skills. (F, 4)
- That was really what I meant. (F, 2)
- As I see it, you are to acquire knowledge, but most importantly, you should use it. (F, 4)

Two terms that frequently appeared in the interviews regarding methods and strategies were “exploratory learning” and “thematic approach.” A particular focus on the term “exploratory approaches” emerged during the interview analysis. According to one teacher, “There’s an exploratory perspective emphasising critical thinking” (A, 2). Some teachers argued that the “exploratory learning” was connected to critical thinking, critical literacy, and relevance thinking, while others connected such learning to the three Interdisciplinary Topics. For some of the teachers, after the 2020 curriculum reform, the Norwegian L1 subject was more connected to contemporary society than before. They described a sense of dust being blown off the Norwegian L1 subject. Some considered that future students could experience the subject as being more relevant and enjoyable. But some of the teachers were somewhat insecure about how to understand or conceptualise the concept of the “exploratory approach,” as one teacher illustrated:

Even if they [curriculum developers] use the term *explore*, it’s an open verb. Is there perhaps a method in this concept? Some regulations and limitations, but it’s a creative verb with some limits? The question is how to explore in a systematic and academic way. (G, 2)

Some teachers explained that they used a “thematic approach” to a greater extent than before. One teacher noted having “more space to work thematically. And to work with a topic more in-depth” (D, 1). Some teachers found that when using such an approach, a chronological overview of literature and language throughout history was no longer a central focus. As one teacher described, “Before, we always took a chronological approach to literary history, but now we place more emphasis on thematic approaches” (F, 4). Some teachers problematised this approach, with one teacher noting, “I worry that [students] will not be able to understand the chronology and context of literature if they’re only going to compare a modern text with an old one” (B, 1). Similarly, another teacher commented, “I’ve been teaching thematically for several years, but I’ve concluded that I can’t let go of chronology. I somehow have to achieve both” (C, 4).

Taken together, when talking about “exploratory learning” and the “thematic approach,” the teachers reflected on and discussed how to understand these “open” ways of working in the subject. Throughout the interviews, however, the teachers paid much attention to the “instructional” verbs at the forefront of the Competence Aims (see Figure 1). Typical instructional verbs are *analyse*, *interpret*, *write*, *read*, *listen*, *combine*, and *assess*. As explained earlier, the category of Competence Aims was an important one for the teachers. A common view among the teachers was that the instructional verbs were governing their teaching and *how* the students should work. One teacher described “a consistent and clear use of instructional verbs” (D, 2), while another teacher commented on the verbs at the forefront of the Competence Aims:

Where to interpret, where to explore? I feel, and we’ve discussed this, that the verbs [in the Competence Aims] could have changed place. Maybe we should explore more there and interpret there, and the other way around? It’s as if they [the curriculum developers] have spun a wheel regarding the verbs, and this is the result. (E, 2)

To summarise, when the teachers discussed teaching based on expectations in the curriculum text of Norwegian L1, a consensus emerged that their “space” and freedom for methods and strategies had somewhat narrowed. They perceived being guided more on *how* to teach than on *what* to teach. According to the teachers, “exploratory learning” and the “thematic approach” were emphasised, and the instructional verbs were the primary drivers of the Competence Aims.

8. DISCUSSION

L1 teachers expressed a wide range of views when discussing the design, structure, connections, and the total amount of content of the formal curriculum text for the Norwegian L1 subject launched in 2020. Our analysis revealed that the L1 teachers had various perspectives on what they considered important subject-matter knowledge, depending on how they read, navigated, and combined components within and across the curriculum text. In general, the teachers perceived a rather weak narrative about explicit subject-matter knowledge in the Norwegian L1 curriculum document, and most teachers interpreted being guided in terms of *how* to teach rather than *what* to teach. In the discussion below, we consider possible explanations and implications of these findings.

