

# L1-DIDACTICS AND THE GLOBAL PRESSURE FROM ANGLO-SAXON NEW LITERACIES. GAINED DISCIPLINARITY AT RISK?

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## Abstract

Within Scandinavian teacher education L1-didactics and literacy have, since the 1990s, developed from delimited areas of knowledge to full academic disciplines. This scientific essay asks whether achieved L1-didactic disciplinarity is at risk encountering increased influence of New Literacies. Historical roots and further development of L1 and L1-didactics in Norway and Scandinavia, are outlined, extracted from other resources. Further relevant disciplinary concepts are problematised, in two ways, firstly facing the challenge of mediating between languages and secondly searching possible epistemological processes behind increased academisation of L1-didactics in teacher education. Four processes are discussed in detail: *Literacification*, referring to increased political dissemination of and research on literacies. *Disciplinisation*, concerning processes of generating school subjects and academic disciplines. *Didactisation*, integrating knowledge of both learners and subject matter. *Internationalisation*, referring to application of international political, linguistic, and academic policies, pedagogies, and practices. Finally epistemological and methodological challenges are discussed in light of a possible tension between L1-didactics and New Literacies, especially whether competence-based (new) literacies may obstruct *Bildung*-oriented L1 and L1-didactics. In case, clarification of curricular means-and-ends are disrupted and both L1-didactics and New Literacy research challenged. Although final answers are not given, the study has offered extended epistemological contexts for further discussions.

Keywords: L1-didactics, literacies, internationalisation, disciplinarity, *Bildung*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The title implicitly suggests, firstly, that L1-didactics as a discipline in teacher education recently has led to improved disciplinarity and secondly that the increased popularity of so-called New Literacies may contribute to an impairment of the foothold disciplinary didactics (Norw. *fagdidaktikk*), and especially L1-didactics, recently has achieved. The notion *Anglo-Saxon* does play a role in this respect. New literacy research (Coiro et al., 2014) almost without exceptions arrives in English language only. The field is dominated by scholars with English as native language, and applies concepts mostly disconnected from continental European traditions such as *didactics* and *Bildung*. What this scientific essay accordingly asks is whether the imported disciplinarity may outperform a new and still fragile L1-didactics (and not necessarily lead to a sound epistemological encounter).

For studying this assumed tension, the scientific essay is chosen. This academic genre raises questions rather than solves them, by combining 'objective' professional knowledge with an author's more 'subjective' positioning as qualified research (Halås & McGuirk, 2021). If one starts from Dilthey's dictum that certain studies within the humanities may not seek evidence, but understanding, it is obvious that Popper's demand for falsification cannot be easily met (Popper, 1963). A scientific essay may shift focus from quantity to quality in recognising that conceptual relationships rather than statistical durability and generalisability become, methodologically speaking, the central issue. Professionalism in a scientific essay is hence characterised by linking concepts to a systemic, smaller network or set of justified ideas, assumptions, epistemological lines, and arguments. However, it can increase its communicative, intersubjective validity (Kvale, 1989) through different forms of relevant contextualisations (Halås & McGuirk, 2021).

In other words, this study does not have *a* method. Its different methodological grips are baked into the progressing line of chained arguments through its own discourse. There will be shifts between applying findings from other's and my own research, contrasting, and criticising particular views, developing historical lines, doing simple semantic and content analyses etc. Although there are incidences of inductive and deductive reasoning the overall form of inference is abduction, a form of inference searching an adequate explanation (Feil & Olteanu, 2018).

To discuss claims and assumptions, the text is further organised as follows: in section 2, the disciplinary development of L1-didactics will be outlined, mainly its Norwegian history. The emergence of school subjects and academic disciplines in (teacher) education is assumed to be stimulated and caused by fairly under-researched processes, such as (early) literacification, disciplinarisation, didactisation, and internationalisation (Ongstad, 2023). Since these intertwined processes over time have changed the epistemological and thus the educational conceptual landscape, and because this essay addresses an international audience, a set of key notions, concepts, and terms in different languages will be explained and problematised, in particular *subject didactics* and *Bildung*. Especially two challenges

are raised: in section 2.3, it is asked *Fag—subject and/or discipline?* and in 2.4 *How to perceive and define the compound L1-didactics?* In the next four sections (i.e., sections 3 to 5), each of the hypothesised processes are investigated more in depth. Didactisation, which contributed to increased disciplinarisation and academisation in Norwegian teacher education is, in the last section (7), contrasted with international literacification (*“New literacies as Literacy 2.0”*, to allude to digital jargon). Here disciplinarity as such will be problematised more in depth: Are disciplines (Norw. *fag*) means or ends, and how do literacy and L1-didactics relate to *Bildung* as a final aim for national education. Since this is a scientific essay, it will end by briefly recollecting critically the main argument line from a methodological meta-perspective, making forms of validity more transparent.

## 2. CLARIFYING AND PROBLEMATISING KEY CONCEPTS AND PROCESSES

### 2.1 *The parallel growth of L1-didactics and literacy in teacher education—a concern?*

Ongstad (2023) argues that L1-didactics seemingly has reached an optimum of academic disciplinarity. This significant change has not been much researched, hence an aim for this study is even to contribute to an epistemological history of L1-didactics in Norway. A precursor to this historic development concerns how a prime literalisation of the population in the 18<sup>th</sup> century eventually developed into what today is perceived as the school subject *norsk* (Eng. Norwegian) as L1. This rather slow change triggered during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in turn also the establishing of a national teacher education (Dahl, 1959), and with it even a L1-discipline, *studiefaget norsk* (Jølle et al., 2021; Madssen, 1999; Rogne, 2020). In the late 1970s and early 1980s a minor compulsory course in *norskdidaktikk* (L1-didactics) was added to L1 in teacher education for primary education (Madssen, 1981). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, L1 and L1-didactics have tended to merge at some teacher education institutes (Ongstad, 2012). This process has caused both terminological and epistemological confusion, since *norskdidaktikk* now may refer both to the part of the study discipline that is *not* ‘norsk’ as well as a certain *integration* of the two. Since the above processes cover a period of more than 280 years, descriptions will be sketchy.

These disciplinary developments are not the essay’s *main* focus though, as the title maintains that the achieved disciplinary state for L1-didactics might be challenged or even lost due to two specific external forces, the increased prevalence of international literacy spread by means of English as a global academic discourse (Green & Erixon, 2020). The first schooling in Norway, from 1739 onwards, can be regarded as an early, national literacy program which in the 19<sup>th</sup> century developed into Norwegian as L1. Since the turn of the millennium (2006) a new form of literacy program was launched. This development may recently have joined forces with external, imported new literacies, generating a new academic track in education that might challenge the school subject *norsk* and the discipline *norskdidaktikk* as we

have known them (Ongstad, 2023). Although a main focus will be on Norway, developments in other Scandinavian and Northern-European countries are also inspected.

Erixon & Ongstad (2023) have, in a study of academisation of teacher education in Nordic countries, identified four processes that have generated a problematic relationship between disciplinary didactics (Norw. *fagdidaktikk*) and literacies. Some processes have been studied earlier, but in somewhat different contexts (Ongstad, 1999, 2014, 2020). *Literacification* is a newly coined notion for the development or promotion of literacy as a universal epistemology, academically and politically and for the specific policy of generating and implementing particular curricular national skills and competencies (Hug, 2023). *Disciplinarianisation* (Norw. *fagliggjøring*) is a deliberately imperfect translation of Norwegian and Danish words for establishing *faglighet* (Eng. disciplinarity). It implies an increased tendency in the so-called knowledge society to professionalise, institutionalise, and formalise clusters of professional knowledge, such as school subjects and university disciplines (Helsvig, 2022; Krogh, 2009, 2020; Ongstad, 2014, 2020; Spier, 2008). *Didactisation* refers to how teachers, teacher educators, researchers, authorities, and others transform, adapt, and contextualise knowledge and skills for learners and learning (Hertzberg, 1999; Hopmann, 1998; Krogh, 2018, 2023; Ongstad, 1999). *Internationalisation* implies *import* of basic educational ideas, ideologies, discourses, policies, and means. In this context it is applied especially on the study of L1 curricula for schools and teacher education (Ongstad, 2020; Teichler, 2009). These processes may occur partly intertwined. For instance, literacification and didactisation can be seen as types of disciplinarianisation, and literacification may often imply internationalisation.