8.1 Navigating and connecting within and across the Norwegian L1 curriculum document

Teachers may do curricular work differently in the curriculum text, depending on how they navigate within and across the subject curriculum of Norwegian L1 and which components they consult. By paying attention not just to the content and language in the curriculum document (RQ2) but also to how the teachers engaged

with the format and structure (RQ1), we thus found a few differences between the printout and the clickable online version.

The clickable online version offers one way of putting everything together. The platformisation of the curriculum, as well as the support, connections, and explanations that teachers could click on in the digital version, steered their curriculum-making in a specific direction, potentially narrowing their interpretations. Several teachers appreciated the clickable options, while others found them irrelevant, and some were unaware of the possibility of clicking and connecting. At the same time, the kinds of connections the teachers chose to make within the clickable online version remains an open question. Bearing in mind the fine line between the prescribed formal national curriculum and the optional linked resources in the online version, we noted that the L1 teachers could clearly pursue several paths when looking for subject-matter knowledge to include in the Norwegian L1 subject. But reading the “static” and “linear” printout versions did not necessarily limit their possible paths, approaches, and interpretations. Both the printout and the clickable online version represent a complex composition with numerous options, because the different components (Relevance and Central Values, Core Elements, Interdisciplinary Topics, Basic Skills, and Competence Aims) in the curriculum document all represent specific content aspects and forms of knowledge in the Norwegian L1 subject.

According to Muller and Young (2019), one characteristic of powerful knowledge is *systematic* knowledge, which involves understanding the relations between content and concepts in a school subject. How L1 teachers navigate, make connections, and ensure the coherence of the curriculum text thus determines what kind of subject-matter knowledge the students will have access to in the Norwegian L1 subject. The starting point for the teachers in our material was the component Competence Aims, but due to the openness of these aims, the teachers consulted other components in the curricular text as well. But when so many routes, options, and “ways” of curriculum potential (Deng, 2018, 2021, 2022) exist, as in the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum document from 2020, uncertainty may result regarding which path the teachers will take and how *systematic* their approach will be while looking for subject-matter knowledge.

8.2 Knowledge of what?

“Pedagogical freedom” and “space” in the curriculum represent important principles for the teaching profession in Norway, and overall, the L1 teachers in our material responded positively to this freedom. Nonetheless, the L1 teachers generally perceived a rather weak narrative about explicit subject-matter knowledge in the curriculum text of Norwegian L1. They also perceived subject-matter knowledge to be downplayed compared to how to work in the Norwegian L1 subject. One indication of stronger governance of how to work is the foregrounding of verbs in the Competence Aims. These instructional verbs presume that the students have

acquired substantial subject-matter knowledge: the kind of knowledge that Muller and Young (2019) describe as *specialised*, *differentiated*, and *systematic*. For example, before the students can “use subject-related terminology to describe sentence structure and the relationship between sentences when working with text” (Competence Aims in Vg1 programmes for general studies; see Figure 1), the students need to *learn* subject-related terminology and *what* sentence structure is.

Although we noted agreement among the teachers that the Competence Aims had a wide scope and that the instructional verbs governed and indicated a teaching direction, this finding also reveals certain tensions. Some teachers commented that components such as Core Elements and Interdisciplinary Topics, in combination with the Competence Aims, provided guidance, while others felt that these components were descriptions of competencies rather than explicit subject-matter knowledge.

The teachers especially questioned the relevance and place of the topic Sustainability in the Norwegian L1 subject. Some teachers felt that if they were to work with the topic of Sustainability, certain challenges would arise related to students developing *specialised* and *systematic* (Muller & Young, 2019) subject-matter knowledge in the Norwegian L1 subject. These teachers argued that Sustainability was not a familiar topic within the academic disciplines for teaching the Norwegian L1 subject. In other words, the links between the academic disciplines and the school subject were weak. These teachers acknowledged that although the Norwegian L1 subject could offer some strategies and methods—for example, rhetoric analysis and critical literacy when working with topics related to Sustainability—that topic could not be a systematic content provider in the Norwegian L1 subject. Other teachers felt that this topic provided opportunities to expand the Norwegian L1 subject, which Aase (2019), Diamond and Bulfin (2021), and Yates et al. (2019) have all identified as ongoing changes in questions and focus by reading new texts, working in new ways, and framing familiar content in innovative ways.