In 2012, Ellen Krogh problematised the relationship between L1-didactics and 'new' literacy:

The question is whether it is appropriate to import literacy as an educational metaphor to Scandinavian mother tongue didactics. That the concept and the phenomenon have great educational policy meaning is (...) evident, and thus it must also be reflected from a mother tongue didactic perspective, but perhaps precisely in a regular translation into terms and phenomena that can be integrated into a mother tongue didactic frame of reference (Krogh, 2012, p. 265, my translation).

Twelve years have passed since then. Meanwhile literacy and English have continued to overflow the world. A *Google* search of literacy in May 2023 gave about 48 million hits until 2012. A search restricted to the last 11 years gave 543 million, *11 times more*. This literacy tsunami has in fact invaded the international academic society, and education in particular. Regarding the amount of research on literacy, searches on *Google Scholar* indicate that there is an approximate doubling of hits for literacy research the last 15 years. Both English academic language and literacy now function as cuckoo eggs in many national, educational nests. Quite a few minor school subjects and academic disciplines are about to be kicked out (Holm, 2019; Phillipson, 2006). Even major ones, such as L1s, might face significant change and reshaping (Elf et al., 2015; Krogh, 2020). To problematise possible tensions between a L1-didactics

and literacy, each of them should be outlined more in detail, the former from point 2.2. onward and the latter in section 3.

## 2.2 What is meant by L1 and L1-didactics?

The above question may seem unnecessary for readers of a journal named L1. Yet, both Krogh (2023) and Vollmer (2022) have pointed to less noticed semantic hurdles when discussing didactic concepts internationally, not the least due to increased Anglification of the common academic discourse. Although such clarifications may make up a disproportional part of this text, an extended explanation of the applied terminology seems adequate, as these are notions that risk being wiped out. The prefix *L1*- will be discussed first, then the suffix *-didactics*, and finally the compound *L1-didactics*, which historical development is at the core of this inquiry.

*L1* may refer to a person's first, main and/or home language through early childhood, spoken and/or written. In addition, for a country or a state, it even refers to the prime school subject as well as its possible role as language of schooling for a national majority (COE, n.d.; Martyniuk, 2007). In so-called nation-states, cultural and linguistic homogeneous countries such as Iceland and Albania, these aspects, conditions, or references tend to coincide. Even Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have a fairly strong concurrence between the terms for the country, the main spoken (native) language for most inhabitants, and the name of the L1 curriculum: *Danmark/dansk/dansk*, *Norge/norsk/norsk*, and *Sverige/svensk/svenska*, respectively. From a global perspective, such homogeneity is rare (Ongstad, 2020). The concurrence creates a (nationalistic) robustness that obstructs Scandinavian L1 subjects from being terminologically and epistemologically altered.

According to a definition of MTE or L1 as a field, rooted in the work of the International Mother Tongue Educational Network (IMEN), it can be understood as:

[...] the teaching and/or learning within an educational system of the so-called mother tongue, be it a standard language of a nation state that statutorily accepts it as such, the language of education or the language of primary socialisation (a child's first own and/or home language). (Ongstad, 2003, p. 77.)

In Scandinavia, *Danish*, *Norwegian*, and *Swedish* are terms for a *skolefag* (Eng. school subject) in primary, secondary, and upper secondary education. Further, historically and generally, a corresponding discipline in teacher education, whether given at university-colleges (teacher colleges) or universities, has mostly also been termed *dansk*, *norsk*, or *svenska*. To avoid confusing of the school subject with the national spoken language it is common to speak about *danskfaget*, *norskfaget*, and *svenskämnet* (Engl. -subject), both in school and in teacher education. The disciplines studied in higher education that qualify for teaching these school subjects are in Scandinavia manifold: *norsk*, *dansk*, *svenska*, *nordisk*, *nordistikk*, *Scandinavian studies*, lately in Norway even *norskdidaktikk*, and in Sweden *svenska med didaktisk inriktning* (SMDI). Smidt (2023) has used the term *lærerutdanningsnorsk* to make aware a possible difference between *norsk* in teacher education and the traditional

study of Norwegian language and literature at universities (*nordisk*). To recognise tensions between the two strands for becoming teachers of L1 in schools is crucial for an appropriate epistemological positioning of L1-didactics.

This is where it becomes challenging to use English language to explain Norwegian and Scandinavian terms for disciplinarity. English and Swedish language are fairly similar in this respect, since *skolämne* means school subject and *svenska* (Eng. *Swedish*), as a discipline in Swedish teacher education, is mostly termed *disciplin* in Swedish. The term, concept, and phenomenon *fag* in Danish and Norwegian, *Fach* in German and *vak* in Dutch, will therefore need a more detailed description.

### 2.3 Fag—subject and/or discipline?

In Norwegian and Danish, *fag* is a body of conceptualised knowledge and/or skills *both* in schools (Norw. *skolefag*) and higher education (Norw. *lærerutdanningsfag* or *studiefag*), as well as a term for branches in business and work-life (Norw. *yrkesfag*) (Madssen, 1999; NFR, 2004). To translate it as *discipline* may restrict its epistemological implications. The adjectival form, *faglig* (Eng. *disciplinary*), even hints at an implicit *qualitative norm* or level of standard for knowledge and skills in general, both in education and in work-life where *fag* is involved. To be *faglig* is to be professional by adhering to given norms for performing something in a *faglig* way. The noun, *faglighet* (Norw.), *faglighed* (Da.) translated as *disciplinarity*, includes the disciplinarity of school-subjects (Vollmer, 2022). *Fag* in Norway and Denmark is thus a fairly broad concept, since it concerns fields, professions, academic disciplines, and school subjects (NFR, 2004).

Still, a *skolefag*, a school subject, is a fairly precise phenomenon, regulated by law and prescriptions. In Norway, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Norw. *Utdanningsdirektoratet*) has responsibility for the disciplinarity of school curricula. Curricula in higher education have been surveyed by the *Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education* (NOKUT) and lately by the newly founded *Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills*. It should be added that *fag* and *Fach* are strongly associated with the *Bildung* tradition. According to SNL (2023) *Bildung* (Norw. *danning*) is a concept that describes the formation of human personality, behavior, and moral. It focuses on the individuals' ability and responsibility to develop themselves, and therefore differs from socialisation, upbringing, education, and other educational core concepts. A school system's object clause may normally have an implicit or an explicit reference to *Bildung*. There exists a common belief even across curricular ideologies that working with *fag* in schools can generate a *Bildung* process in students (Nielsen, 2007; Schneuwly & Vollmer, 2018; Vollmer & Klette, 2023).

Yet, over time, a body of knowledge, such as *fag*, splits up, grows, changes, consolidates, amalgamates, dissolves, and drifts (NFR, 2004). Establishing, specialising, extending, and merging of subjects and disciplines are therefore basic

features of a competitive and competence-oriented society (Ongstad, 2006). In the long run, such changes may threaten, not only school subjects and academic disciplines, but even disciplinarity (Norw. *faglighet*) as such. Instability is symptomatically visible in frequently used notions such as *modules*, *sub-subjects*, *disciplinary elements*, *subject-groups* and in prefixes, such as *cross-*, *inter-*, *multi-*, *trans-*, *de-*, *anti-*, *in-*, *meta-*, and *post-* (Osborne, 2015; Repko, 2011). However, some disciplines seem able to strengthen their position and appear as goals in themselves.

When clarifying terms two challenges have not been touched upon yet, firstly to what degree L1-education concepts can be shared across borders and secondly the specific semantic problem that the Danish-Norwegian notion *fag* is not used in Swedish and English. Hence *faglighet*, *faglighed*, and *Fachlichkeit* (disciplinarity) may on the one hand hint a certain disciplinary *continuity* across organisational levels when describing a line between what is taught in schools and studied in teacher education. On the other hand, may the pair subject/discipline represent a functional discrimination between *kinds* of L1-disciplinarity. The epistemological nature of the kind of disciplinarity that enters the educational system in a bottom-up manner might be significantly different from the kind of disciplinarity that sprinkles schools top-down. Hence, a semantic-epistemological knot is that *faglighet* in L1 in teacher education almost always may refer to the latter (Lovdata, 2023). This frozen use of the term *faglig* may hence obstruct a perception of *professional* disciplinarity (Norw. *yrkesmessig faglighet* or *profesjonsfaglighet*) as the art of amalgamating epistemologies of learners and the learned.

Things are even more complicated, since *emne* in Danish and Norwegian, which etymologically is close to the Swedish *ämne*, can refer to a sub-element (Norw. *fagemne*), such as reading or writing in school and higher education. These terminological differences concern not just L1, but all school subjects. The Swedish term *ämnesdidaktik* (Eng. disciplinary didactics) is called *fagdidaktik* in Danish, *fagdidaktikk* in Norwegian, and *Fachdidaktik* in German. Hence, writing about this matter for an international audience, using the English notion *disciplinary didactics* only, might not give readers a sufficiently subtle understanding of what is meant by *danskididaktik* and *norskididaktikk*. Readers are therefore asked to be patient with the many terms that will be added.

Rothangel and Vollmer (2020) offer a clarifying discussion of *Fach* and *Fachdidaktik* when presenting such terms and concepts across European languages and especially when comparing a continental didactic tradition with a curriculum-oriented educational thinking in the English-speaking world. They argue that a direct translation is quite problematic. In his article *International Transfer of Knowledge: Translating Didaktik, Fachdidaktik, Allgemeine Fachdidaktik* Vollmer (2022, p. 29) even argues that:

[...] there are challenges and even limits in sharing didactic and subject-didactic knowledge, concepts and research findings internationally, when transmitting them from German into English and thus from a continental European into an Anglo-Saxon way of thinking and of organising school education.

A technical one-to-one translation for words which do not exist in English such as *didaktikk*, *fag*, and *fagdidaktikk* is a fairly low, semantic hurdle though. When they represent different mindsets epistemological and curricular challenges become far more significant (Gundem, 1998; Krogh et al., 2021). And, if English is given the upper hand and even replaces national languages in European higher education, centuries of didactic thinking is at risk.

#### 2.4 How to perceive and define the amalgamation L1-didactics?

In the 1970s, disciplinary didactics in Norwegian teacher education was a minor course for student teachers (Madssen, 1981). It was simply added as separate courses in the curriculum. However, in Madssen (1981) implications of the term, concept, and phenomenon were for the first time discussed more in depth. A principled discussion of L1-didactics and its relation to L1 occurred further in Fjeldstad (1983). A next step along this historical line was the development of specific textbooks in *fagdidaktikk* (Lorentzen et al., 1998; Mellin-Olsen, 1989; Skagen & Tiller, 1983) and later even in *norskdidaktikk* for teacher education (Fjørtoft, 2014; Moslet, 1999; Smidt, 2009). Such titles are surprisingly few given the rapid growth both of disciplinary didactics and didactics for L1. A reason for this 'lack' may be an extensive didacticisation of *sub-disciplines* (Norw. *emner*) such as writing, reading, literature, media etc. which gained attention (Smidt, 2023).

Through the 1990s a whole new 'flora' of *-didaktikk* suffixes occurred (NFR, 2004), not only added to traditional school subjects but even to specific sub-topics such as *fiolin-didaktikk* and *Ibsen-didaktikk*. During less than a decade even L1 key terms that had used the *-pedagogikk* suffix changed to *-didaktikk*, for instance from *skrivepedagogikk* to *skrivdidaktikk*, from *språkpedagogikk* to *språkdidaktikk*, and from *litteraturpedagogikk* to *litteraturredidaktikk* (NFR, 2004; Smidt, 2023). What the deeper epistemological reasons for these significant developments could be, is not clear.

At the same time, the formal notion for L1 in school and teacher education in the national curricula has been *norsk* in Norway and *dansk* in Denmark. For Sweden, the situation is different. *Svenska* is the term for the school-subject, but *svenskadidaktik* gave by May 2023 only two Google-hits, while *svenskdidaktik* gave 940, *svenskämnets didaktik* 3500, and *svenska med didaktik inriktning* (SMDI) 17.500 hits, of which a majority may refer to the national association, SMDI.

In an intriguing interview one of the SMDI-pioneers, Tor Hultman, argued that they as founders wanted to *transgress* the idea that disciplinary didactics for Swedish should be restricted to its traditional what-how-why (Einarsson, 2005). It should even include conditions for students' language development in a wider perspective. This broader view presumably caused the subject to be called *Swedish with a didactic orientation* and not *Swedish didactics* or *the didactics of the Swedish subject* (Einarsson, 2005, p. 3). For Hultman *svenska med didaktisk inriktning* is a broader concept than *svenskdidaktik* and *svenskämnets didaktik*. Later this development



continued. Holmberg and Nordenstam (2016, p. 48) contend that SMDI also began to denote a multi- or interdisciplinary research area, beyond L1.

In this section stress has been put on clarifying differences between Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon key notions relevant for studying an emergence of L1-didactics, as well as internal Scandinavian similarities and differences (Krogh & Penne, 2015). During this terminological investigation, four issues concerning epistemological, developmental driving forces have emerged: Firstly, could the expansion of *svenska med didaktisk inriktning* (SMDI) beyond (just) *svenska* (Eng. *Swedish*) be an early symptom of what was called *literacification*? Secondly, why could not *faglig* refer even to *didactic* epistemologies of relationships between students and *fag*, an example of *disciplinisation*? Thirdly, how strongly is the new disciplinisation fuelled by *didactisation*? Fourthly, and finally, could literacification be boosted by *internationalisation* and the parallel Anglification of academic discourse in Scandinavia (Ongstad, 2020)? These issues will be dealt with in that order.

### 3. EARLY LITERACIFICATION

#### 3.1 'Nameless' literacy. From reading and writing to a 'disciplined' L1

This part could have been placed in the former section where terms and concepts were clarified. Since literacy is one of the key themes, it seems more relevant however to discuss literacy as term, concept, phenomenon, and process at length in a separate section.

Madssen (1999) argues that when schooling was made compulsory in the first part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Norway, there did not exist a proper school subject called Norwegian (Norw. *norsk*) or mother tongue (Norw. *modersmål*), in other words—no school subject L1. Rather the first content elements were reading and writing or—with today's word—a first, national literacy programme. With Berge's (2017) translation of modern literacy into Norwegian these content elements or skills could be characterised as *skriftkyndighet* or *tekstkyndighet* or by the term *litterasitet* (Eng. literacy), as processes involved in learning to read and write (Kulbrandstad, 2019).

Hence, it was only much later that a *disciplinary* school subject, first called 'mother tongue', and later Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish occurred. Thavenius (1999), Henningsen and Sørensen (2004), and Aase (2002) outline how L1 came about, respectively, in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway becoming a school subject. Historical patterns in the three countries appear fairly similar: between 1500 and 1700, only restricted groups were taught to read and write their mother tongue. In Denmark-Norway, then a "twin-country", to read and to write were in both countries made compulsory for the population as part of confirmation preparation from 1739 onwards (Madssen, 1999).

Aase (2002) argues that in Norway, the L1, *norskfaget*, was *not* crafted or created, but was a result of a row of cultural, religious, and linguistic battles between 1830 and 1870, when it eventually became a school subject with a proper term, a

formalised written national curriculum, with qualified teachers, formalised exams, and a fixed number of hours per year. Madssen (1999) also points to the 1870s as the time, by which *norsk* as L1 had become a school subject.