With the LK20 reform, however, new and updated learning resources have already been launched and will be developed in the Norwegian L1 subject based on the curriculum text. Considering that the L1 teachers perceived a rather weak narrative about explicit subject-matter knowledge in the Norwegian L1 curriculum document, a key question is whether the learning resources will feature a greater diversity of content, texts, and tasks in the future. Two recent studies, one from the Danish context (Bundsgaard et al., 2020) and one from the Norwegian context (Bakken & Andersson-Bakken, 2021), showed that learning materials in the L1 subject were inconsistent with the national curricula. These findings are potentially critical, because when the curriculum is open and competency-oriented, the teachers might use the learning material as “the curriculum,” since the learning materials are more specific than the formal curriculum. As an example, who or what is to define “topics related to the Norwegian subject” or “subject-related terminology” (see Competence Aims in Figure 1) if not the curriculum text? The developers of learning resources? Those who prepare the national written

examination? The students? The teachers? And, in terms of text selection in the Norwegian L1 subject, which factors will be decisive for teachers?

Commenting on text selection, Yates et al. (2019) note that if the curriculum text is too open, then pragmatic considerations and teachers' experiences, personal preferences, or political values might become the governing principle. Considering our findings, one might ask whether the guiding principles in text selection will be those texts that fit the instructional verbs in the Competence Aims: those that are easy to put into context, make relevant, compare, be critical about, or that match all three interdisciplinary topics at the same time. Some of these considerations are legitimate and partly based on the curriculum, while others are not. Another aspect is that *teacher knowledge* (Shulman, 1986), what teachers know, but also not know, will influence how the teachers implement an open and competence-based curriculum. According to a recently published study in the Norwegian context of teacher education, "the student teachers' grammatical knowledge is quite poor" (Brøseth & Nygård, 2023). If the teachers are unsecure of grammar knowledge, how will they approach teaching of grammar in the Norwegian L1 subject, when the curriculum text and the Competence Aims referring to grammar are very open?

These questions and issues indicate multiple avenues for empirical research, and although "powerful knowledge" can be criticised from many angles (Alderson, 2020; Carlgren, 2020; Rudolph et al., 2018; White, 2018), the idea of such knowledge in school subjects highlights that knowledge matters as well as the question of what kind of knowledge should be *included* in the formal curricula of today and in the future.

8.3 What Does the Focus on Strategies and Methods Do to the Norwegian L1 Subject?

Returning to the issue of why many curriculum scholars have paid relatively little attention to L1 subjects, one reason might be that competencies, skills, and knowledge are closely intertwined in L1 subjects. In these subjects, writing, reading, and oral skills and competencies are necessary to read, write, and talk about literature and language; these skills are also the portal to all other school subjects (Macken-Horarik, 2011). The teachers in our material did not problematise that they, according to the LK20, had a particular responsibility for the development of skills such as reading, writing and oracy. The criticism from some curriculum theorists on the downsides of a competency-based curriculum is therefore not particularly suited for L1 subjects. Not surprisingly, the Norwegian L1 teachers in our study thus found it challenging to nail down explicit subject-matter knowledge. But what does it mean for the Norwegian L1 subject, in both the short and long terms, that skills, methods, and strategies are explicit, while subject-matter knowledge is more vague, implicit, or absent? The focus on skills, methods, and strategies can potentially challenge or

eclipse both specialised knowledge—knowledge developed over time and expressed in the boundaries between academic disciplines and school subjects—and systematic knowledge, because one characteristic of systematic knowledge is its “basis for generalizations and thinking beyond particular contexts or cases” (Young, 2014b, p. 75).