In the case of Denmark, Henningsen and Sørensen (2004) found quite similar patterns for the period 1739 to 1814. Danish language could be used for instruction in other subjects, and from 1775, some reading and writing in Danish appeared in Latin-schools. Yet, there were no clear signs yet of a *school subject Danish* (Da. *dansk*). The official directives for the public school system did not normally operate with a subject called 'Danish' or 'mother tongue'. The regulations from 1814 worked with a group of subjects, in which disciplines that later were perceived as parts of the subject Danish were instead included in 'reading' and partly in 'writing' (Den store danske, 2023). The school law of 1814 was the first to apply to the entire country. They further contend that it is only in the following decades that the first signs of a school subject Danish emerged. *Dansk* was not used as a term for the subject before 1899. Since no new school laws were launched between 1814 and 1899 in Denmark, no fixed year for a 'birth' of Danish as a proper school subject is suggested. They characterise the development between 1814 and 1903 as a move *Fra redskabsfag til nationalfag*, from an instrumental subject to a subject *for* the nation. This shift will be discussed later.

Thavenius (1999) chooses 1807 as starting point in search of a ('real') beginning of the school subject Swedish. That year Latin gave way for the mother tongue as the language of instruction across the school's subjects. In fact, Latin did not disappear before 1856 when a new law was introduced. Even Thavenius points out the 1870s as the time when *modersmålet* settled and became a school subject in Sweden. However, he argues that there was no core. Not only was *svenska* just a formally arranged cluster of different sub-subjects. Over the years there were even four different *svenska*, one for primary education (Swe. *folkskola*), one for the other school levels (Swe. *Läroverket*), one for girls, and one for vocational education. Attempts to integrate and unify came later and only gradually.

Summarised, the transition from skills and competences toward a school subject seems basically similar in Scandinavia. It took almost 150 years from the first literacy initiation to establishing a proper school subject (L1). The notion *literacy without a name* underscores that the phenomenon may be said to exist without a word for it in Scandinavian languages. All these scholars have argued that the L1 process happened slowly and gradually, further that the subject was a compound and not a whole, and that L1, even at the final stage, had no core. Besides, they have made it clear that their descriptions are based on studies of laws, curricular documents, and textbooks. What happened in classrooms is not really known. Finally, although different strong forces, groups, and agents had tried to shape or influence L1 during these centuries, no single force got the upper hand, in spite of the fact that the first literacy programmes had strong religious justifications. Later religion, rhetorics, enlightenment, work-life, business-life, farmers and workers movements, etc. had an impact, without achieving hegemony.

### 3.2 Disciplinary encapsulation of 'literacy' elements in L1 between 1880s and 1990s

Simplifying how L1 over the years has been composed by disciplinary elements (Norw. *fagemner*) in curricula, one can discriminate between *doings* and *knowings*, two popularised words which correlate approximately with today's curricular terms, *skills* and *knowledge*. Following Sawyer (2007, p. 77) pupils are expected to *respond* by reading, listening, and viewing when working with L1's major content parts. Pupils further *compose* (create) by, respectively, writing, speaking, and representing (Ongstad, 2020). Sawyer focused on *language*. In Table 1 *text, communication, literature, culture, and media* are added at the top and "doings and activities" to the left. They are currently the main content elements in the Norwegian national L1 curriculum.

Table 1. Overview of systemic relationships between modes of language and positions as receivers and senders of forms of language (based on Ongstad, 2020 and Sawyer, 2007)

L1 key elements	Language, literature, culture, media, text, communication		
Modes/Channels	Written	Spoken	Visual
Expected responding	Reading	Listening	Viewing
Expected composing	Writing	Speaking	Representing

This set of activity concepts samples the core of six curricular L1-activities that are historically associated with the first two literacy skills that initiated schooling in Scandinavia in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The six are both classroom activities and the core elements that are evaluated as competences. These L1-activities, still not *termed* literacies in Scandinavia though, have dominated much L1-schooling for centuries. Generally, written modes have dominated over spoken ones and written and spoken over visual ones. It is not until the 21<sup>st</sup> century that the visual mode has gained significant momentum, due to a dramatic increase of new media in society and a substantial growth of communication theories and research on multimodality (Elf et al., 2015). This development even functions as an entrance ticket to L1-curricula (Ongstad, 2014) and research for so-called New Literacies (Coiro et al., 2014).

In Norway *Den første lese- og skriveopplæringa* was in the 1980s a well-known notion in L1 teaching. It meant the first basic reading and writing for novice pupils the first years in school. This initial learning would over the schoolyears be extended to the six activities in Table 1. However, when compulsory schooling increased from seven to nine and ten, and for a majority later even to 13 years, the meaning of *basic* was challenged by ever new socio-cultural contexts. The national 2006 curriculum in Norway therefore radically introduced five so-called basic skills (Norw. *grunnleggende ferdigheter*) which *all* school subjects had to take responsibility for (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2023). They apply for all schoolyears 1 to 13 (age 6 to 19). Three of these, reading (Norw. *lesing*), writing (Norw. *skrivning*), and oral skills (Norw.

*muntlige ferdigheter*) fall under L1's domain. (The other two are numeric and digital skills.) In the 2020-curriculum this principle is even enforced. Soon, researchers began to associate basic skills with literacy (Mausethagen, 2007) by which the school subjects silently became tools for literacy.

What literacy in this context means is not clear though. *The Language Council of Norway* (LCN) presents an extensive discussion of the English term *literacy* because it creates semantic problems when introduced to and applied in its English form in a Norwegian linguistic context. LCN cites UNESCO's definition:

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and society. («The Plurality of Literacy and its Implications for Policies and Programmes». UNESCO Education Sector Position Paper, Paris 2004)" (LCN, 2023/no pagination).

As can be seen, the description covers fairly well the four of the basic skills in the 2006 and 2020 curricula. Left apart the invasive character of using English terms, it can be concluded that Norway in fact has made *literacy*—or a specific set of literacies—to its major educational national goal across years and subjects. Schooling in Norway hence started as what I called 'nameless' literacification. These first elements were over time dominated by a nationalistic oriented school subject, a disciplinarisation. However, this process was gradually guided by ideas of classical *Bildung*, mostly dominated by philosophy, pedagogy, and general didactics for about 120 years. Literacification, still nameless though, "bounced back" in 2006, now termed as *basic skills*, and got a strong grip on the school subjects. In spite of a *Bildung*-like overarching goal for schooling in general in Norway, the new dominant curricular concept, not only in L1, but in all subjects, was now *competence* (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010). Ideas of education as *Bildung* were in the final round pushed aside by the ministry in the 2006 curriculum for *Norwegian* (Krogh, 2020; Ongstad, 2020; Smidt, 2023; Vollmer, 2021). In the aftermath, the term *literacy* intruded even Norwegian academia and teacher education and became a silent competitor to disciplinary didactics in general and to L1-didactics in particular (Egenæs Staurseth, 2019; Ongstad, 2014; Unstad, 2022).

In this section literacification processes have been in focus. Disciplinarisation of L1 in Norway and Scandinavia has just been touched upon. The next section investigates this concept more in depth.

#### 4. DISCIPLINARISATION (NOW. FAGLIGGJØRING)—THE L1 CASE

In Norway, Steinfeld (1986) and Aase (2002) have shed light on the early years of L1 while Madssen (1999) and Rogne (2008) have studied L1 in its later years. Mortensen (1979), Krogh (2005), and Sjøstedt (2013) are other Scandinavian studies in this field. All these studies concern the 'making' of L1, or the disciplining of a L1. Ongstad (2014) has described similar processes and conditions for the subject English in the

U.S. that eventually even influenced Norway. In addition, there are general theories of and empirical studies on of how school subjects have come about and what characterises them, such as Bernstein (2018), Goodson and Marsh (2005), and Goodson (2013). Further, there are several studies of academic disciplines, such as Christie and Maton (2011), Osbourne (2015), and Neumann (2009) dwelling with disciplinarity *as such*.

In these and most other studies of school subjects and academic disciplines, disciplinarity (Norw. *faglighet*) is mostly restricted to the *subject matter*, either the academic content or the content of the school subject. If, for instance, L1-teachers are characterised as *faglig sterke* (Eng. strong in terms of disciplinarity), this does not necessarily imply that they are considered as good L1-teachers. It is a praise of their academic disciplinary knowledge. In this section perception of disciplinarity is problematised. What seems missing is an alternative perception.

Krogh (2009), Vollmer (2014), and Ongstad (2014) have all worked with L1-disciplinarity investigating the concept(s) *faglighed* (Da.), *Fachlichkeit* (Germ.), and *faglighet* (Norw.). As underlined in the introduction, *faglighet* covers both school subjects and disciplines in teacher education. In two different studies, Ongstad (2002, 2020) found, along with Nystrand et al.'s (1993) earlier studies, that paradigmatic changes in linguistics theories and textual studies between the 1930s and 1980s would later on propagate to L1 school curricula in a patterned way. They occurred as silent, linguistic disciplinary ideologies in L1. The disciplinarity of the research was simply blueprinted in the curricula. For linguists this development is no surprise. What is intriguing is that such changes for so many decades predominantly applied to disciplinary *matter* and hardly to the didactic aspect.

In Norway it is not before the late 1980s that studies of the *relationship* between pupils and texts (reading and writing), creating a consciousness of a *combined* or *fused* disciplinarity, became a didactic issue (Mellin-Olsen, 1989). An important, symptomatic agent for this development in Norway was Inge Moslet who persistently advocated for a much more child-centered L1. He caught the essence of a possible new, extended, integrated disciplinarity in his research project *Barn skriver* (Eng. Children write) (Moslet, 1983). It refers neither to *writing* nor *children*. Moslet's point was the two *as one* opposing a professionalism that just 'summarised' pedagogy and linguistics. He was an early critic of the national 1973 L1-curriculum (Moslet, 1981) and a main architect behind preparations for the next, in 1987, as well as key figure in the committee that crafted the 1992 L1-curriculum for teacher education. Last, but not least, he was the first editor of the textbook *Norskdidaktikk* (Moslet, 1999). He hereby became a pioneer and inspirator for a more integrated, didacticised L1, both in school and in teacher education, a new disciplinarity, one that was not restricted to subject matter.

This epistemological heritage has been followed up by others. For instance, had Jon Smidt (1989), in his pioneering study of his own L1-pupils' reading, been able to combine text- and student-orientation and outline an example of *teacher disciplinarity* (Norw. *lærerfaglighet*). Later he disseminated findings and L1-didactic

ideas to the community of L1-teachers of Norwegian (Smidt, 2009, 2023). Exponents for a similar development in L1 disciplinarity in other North European countries are, for instance, in Denmark Krogh (2005), in Sweden Thavenius (1981), in Germany Vollmer (2014). These scholars and many others have contributed to an integrated or fused perception of disciplinarity by refusing to separate knowledge of texts from knowledge about learners of text. Yet, many L1-didacticians' struggle for a combined disciplinarity has been accused both for not being *faglig* or not being *pedagogical* enough (Einarsson, 2005; Erixon, 2023; Krogh, 2023; Smidt, 2023).

In Norway, the national curriculum for L1 was reformed in 1997, 2006, 2013, and 2020 (Ongstad, 2020). In these curricula the learner seemingly got a more advanced seat. However, it was not as a consequence of a more didactic oriented disciplinarity. An external force had come to the fore (Mausethagen, 2007). Focus was now the learners' *competence* as final outcome, not their *Bildung*. The change of focus applied to *all* school subjects. Many analysts pointed to OECD-friendly governments of all political colours as a main reason for the change (Slagstad, 2006). Ongstad (2020) found, in analyses of ideological discourses in these curricula, that the words *teacher* and *pupil* had vanished and with them reduced possibilities for explicit didactics to be written into the L1-curriculum (Ongstad, 2023). Besides, *Bildung*-perspectives had, as mentioned, been diminished, or simply been left out (Smidt, 2023). Instead, skills and competence moved in and were soon considered and named in Norwegian as *literacy* (Blikstad-Balas, 2015). Also, literacy theory in teacher education increased. The newly developed disciplinarity in the field, L1-didactics, therefore had a new competitor, *New Literacies*, that invaded the curriculum, challenging L1-didactics as a term in teacher education. Confronted with this turn, what was the status for L1-didactics within the study discipline (Norw. *studiefaget*) L1?

## 5. DIDACTISATION

### 5.1 *Disciplinary didactics as term, concept, and phenomenon*

Didactisation, which of course simultaneously may function as disciplinarisation, implies that teachers, teacher educators, researchers, or institutional or political agents *generate* new disciplinarity, as combined and integrated (Breines et al., 1983; Hertzberg, 1999; Hopmann, 1998; Ongstad 1999, 2023). The term is also found in Danish, German, and French (Busse, 1994; Krogh, 2018; Pastré, 2017). Didactisation extends the fields continuously and includes far more than what is formally *called* L1-didactics. At the institutional level this new, expansive disciplining has made disciplinary didactics in general, and L1-didactics in particular, to an extensive, academic field (Ongstad, 2017). Pedagogy, general didactics, disciplinary didactics, and other relevant disciplines are now constituting elements in the new overarching field educational science(s) (*utdanningsvitenskap, uddannelsesvidenskab, and utbildningsvetenskap*) in Scandinavia (Ongstad, 2017). When a faculty takes the

name *utdanningsvitenskap* it signals implicitly a *didactic* base for its professional activities.

Key elements in Norwegian and Scandinavian teacher education for primary education were for a long-time pedagogy, methods (Norw. *metodikk/fagmetodikk*), practice, and a range of disciplines that covered most school subjects (Elstad, 2020). Between 1950 and 1980, L1 in teacher education was squeezed between two big millstones, the academic disciplines pedagogy and philological Norwegian especially in upper secondary schools. By 1990, methods had vanished and general didactics, as part of pedagogy, was weakened (Gundem, 1998). This vacuum gradually became filled by disciplinary didactics (Elstad, 2020; Ongstad, 2017).

Lorentzen et al. (1999) claimed that disciplinary didactics in some form or other existed even before the term appeared because content in school is taught and learned and hence fulfils a wide definition of disciplinary didactics. Terminologically *fagdidaktikk* (Norw.) first appeared in Germany as *Fachdidaktik*. Recently Schneuwly and Vollmer (2018), Vollmer (2014), and Rothgangel and Vollmer (2020) have given insights in how disciplinary didactics developed in German speaking countries and partly in France and Switzerland. Even if disciplinary didactics first emerged in continental Europe, the Scandinavian development happened rather independent from German influence, in spite of Klafki's strong impact on general didactics and pedagogy in Scandinavian teacher education (Gundem, 1998). Apart from the term there are few traces of German didactic influence.

Pedagogy was a dominating discipline in Scandinavian teacher education and prescribed a place for disciplinary didactics simply by normatively defining disciplinary didactic as a sub-category of general didactics which again was seen as a branch of pedagogy (NFR, 2004; Svartdal, 2001). This perception classified *fagdidaktikk* as a pedagogy. In Norway, Stieg Mellin-Olsen (1989) rebelled against this prescriptive perception, arguing that disciplinary didacticians should free themselves from the pedagogical discursive repertoire of concepts and develop their own didactic discourse. In the 1990s and the 2000s, L1-didactics in Norway was largely a bottom-up movement and a movement against epistemological dominance from established disciplines. That said, the power of pedagogy and the academic disciplines was probably stronger in Sweden and Denmark than in Norway (Erixon, 2023; Krogh, 2023). Pedagogy's somewhat weakened position in Norway in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may have contributed to stronger development of disciplinary didactics in Norway (Ongstad, 2023).