At the same time, although the formal curriculum text can be interpreted as emphasising *how* to work rather than *what* to know, it is also a subject-based curriculum that relies on teachers' professional knowledge. L1 teachers bring to the Norwegian L1 subject various perspectives influenced by their education and experience. The Norwegian L1 subject has connections to several different academic disciplines, and L1 teachers bring to the subject varied subject-matter knowledge. Some teachers' education and specialisation are based on writing or reading studies, while language or literature studies form the basis for others. Differences in education, combined with the various forms of knowledge structures in the L1 subject, might explain why the teachers expressed divergent views regarding important subject-matter knowledge. Alternatively, their answers to “the knowledge question” might also be based on their personal preferences, rather than what they find in the Norwegian L1 subject curriculum document from 2020. Finally, the openness of the curriculum text itself, combined with a focus on skills and ways of working, might explain why it was hard for the teachers to express what they considered to be the most important subject-matter knowledge in the subject. The L1 teachers in our material expressed their appreciation of the dynamic nature of the Norwegian L1 subject, which, from their perspective, offered great didactic opportunities such as for example working thematically and in-depth with new texts. The teachers were quite naturally interested in questions about the dynamic nature of the Norwegian L1 subject. They also related subject-matter knowledge to the wish to convey to students that the L1 Norwegian subject is useful and valuable in their daily lives and futures: in other words, the wish to present subject-matter knowledge as something greater than just a school subject.

These findings appear to be similar to those observed by Aase (2019) about a “student-centred” and “society-centred” discourse. The L1 teachers in our material were not overly concerned with the distinction between non-school knowledge or everyday knowledge (tied to the context of our experience) and school knowledge: what Young (2014b) refers to as *differentiated* knowledge. The L1 teachers thought of making links between these two worlds to be beneficial to their students. A relevant subject, and the unpacking and acquisition of subject-matter knowledge, involved didactic analysis of *why*, *how*, and *what* for the L1 teachers. This finding is consistent with the work of Alderson (2020) and Yates and Millar (2016), who argue that content selection in a school subject is a distinctive curriculum issue that cannot be separated from pedagogical concerns.

9. FINAL REFLECTIONS

Our findings suggest that considering teachers' voices is crucial to understand how a formal subject curriculum text works to select subject-matter knowledge in a school subject. This empirical study extends our understanding of subject-matter knowledge role in an L1 subject in a competency-oriented curriculum such as Norway's. By having research questions that focused on both the technical design and format, as well as the content and language in the formal curriculum document, our research has helped to achieve a better understanding of the digital platformisation of the curriculum. From our perspective, we must acknowledge that the meeting of curriculum and platform is an important consideration since digital platforms are not passive tools. Although digital platformisation of the curriculum is increasingly present in the global educational debate, we encourage more research on the implications of this issue as the current study was not explicitly designed to address platformisation.

As a result of our study, we also hope to increase awareness about the total content found in L1 subjects. Zooming into content aspects such as literacy, text selection, grammar, spelling, rhetoric, multimodality, genres, or orality is important. Still, doing so does not illustrate the whole picture or the correlations and connections in this conglomeration of a school subject. Focusing on a single content aspect at a time brings some aspects to the forefront while others recede to the background. We should also mention that what is "new" in a school-reform process tends to get more focus than what is continuing. For now, critical literacy, digital media and interdisciplinary topics tend to get much of the attention in the L1 conversation in Norway, with the argument that we must prepare students for an unknown future.

Even though schools should prepare students for future lives beyond the school, we do not know exactly what the future holds. We know that the world is constantly changing, that knowledge emerges, and that education will continue to change. L1 subject practitioners have always sought to balance the past and the present, for example by allowing students to engage in different types of texts from different periods. Reading about thoughts and living conditions from people in former times and different contexts—in other words, gaining *specialised* knowledge in L1 subjects—can provide interesting perspectives that can help us both today and in the future.