## 5.2 The emergence of L1 and L1-didactics in research and teacher education

In the following sketches of the history of *Norwegian* as a discipline in teacher education in Norway, I draw on Rogne (2020). As pointed to, *norsk* or rather *mother tongue education* (Norw. *modersmaalet*) in primary schools was in place around 1880. State 'seminars' in Norway were established from the late 1820s onwards. In the curriculum for these teacher seminars reading, language learning, and writing

were central sub-subjects in L1 (Dahl, 1959). It lasted till 1890 before a law was passed on for teacher training in Norway. In L1 there was emphasis on the subjects of knowledge of literature, knowledge of languages, and skills in written and oral presentation—sub-subjects up to the late 1960s. Historical perspectives were important in both literature and language knowledge (Rogne, 2020).

During the next decades new sub-subjects entered the curriculum, for instance analysis of language use in 1974, language sociology and standardisation in 1980, text linguistics, students' text, Norwegian as a second language, and analysis of pictures in 1992. There was also an increased focus on reading in 1999. Rogne found that, as a general tendency, new sub-subjects usually later became a permanent part of the subject. The growth was in other words rather cumulative. It should be added though that teacher education between 1965 and 1992 had been extended from two to four years. Besides, Norwegian in the late 1980s was in fact not compulsory. In this period, Norwegian was extended from a half to one semester of the four years. From 2010, primary school teacher training was split into two, one for grades 1 to 7 and one for grades 5 to 10 in primary and secondary education, which implied two slightly different L-subjects in teacher education. A five-year education with a master's degree was made obligatory from 2017.

Further, Rogne (2020, p. 23) comments upon the situation for disciplinary didactics (L1-didactics). He contends, based on his criteria for L1-didactics, that in the 2003 curriculum it had become a dominant sub-subject, since most learning outcomes formulations in the curriculum concerned didactics (Rogne, 2005, p. 52). Professionalisation of L1-didactics continued independently of changes in the national curricula for L1 in teacher education. For instance, Oslo University College had offered a half year course in *norskdidaktikk* on top of a one-year basic course in Norwegian (Ongstad, 2023; Smidt, 2023). In the new century teacher education colleges in Trondheim, Hamar, Tønsberg, and Oslo also offered master studies with a L1-didactic profile. Some years later the same colleges had even established doctoral studies that included disciplinary didactics (Kulbrandstad & Kulbrandstad, 2017; Ongstad, 2023). Similar studies were developed in Denmark and Sweden, in Denmark mainly in teacher education for the upper secondary level (Krogh, 2023), in Sweden more on the doctoral level (Erixon, 2023).

Hence, in the early 1970s disciplinary didactics (Norw. *fagdidaktikk*) was just a newly coined Norwegian term. From its implementation in curricula for teacher education in 1973 to its achieved status as a key sub-disciplinary element in the national 2017 curriculum, it had developed into a *fag* (Eng. subject/discipline). Still, this professionalised disciplinisation should be considered as a fragile process, considering the unpredictable nature of the integration or non-integration of key disciplinary elements, as discussed in the following.



### 5.3 *Didactics as added or integrated?*

If the answer to the question in the title of this section is “(more) *integrated*”, a possible next question is: Why is not *norskdidaktikk* the new preferred term for the whole discipline in teacher education instead of *norsk*? Plato’s croco-phat metaphor can be applied to raise the dilemma of how two amalgamating terms in hyphenated constructions balance the semantic importance of each aspect in a new construction (Ongstad, 2004). For instance, is *norsk-didaktikk*, seen from a semantic perspective, didactical oriented Norwegian or Norwegian-oriented didactics? Or is it a new discipline altogether, where no aspect gets the upper hand? Nevertheless, the gravity of ‘*norsk*’ is generally so heavy that most users will associate *norskdidaktikk* with a sub-subject or sub-discipline added to *norsk*, where traditional perceptions of *norsk* will persist. *Didaktikk-norsk* as a term does not exist, but could probably be associated with SMDI, as L1 with a didactic *orientation*.

The Faculty of Educational Sciences (Swe. *Utbildningsvetenskap*) at Gothenburg University now offers a Master in didactics announced as *Masterprogram i didaktik, Ämnesdidaktik, Svenska*, which implies that ‘Swedish’ is placed under general disciplinary didactics, which again is under didactics, which again is under an overarching educational science. This is an illustrative example of Holmberg and Nordenstam’s point that in Sweden the ‘new’ field finds itself in-between the heavy gravity of three heavy institutions: Literary studies, linguistics, and pedagogy (didactics) (Holmberg & Nordenstam, 2016). While SMDI implies seeing *svenska* as a possible major constituent, Gothenburg University’s announcement about the master study rather may signal the opposite.

As a contrast, the University of South-Norway (USN) offers a master study in *Norskdidaktikk* and announces that the sub-disciplines students can study are non-fiction, fiction, oral interaction, reading, writing, and oral skills. There is no mentioning of any didactics in the first part of the announcement. Yet, a closer look reveals that Language and language didactics, Literature and literature didactics, and Norwegian academic writing and reading, are three key elements. This lack of prioritising is increasingly common and visible in many job-announcements. For instance, at Østfold University College in 2023 there is a vacant position in “*norskdidaktikk/norsk/nordisk*”, which seemingly makes these three, *L1-didactics*, *Norwegian*, and *Nordic studies* equal as appropriate competence. It is likely though that the field in the future will continue to have competing disciplines that qualify for teaching L1 in teacher education. In this uncertain situation even a competitor as hinted had arrived, from abroad.

## 6. INTERNATIONALISATION: NEW LITERACIES AS LITERACIFICATION 2.0 IN NORWAY?

### 6.1 *Literacy as a drifting, evolving concept*

This section builds on Ongstad (2014). In the U.S., the executive committee of the *National Confederation of English Teachers* (NCTE) describes literacy as follows: “*Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy.*” (NCTE, 2012) Here, literacy has become a *practice*. However, terms with a different content were also registered, such as *study* and *field*, as in the examples *National Board Certification in Literacy* and *Department of English and Literacy* respectively (Ongstad, 2014). The term literacy has consequently drifted from, in the past, denoting a *personal faculty* to now including an *educational practice* that is supposed to create this literacy, further, to denoting the very disciplinary *field of knowledge* (theory). Along this expanding route, literacy has moved from a relatively positive, i.e., ideologically charged term that describes future, desirable characteristics of persons and groups that have been taught, to, apparently, a descriptive term denoting a completely new field of knowledge, which, as with L-didactics, implies a full-fledged disciplinarisation.

### 6.2 *New literacies in Norway*

Literacy came to Norway and Scandinavia in different ways and phases (Ongstad, 2014). In the 1980s and 1990s, Norwegian L1-researchers began to pay interest in international projects, practices, and policies in the fields of reading and writing. Influential researchers from the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Australia were invited. They included among others M. Halliday, J. Martin, G. Kress, J. Gee, B. Street, N. Fairclough, and M. Nystrand (Smidt, 2023). These and other influential scholars brought new concepts and methodologies, which gradually were incorporated in L1 and L1-didactics and became visible in research, subjects, disciplines, and textbooks (Skjelbred & Veum, 2013). In Norway, these new impulses appealed to and were applied by many teacher educators in Norwegian in the 1990s and beyond.

However, there were still few, if any in Norway, who at the start used the term *literacy* for these new orientations, although some international influencers promoted the term (Gee, 2014). Literacy was part of their new disciplinarity, sometimes even the name of their affiliation. For instance, in 1994 I stayed at the *Department of English and Literacy* at Melbourne University. Besides, it is symptomatic for a field’s ‘maturity’—in 2015 *Literacy studies* got its own handbook (Rowse & Pahl, 2015.) It had become a *fag*, a discipline, a field.

At the political stage, under successive governments, Norway gradually began to participate actively in international organisations that worked on literacy issues, such as UNESCO, the OECD, the EU, and the Council of Europe (COE) (Ongstad, 2020;

Slagstad, 2006). Through this extensive political work, which gradually became more concrete, invading, and binding, the Ministry of Education, under changing names these years, developed new political and educational discourses (Mausethagen, 2007). This influence happened without the term *literacy* being applied in policy documents as a *Norwegian* word. In the new millennium, however, several researchers started to use *literacy* as Norwegian. It caused ideological awareness, not only of the translation problem, but even about the conceptual content and its possible ideologies (Berge, 2005, 2017).