L1 subjects are dynamic and fluid and are the result of ongoing construction processes and complex negotiations. Norway's L1 subject is well known for constantly adding new aspects and topics, while "nothing is removed." The teachers in our study emphasised that education and teaching are about change and that the curriculum needs to be updated to meet society's evolving conditions. But L1 teachers' voices and perspectives have not been very visible, addressed, or explored in the powerful knowledge debate so far. For curriculum theorists and curriculum developers, what a curriculum is may seem self-evident, but the L1 teachers in our

material had difficulty separating the formal curriculum text from their teaching and the Norwegian L1 subject they had experienced. For the teachers, the formal curriculum was both a text and something they made.

In order to provide an empirical account of how actual practitioners in an L1 subject interpret and make meaning of a government-prescribed subject curriculum document, we thus posit that curriculum theory and L1 research and disciplinary didactics can inform each other: when combined, interesting perspectives can appear that would not otherwise emerge if only curriculum theory or L1 research and disciplinary didactics were used. Both traditions are concerned with content in school subjects while often doing so from different angles based on different entry questions. Within curriculum theory, "the knowledge question" is mainly explored theoretically focusing on curricula as text, while in L1 research and disciplinary didactics, the lens is more practical. We share the position of Green & Krogh (2020), who argue for engaging both curriculum theory and didactics when investigating the L1 subject. In one of his latest papers, Young (2021) suggests that "we should allow each tradition to grow within its own terms and be a kind of mirror to the other" (p. 252). We hope our article will be a contribution in this direction.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

First and foremost, we want to extend our sincere gratitude to all the L1 teachers who participated in interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we are grateful for all the feedback we received when presenting this study at various conferences, including NNMF 8 2021 (Nordic Network for Research in L1 Education), NERA 2021 (Nordic Educational Research Association), and Åsgårdstrand working seminar (2022). We would also like to thank the members of the University of Oslo research group of Curriculum Studies, Leadership, and Educational Governance (CLEG) for providing constructive feedback on earlier versions of the paper. Lastly, we thank the three anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback and helpful suggestions to improve the paper.

REFERENCES

- Aase, L. (2019). Et fag i strid med seg selv? [A subject in conflict with itself?]. In Blikstad-Balas M. & Solbu K. R. (red.) *Det (nye) nye norskfaget* [The (new) new Norwegian subject]. (pp. 13-26). Fagbokforlaget.
- Alderson, P. (2020). Powerful knowledge and the curriculum: Contradictions and dichotomies. *British Educational Research Journal*, 46(1), 26-43. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3570>
- Bakken, J., & Andersson-Bakken, E. (2021). The textbook task as a genre. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2021.1929499>
- Ball, S., Maguire, M., & Brown, A. (2011). *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools*. Routledge.
- Bergh, A., & Wahlström, N. (2018). Conflicting goals of educational action: A study of teacher agency from a transactional realism perspective. *The Curriculum Journal*, 29(1), 134-149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2017.1400449>

- Bernstein, B. (1999). Vertical and horizontal discourses: An essay. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20(2), 157-173.
- Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis. A practical guide*. Sage.
- Brøseth, H., & Nygård M. (2023). Norwegian first-year student teachers' knowledge of L1 grammar. *L1- Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 23(1), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.21248/l1esll.2023.23.1.411>
- Bundsgaard, J., Buch, B., & Fougst, S. S. (2020). Danish L1 according to the learning materials used: A quantitative study. *L1- Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2020.20.02.05>
- Carlgren, I. (2020). Powerful knowns and powerful knowings. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1717634>
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE.
- Davies, L. M., & Sawyer, W. (2023). Knowledge, Making and English Teachers (Ch. 1). In Davies L. M., Doecke B., Mead P. Sawyer W. & Yates L. *Literary Knowing and the Making of English teachers. The Role of Literature in Shaping English Teachers' Professional Knowledge and Identities*. Routledge.
- Deng, Z. (2018). Pedagogical content knowledge reconceived: Bringing curriculum thinking into the conversation on teachers' content knowledge. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 72, 155-164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.11.021>
- Deng, Z. (2021). Powerful knowledge, transformations and *Didaktik*/curriculum thinking. *British Educational Research Journal*, 47(6), 1652-1674. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3748>
- Deng, Z. (2022). Powerful knowledge, educational potential and knowledge-rich curriculum: Pushing the boundaries. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2022.2089538>
- Diamond, F., & Bulfin, S. (2021). Knowledge in the making: Cultural memory and English teaching. *Changing English*, 28(1), 29-44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684X.2020.1853505>
- Eggebø, H. (2020). Kollektiv kvalitativ analyse [Collective qualitative analysis], (V. Szepessy, Trans.) *Norsk sosiologisk tidskrift*. 4 (2), 106-122. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535-2512-2020-02-03>, translation available at <https://hdl.handle.net/11250/2724396>
- Erixon P. O., & Green B. (2020). Rethinking L1 education in a global era: The Subject in Focus (p. 1-17). In Green B. & Erixon P. O. (eds.) *Rethinking L1 Education in a Global Era. Understanding the (Post-) national L1 Subjects in New and Difficult Times*. Springer.
- Goodlad, J. I., Klein, M. F., & Tye, K. A. (1979). The domains of curriculum and their study. In J. I. Goodlad (Ed.), *Curriculum inquiry: The study of curriculum practice* (p. 43-79). McGraw-Hill.
- Gourvenec, A. F., Höglund, H., Johansson, M., Kabel, K., & Sønneland, M. (2020). Literature education in Nordic L1s: Cultural models of national lower-secondary curricula in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. *L1- Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 20, 1-32. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2020.20.01.07>
- Green B., & Krogh E. (2020). Curriculum Inquiry, Didaktik Studies and L1 Education. Framing and Informing the L1 Subjects (p. 18-37). In Green B. & Erixon P. O. (eds.) *Rethinking L1 Education in a Global Era. Understanding the (Post-) national L1 Subjects in New and Difficult Times*. Springer.
- Hizli Alkan, S., & Priestley, M. (2019). Teacher mediation of curriculum making: The role of reflexivity. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 51(5), 737-754. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1637943>
- Hogarth, C., Matthiesen, C., & Bakken, J. (2021). Advancing citizenship through language arts education: Conceptions of rhetoric in Scandinavian national curricula. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2021.1989050>
- Holmberg, P., Krogh, E., Nordenstam, A., Penne, S., Skarstein, D., Skyggebjerg, A. K., Tainio, L., & Heilä-Ylikallio, R. (2019). On the emergence of the L1 research field: A comparative study of PhD abstracts in the Nordic countries 2000–2017. *L1- Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 19, 1-27. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2019.19.01.05>
- Hopmann, S. (2007). Restrained teaching: The common cores of didaktik. *European Educational Research Journal*, 6(2), 109-124.
- Hopmann, S. (2015). "Didaktik meets curriculum" revisited: Historical encounters, systematic experience, empirical limits. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 2015(1).