It is especially in this last phase that the situation has become didactically and epistemologically challenging. Firstly, there is an increased general acceptance of English-language subject terms without much prior critical discussion (Kristiansen, 2012; Schwach et al., 2022). Secondly, there seems to be little awareness of how literacy research from English-speaking countries may, historically, have influenced Norwegian research and Norwegian practice in the field (Ongstad, 2020). Thirdly, the diversity in and the continued expansion of the concept literacy is in itself epistemologically interesting (Endres, 2001). Last, but not least, the academic and research recipient apparatus, the entire subject and professional field that can contribute to integrating and balancing new educational impulses, namely disciplinary didactics and general didactics in teacher education, are challenged by literacy as a firm ideological policy (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010; Slagstad, 2006).

The discipline Norwegian in teacher education has been particularly active disseminating and implementing literacy research and literacy practices. It has consequently contributed to the growth of literacy-inspired perspectives in disciplinary didactics, not only L1-didactics. This development has led to various challenges: Is literacy disciplinary didactics? Or vice versa? Was, for example, mother tongue didactics 'literacy-influenced' even before the term gained acceptance in Norway? Are researchers' and politicians' perceptions of literacy on a collision course when developing curricula? Is the next generation disciplinary didacticians sufficiently meta-oriented and critical to grasp the magnitude of imported literacy theories that arrive, detached from didactics?

This drift raises two further central questions about disciplinarity (Norw. *faglighet*). Firstly, to what extent is literacy an ideological phenomenon? Secondly, what actually happens semantically and epistemologically when an unambiguous concept turns ambiguous? Literacy/literacies can be understood, both historically and for the time being, as an ability, a goal, a school subject/sub-subject, a study, a collection of practices, an ideology, and a critical positioning. Along the way, the concept has grown in political and educational influence. By opposing Norwegian-Scandinavian L1-didactics and 'New Literacies' fuelled by English, several terminological and epistemological key issues have been raised along the road. In a final section some key issues are highlighted and discussed more in detail as raised in the title and foreshadowed in section 1.

## 7. CRITICAL DISCUSSION—L1-DIDACTICS AND/OR LITERACY?

### 7.1 *Dynamic concepts travelling across borders*

Semantically, one term can refer to several concepts and one concept can be referred to by several terms. Besides, when communicating across borders the implication of this basic ‘rule’ increases in complexity. When a phenomenon is growing, the challenge of conceptualising it is not just terminological, but even epistemological. As seen, the English term *discipline* has to cover the Norwegian terms *fag* and *disiplin*. Further, *didaktikker* (Norw.) cannot be translated to English plural (\*)*didactics* and *litteracies* cannot be translated to Norwegian (\*)*litteracier*. Not the least, both disciplinary didactics and literacies are expanding phenomena—they need not only a functional plural form but a procedural term as well to cover the dynamics, such as *didactisation* and *litteracification*. Hence, we are confronted with a combined terminological *and* epistemological puzzle. Not least, when investigating discursively evolving phenomena, it is hard to know when a term is just a term and when it is a trustworthy symptom of a real phenomenon.

Symptomatically, the *Norwegian University of Science and Technology* (NTNU) has developed a doctoral course within the study of the discipline English called *Dynamic Literacies*. The course pays attention to dilemmas, tensions, challenges, and changes. The focus is on phenomena such as learning, identity, and agency. Literacy can be situated, which raises questions such as *What is literacy?* and *Can literacy be any kind of competence with regard to reading, understanding and writing texts in its broad sense?* There are different forms, such as for instance, digital literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, information literacy, and multi-literacy (NTNU, 2023a). The floating nature of literacy has also been recognised by UNESCO:

The plural notion of literacy latches upon [...] different purposes and situations. Rather than seeing literacy as only a generic set of technical skills, it looks at the social dimensions of acquiring and applying literacy. It emphasizes that literacy is not uniform but is instead culturally and linguistically and even temporally diverse. It is shaped by social as well as educational institutions: the family, community, workplace, religious establishments and the state (UNESCO, 2004, p. 13).

What may be disturbing for L1-didactics however is that “new literacies” as a concept is also a heavily promoted policy:

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associates with various contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential, and participate fully in community and wider society (UNESCO, 2017, p. 14).

A hidden ideology of this statement is that teaching, or a teacher’s *role* is left out. It appears as *auto*-didactics. Literacy is seemingly about learning only. This tacit implicitness is discursively implemented in a row of national curricula around the world. L1-didactics, which is about the dynamic interplay between *teacher*, L-1

*subject matter*, and *student in context* becomes a 'loser' confronted with this learning-focused curricular ideology (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010; Ongstad, 2020). As proven in much recent research, there is no place left for a didactic meta-consideration in the national curricula of how dynamics of the four mentioned didactic aspects can contribute to *Bildung* (Ongstad, 2015, 2020). The sum of all skills in the UNESCO-quote is an open set of non-integrated competencies, not *Bildung*, that is, not guided by a national object clause, prioritising a specific value that competencies should serve.

### 7.2 Integration of L1, L1-didactics, and literacy?

In the new Norwegian national law for teacher education (Lovdata, 2023), which applied from 2017, the terms *discipline* and *disciplinary didactics* are consistently kept separate, whenever the two are mentioned. Institutions are in general terms responsible though for high disciplinary quality and wholeness between the main parts: Disciplines, disciplinary didactics, pedagogy, and practice studies. Disciplinary didactics is not mentioned in the description of content elements for the Bachelor years (1-3) nor in the regulations for practice. Studies of/in school-subjects in the Master years (4-5) must be professionally oriented though and include disciplinary didactics (Lovdata, 2023).

Firstly, according to the perspective of the law, disciplinary didactics is still implicitly regarded as an *addition* to disciplinarity, although an approximation is generally recommended. Secondly, disciplinary didactics is no longer associated with practice. The applied perspective has vanished (in the law). Thirdly, there is no mentioning of literacy or literacies or any associated terms. Hence, when the law is compared with some institutions' descriptions of master studies in L1 by 2023, the degree of both the integrative development of disciplinary didactics into the discipline (didactisation) and the literacification of L1 in teacher education has increased significantly.

NTNU, for instance, offers teacher education (Norw. *Master i fagdidaktikk*). In the study of *Norskdidaktikk* one of the minor courses is called *Norskfaglig skriving og lesing*. It literally translates as '*Norwegiandisciplinary*' writing and reading. The content description addresses the topic literacy, an example that could illustrate the ongoing epistemological and integrative processes within and between the fields:

A central perspective in the (sub-)subject is literacy, understood as the ability to understand, interpret, create, and communicate with the help of texts, and to critically select, combine and adopt different linguistic and textual practices for different purposes (NTNU, 2023a; my translation).

In this present essay's first section the concept disciplinarisation was introduced, and didactisation and literacification mentioned as examples of kinds of disciplinarisation. Lately such processes have, both nationally and in Scandinavia had a strong impact on terms for sections, departments, and faculties organising these new disciplinary knowledges. At NTNU the faculty which offers the above courses, is

called *Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap*. It offers a PhD in *Utdanningsvitenskap*, and, under this terminological umbrella, several Master studies in *Fagdidaktikk*, mostly oriented towards specialisations in specific school subjects. The faculty was earlier called *Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet* (Eng. *The Faculty of Social Sciences*). For many years, the notion *pedagogiske fag* (Eng. *pedagogical disciplines*) was the overarching national concept for academic disciplines that qualified for teaching in schools such as *Norwegian* and *mathematics* (NFR, 2004). In other words, the hierarchical, organisational order went from the row *samfunnsvitenskap, pedagogikk, norsk* in the past to the row *utdanningsvitenskap, fagdidaktikk, norskdidaktikk, literacy* at present, at this university. This change is probably a current national trend as well.