- <https://doi.org/10.3402/nstep.v1.27007>
- Hordern, J. (2022). Powerful knowledge and knowledgeable practice. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 54(2), 196-209. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2021.1933193>
- Hübner, N., Savage, C., Gräsel, C., & Wacker, A. (2021). Who buys into curricular reforms and why? Investigating predictors of reform ratings from teachers in Germany. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 53(6), 802-820. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1870714>
- Hughes, S., & Lewis, H. (2020). Tensions in current curriculum reform and the development of teachers' professional autonomy. *The Curriculum Journal*, 31(2), 290-302. <https://doi.org/10.1002/curj.25>
- Johansson, M. (2021). Literary socialization through education. *L1-Education Studies in Language and Literature*, 21, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2021.21.02.03>
- Karseth, B., & Sivesind, K. (2010). Conceptualising curriculum knowledge within and beyond the national context. *European Journal of Education*, 45(1), 103-120. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3435.2009.01418.x>
- Karseth, B., Kvamme, O. A., & Ottesen, E. (2020). *Fagfornyelsens læreplanverk: Politiske intensjoner, arbeidsprosesser og innhold* [Curriculum Renewal: Political intentions, work processes and content]. (Report 1 from EVA2020) [Evaluation project]. Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Oslo. <https://www.uv.uio.no/forskning/prosjekter/fagfornyelsen-evaluering/publikasjoner/eva2020-delrapport-1.pdf>, English summary available at <https://www.uv.uio.no/english/research/projects/EVA2020/Publications/report-1---summary.pdf>
- Karseth, B., Kvamme, O. A., & Ottesen, E. (2022). *Fra politiske intensjoner til nytt læreplanverk: Prosesser, rammer og sammensetning* [From political intentions to a new curriculum: processes, frameworks and composition]. (Report 4 from EVA2020). Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Oslo. https://www.uv.uio.no/forskning/prosjekter/fagfornyelsen-evaluering/aktuelle-saker/rapport-4_eva2020_290622.pdf, English summary available at <https://www.uv.uio.no/english/research/projects/EVA2020/Publications/report-4---summary.pdf>
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2019). *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju*. [The qualitative research interview]. Gyldendal.
- Kähkölä, S., & Rätttyä, K. (2021). Experimenting with the languaging approach in teaching poetry. *L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 21, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2021.21.02.08>
- Löfgren, M., & Erixon, P.-O. (2022). Literature: A high risk implementation route to literacy? *L1: Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 22, 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.21248/l1esll.2022.22.1.409>
- Macken-Horarik, M. (2011). Building a knowledge structure for English: Reflections on the challenges of coherence, cumulative learning, portability and face validity. *Australian Journal of Education*, 55(3), 197-213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000494411105500303>
- Ministry of Education and Research (2013). *På rett vei: Kvalitet og mangfold i fellesskolen* [On the right track: Quality and diversity in schools]. White paper to the Parliament (2012–2013), <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/53bb6e5685704455b06fdd289212d108/no/pdfs/stm201220130020000dddpdfs.pdf>
- Ministry of Education and Research (2016). *Fag- Fordypning—Forståelse* [Subjects - In-depth learning—Understanding]. (White paper to the Parliament (2015-2016), <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/e8e1f41732ca4a64b003fca213ae663b/no/pdfs/stm201520160028000dddpdfs.pdf>
- Ministry of Education and Research (2020). Curriculum for Norwegian (NOR01-06). <https://www.udir.no/lk20/nor01-06?lang=eng>
- Muller, J. (2022). Powerful knowledge, disciplinary knowledge, curriculum knowledge: Educational knowledge in question. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10382046.2022.2058349>
- Muller, J., & Young, M. (2019). Knowledge, power and powerful knowledge re-visited. *The Curriculum Journal*, 30(2), 196-214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2019.1570292>
- Myhill, D. (2018). Grammar as a meaning-making resource for improving writing. *L1-Education Studies in Language and Literature*, 18, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2018.18.04.04>

- Myren-Svelstad, P. E., & Grütters, R. (2022). Justification for teaching literature: A survey study among teachers of Norwegian L1. *L1- Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 22, 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.21248/l1esll.2022.22.1.494>
- Nieveen, N., & Kuiper, W. (2021). Integral curriculum review in the Netherlands: In need of dovetail joints. In M. Priestley, D. Alvunger, S. Philippou, & T. Soini (Eds.), *Curriculum making in Europe: Policy and practice within and across diverse contexts* (pp. 125-149). Emerald.
- Ongstad, S. (2004). *Språk, kommunikasjon og didaktikk* [Language, communication and didactics]. Fagbokforlaget/LNU.
- Ongstad, S. (2015). Competing disciplinarity in curricular L1: A Norwegian case. *L1: Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 15, 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2015.15.01.08>
- Ongstad, S. (2020). Curricular L1 Disciplinarity: Between Norwegianness and Internationality (p. 83- 115). In Green B. & Erixon P. O. (eds.) *Rethinking L1 Education in a Global Era. Understanding the (Post-) national L1 Subjects in New and Difficult Times*. Springer.
- Piekut, A. (2018). Trapped in the genres: A student's writer development in the subject of Danish. On possibilities and restrictions of narratives in Danish upper secondary education. *Education Inquiry*, 9(3), 316-330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2017.1415096>
- Priestley, M., Alvunger, D., Philippou, S., & Soini, T. (2021). *Curriculum making in Europe: Policy and practice within and across diverse contexts*. Emerald.
- Priestley, M., & Biesta, G. (2014). *Reinventing the curriculum. New trends in curriculum policy and practice*. Bloomsbury.
- Priestley, M., Edwards, R., Priestley, A., & Miller, K. (2012). Teacher agency in curriculum making: Agents of change and spaces for manoeuvre. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 42(2), 191-214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2012.00588.x>
- Puustinen, M., & Khawaja, A. (2020). Envisaging the alternatives: From knowledge of the powerful to powerful knowledge in history classrooms. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 0(0), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1703273>
- Roberts, M. (2022). Powerful pedagogies for the school geography curriculum. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10382046.2022.2146840>
- Rudolph, S., Sriprakash, A., & Gerrard, J. (2018). Knowledge and racial violence: The shine and shadow of "powerful knowledge." *Ethics & Education*, 13(1), 22-38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2018.1428719>
- Ryen, E., & Jøsok, E. (2021). Citizenship-as-knowledge: How perspectives from Bildung-centred Didaktik can contribute to European Citizenship Education beyond competence. *European Educational Research Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14749041211045777>
- Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X015002004>
- Sundby, A. H., & Karseth B. (2021). 'The knowledge question' in the Norwegian curriculum. *The curriculum journal*. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uio.no/10.1002/curj.139>
- Vika, K. S. (2021). *Spørsmål til Skole-Norge: Analyser og resultater fra Utdanningsdirektoratets spørreundersøkelse til lærere høsten 2020* [National survey for teachers autumn 2020]. <https://nifu.brage.unit.no/nifu-xmlui/handle/11250/2726052>
- Virranmäki, E., Valta-Hulkkonen, K., & Rusanen, J. (2019). Powerful knowledge and the significance of teaching geography for in-service upper secondary teachers: A case study from northern Finland. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, 28(2), 103-117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10382046.2018.1561637>
- White, J. (2018). The weakness of "powerful knowledge." *London Review of Education*, 16(2), 325-335. <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.16.2.11>
- Yates, L., & Millar, V. (2016). "Powerful knowledge" curriculum theories and the case of physics. *The Curriculum Journal*, 27(3), 298-312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2016.1174141>
- Yates, L., Davies, L. M., Buzacott, L., Doecke, B., Mead, P., & Sawyer, W. (2019). School English, literature and the knowledge-base question. *The Curriculum Journal*, 30(1), 51-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2018.1543603>
- Young, M. (2008). From constructivism to realism in the sociology of the curriculum. *Review of Research in Education*, 32(1), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X07308969>

- Young, M. (2014a). What is a curriculum and what can it do? *The Curriculum Journal*, 25(1), 7-13.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2014.902526>
- Young, M. (2014b). Powerful knowledge as a curriculum principle (chap. 3); The progressive case for a subject-based curriculum (chap. 4). In M. Young & D. Lambert (Eds.), *Knowledge and the future school: Curriculum and social justice* (pp. 65-88, 89-109). Bloomsbury.
- Young, M. (2021). Bridging divides in educational theory? *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 53(2), 247-253.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2021.1893386>
- Wood, B. E., & Sheehan, M. (2020). Transformative disciplinary learning in history and social studies: Lessons from a high-autonomy curriculum in New Zealand. *The Curriculum Journal*.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/curj.87>