However, at the end of the day, how integrated is *norsk* and *norskdidaktikk* in the above study? The two main sub-disciplines are *Språk og språkdidaktikk* and *Litteratur og litteraturredidaktikk*. In *Språk og språkdidaktikk* there is symptomatically a clear will to keep both of the traditional academic sub-disciplines, language and literature, quite separate and even to separate language and literature from their respective didactics. In the description of the content the weight is mostly put on language. Except for *grammatikdidaktikk*, the didactics of language is generally considered as, or reduced to, a *perspective* (NTNU, 2023b). Yet, in *Litteratur og litteraturredidaktikk* the intimate relationship is addressed:

Literature didactics is seen in the context of the subject Norwegian as a whole and is linked to children's and young people's text production and forms of communication, and to reading, writing and language work (NTNU, 2023c, my translation).

With the introduction of Master studies, disciplinary didactics and L1-didactics have seemingly achieved progress, at least terminologically, which, admittedly, does not mean that this necessarily is the case regarding *content*, or not to speak about the *practice*.

### 7.3 *Disciplinarity as means or ends?*

An important dynamic regarding educational politics concerns two different, but intertwined perceptions of school subjects, instrumental and formational processes. Negatively they can respectively be considered as dysfunctional practicism and failed idealism. When the 2020 school reform states that Norwegian is both an instrumental subject and a subject for *Bildung* (Norw. *Norsk er et redskaps- og danningsfag*) a possible tension and dilemma is made explicit. The instrumental aspect seems apparently possible both as means and ends (in the scope of L1). If (new) literacies hence are assumed to be goals for education, what is hence the role for *Bildung* (Norw. *danning*)?

According to Grimen (2008) universities' ideal search for new knowledge will often be *autotelic*, a curiosity-based search for generating knowledge per se. This kind of knowledge will generally strive for autonomy from any context, for instance

in such disciplines as pure mathematics and pure linguistics. As a contrast, a *heterotelic* approach to knowledge implies a search for its application for a goal (Grimen, 2008), for instance applied research or professional knowledge such as *applied* mathematics and linguistics with a prime function to *serve*. In the light of the dialectic relationship between an autotelic and a heterotelic epistemology *Norwegian* in teacher education over the centuries may be said to have moved stepwise toward *professionalisation* (Brumo et al., 2017; Ongstad, 2023; Penne, 2006).

The split between knowledge per se and its possible application in new contexts is not just a national educational issue, but even a general curricular dilemma. The OECD-imported Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo) system leads to a sharp division between the two allowed competence aspects, *knowledge* and *skills* found in curricular bullet points all over the world, what earlier were called knowings (nouns) and doings (verbs) in the text (Ongstad, 2020). The 2020 reform has, as pointed to, no textual place for ‘teacher’, ‘student’, ‘didactics’, or ‘context’ (Ongstad, 2020). They are no longer concepts in the general curriculum. Critically, and ironically, the fulfilment of the reform’s intentions is therefore dependent on a deep, professional, didactic understanding of how knowing can help doing, since the overarching goal should be educational *Bildung*, not textual, communicational, or cultural literacy.

Based on Grimen (2008), it would be tempting to conclude that there exist two kinds of disciplinarity, one related to the autotelic and one to the heterotelic search for knowledge, seeing the former as a content for teacher education, because it is *faglig*. Some teachers, teacher educators, and politicians in Norway advocate for such *faglighet*, for instance literature and language in Nordic studies. However, *faglighet* may end being ambiguous because it competes with a didactic and profession-oriented perception of disciplinarity, that also claims to be *faglig* (in Norwegian, *yrkesfaglig*). Symptomatically clarifying terms such as *fagfaglig* and *lærerfaglig* (respectively) have been coined.

There is a risk though, for making a new disciplinarity too self-contained. A self-critical L1-didactics implies seeing L1 as a tool, a means for *Bildung* as an end. Does ‘new literacies’ have this perspective of dependence?

#### 7.4 Literacification, disciplinarisation, and didactisation in the light of *Bildung*

A first sub-hypothesis for this inquiry was the assumption that schooling in Norway and Scandinavia basically started by implementing reading and writing as obligatory for the population, i.e., a first nameless and modest *literacification* of the nation. Disciplinarisation (Norw. *fagliggjøring*) of reading and writing and other added skills happened much later and generated the school subject L1. Gradually disciplinarisation took over as a dominant ideological process of schooling. It happened by a massive institutionalisation and formalising of school subjects,

ideologically perceived as the ‘necessary’ tools for the nation’s educational goals, which for a long time were rather nationalistic (Ongstad, 2020).

In teacher education, both for primary and upper secondary education, pedagogical and disciplinary content were kept separate. Students who wanted to become teachers, studied pedagogy, didactics, and instruction (Norw. *metodikk*) on the one hand, and a set of L1 disciplines on the other. Significant didacticisation of L1 emerged toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Only over in the 21<sup>st</sup> century some institutions started fusing the two aspects into what are conceptualised as *norskdidaktikk*, *danskdidaktik*, or *svenska med didaktisk inriktning* (SMDI) in Scandinavia. It is still not clear yet whether they will remain just terms for L1-didactics as a sub-discipline or will become a notion for the whole L1 study.

A last hypothesis concerned new literacification. Although the first literacification period actually marked the initiation of schooling in Scandinavia and the set of aspects (Table 1), made up the main content in primary L1-education for 250 years, they were ‘disciplined’ by (or *as*) L1, supported by a durable nationalistic brand, *norsk*, *dansk*, or *svenska*. When this glue evaporated, Norwegian, L1, as disciplinarity could dissolve. Literacification in a new shape came to surface and in Norway, a breakthrough happened with the introduction of so-called *basic skills* when the 2006 reform forced all school subjects to take responsibility for competence. This enforced literacification through new literacies challenged both traditional L1 disciplinarity (Norw. *faglighet*) and L1-didactics.

Bildung (Norw. *danning*) hence became a crucial issue for curricular L1. It was realised that literacy as a restricted set of competences seemed to obstruct or minimise the possibility of prioritising Bildung goals for L1, goals that a strongly didacticised L1-profession had advocated (Aase, 2005; Smidt, 2023). In the wake of this turn, the import of Anglo-inspired research on literacies increased dramatically. This impact concerned not only *Bildung* and the newly won disciplinarity of a didacticised L1, but at the end of the day even Scandinavian disciplinary languages (Norw. *fagspråk*).

In 2022, Oslo Metropolitan University arranged a panel-debate on the topic *Will the subjects disappear with the subject renewal?* (Oslo Met, 2022). The background for this rather dystopian question was two radical curricular grips in Norway. The 2006 reform had given five new basic skills or literacies. The 2020 reform had even added three new compulsory topics. These eight transverse elements are now implemented in all subjects for all 13 years. This massive overcrowding, perforating all school subjects, raises significant doubts: Will the epistemological phenomenon ‘discipline’ (Norw. *fag*) survive or dissolve into separate literacies and topics? And, finally, which consequences will extreme multi-disciplinarity in all school subjects have for disciplinarity in teacher education?



### 7.5 Some final methodological considerations

This study is designed as a scientific essay (Halås & McGuirk, 2021). Major parts are, in a methodological perspective, historical descriptions extracted from other's and own research, put in new contexts in order to problematise the relationship between two recent disciplinarisations, of L1-didactics and New Literacies. Section 1 positioned the challenge and argued why the scientific essay was a relevant choice to handle the issue. Section 2 sorted out semantic implications in the many involved terms and concepts and led up to a problematisation by contrasting the two disciplinarisations and by suggesting four processes that might be involved. In sections 3, 4, 5, and 6, each of these were studied more in detail. Within these sections, the essay drew on insights from previous research, although decontextualised and given a new scope. In the last section, four issues that seemed relevant for the challenges posed in the title were outlined and discussed. Judging the validity of the arguments is, on the one hand, risky since *some* generalisations are based on few sources. On the other hand, the aim was not to draw conclusions, but to problematise more in depth. Although no final answer is eventually given, this scientific essay nevertheless has aimed at offering a critical, extended epistemological context for further discussions.

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