Teacher professionalism and collaboration in the workplace

Galina Shavard

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Galina Shavard

Oslo, September 13th, 2022

Summary

This article-based thesis aims to better understand how teachers develop professionally in workplace collaboration. The empirical data comes from an ethnographically inspired study conducted over a year with a teacher team in a primary school in Norway. It includes extensive observations, interviews, and documents related to three common meeting routines: plenums dedicated to school development, collaborative professional development sessions, and weekly grade-level team meetings.

In research and policy, teacher collaboration is a widely advocated way to develop teacher professionalism from within its local contexts and extend opportunities for teacher agency. Often, it is opposed to development driven by policymakers and administrators aiming to compensate for lower than desired student achievement. Although some research taking a macro-level perspective considers development from-above and from-within as opposite poles, other studies suggest that teacher collaboration can be a means to different ends and promote rather different ideals of professionalism. Indeed, from-above development does not necessarily restrict professional agency, nor can teachers' local work cultures be considered explorative by default.

While there is extensive literature on factors that hinder explorative collaborative work, there has been little empirical investigation conducted across different collaborative routines, and conceptually, limited attention has been paid to problematising the sort of professionalism underpinning professional collaboration at school. Norway is an interesting empirical setting in which to examine different interplays of development from-above and from-within. Here, teachers' work can be seen as framed both by expectations of advanced professional knowledge and discretionary decision-making in addressing complex social problems and, at the same time, tolerance to increased administrative control. To examine these interplays, I employ theoretical perspectives drawn from the sociology of professions and research on teachers and teachers' work as well as such analytical tools as frame analysis, organisational routines, and boundary work.

The analysis indicates that although teachers' meeting routines differed significantly in the extent to which external actors and school leaders defined objectives, how the routines were performed suggested a somewhat restricted form of professionalism, even when objectives were defined by teachers themselves. More restricted professionalism could be seen as associated with teachers' strong focus on the here-and-now of teaching and caring, on the one hand, and

on the other, with the framing of collaborative work through a 'what works' question. However, the focus on here-and-now was not related merely to the practicalities of teaching, but rather to promoting student engagement and wellbeing in and outside the classroom. In fact, it was this particular focus that also opened opportunities for more extended professionalism.

Looking across meeting routines made it possible to trace an underlying pattern. A lack of routines in which the teachers engaged with abstract knowledge, such as theories and concepts, and examined normative dilemmas related to their social mandate seemed ultimately to reduce their agency in the here-and-now of planning lessons and talking about student development by limiting the scope of interpretive frames through which they 'saw' their practice. Put otherwise, it was not simply that teacher agency was narrowed in its scope to day-to-day decision-making, while the direction of school development was decided externally. It was rather that teachers' professionalism in day-to-day matters was somewhat restricted by a lack of more conceptually informed, principled discussions.

Extending earlier research, this thesis highlights the importance of conceptually informed discourse for the development of more extended professionalism. The data suggests that such discourse afforded more professional agency and legitimacy such as, for example, in decoupling organisational objectives of raising student achievement from more context-sensitive considerations regarding the wellbeing and development of specific students. Furthermore, the thesis emphasises the significance of unpacking normative ambiguity related to the ideals of the social mandate. Although some earlier research highlights the power of a shared vision and consensus for the agency of teachers, this thesis indicates that a more articulate and critical perspective on the social mandate and approaches to realise its ideals can be equally important for extending their professional agency.

The conclusions point in two directions. First, I suggest that, at a school level, supporting the quality of teacher engagement with professional knowledge requires viewing collaborative routines as closely interrelated. On the one hand, it involves teachers assuming a more participatory role in defining the direction of school development and, on the other, closer connections to the broader professional knowledge, including theories, research, and data, in day-to-day work with the issues of student development and wellbeing. Second, I suggest that the quality of teacher engagement with professional knowledge may benefit from exposure to different normative logics at play in realising the ideals of the social mandate.

Sammendrag

Denne artikkelbaserte avhandlingen omhandler hvordan lærerprofesjonalitet utvikles gjennom ulike samarbeidsrutiner i skolen. Avhandlingen er basert på en etnografisk inspirert studie av et lærerteam i en norsk barneskole. Datagrunnlaget består av observasjoner foretatt gjennom ett skoleår, intervjuer med lærere og skoleledere, og dokumenter tilknyttet vanlige møterutiner i skolen: 'fellestid' og ukentlige trinnmøter.

Innen forskning og politikk regnes lærersamarbeid som en måte å utvikle lærerprofesjonalitet innenfra på. En slik profesjonalisering innenfra blir ofte fremstilt som å være i motsetning til utvikling drevet ovenfra av politikere og administratorer, ofte med et mål om å 'kompensere' for lavere læringsresultater enn ønsket. Selv om en del av forskningen som tar et makronivåperspektiv anser utvikling ovenfra og innenfra som motsetninger, viser flere studier på mikronivå at lærersamarbeid kan være et middel til ulike mål og fremme ganske ulike idealer om lærerprofesjonalitet. Utvikling ovenfra begrenser for eksempel ikke nødvendigvis lærerprofesjonaliteten, og lærernes lokale arbeidskulturer kan ikke automatisk betraktes som utforskende. I denne avhandlingen undersøker jeg nettopp utvikling av lærerprofesjonalitet i ulike lærersamarbeidsrutiner, i spennet mellom utvikling ovenfra og innefra. Teoretiske perspektiver er hentet fra profesjonsteori og forskning på lærere og læreres arbeid. Jeg bruker også analytiske verktøy som rammeanalyse, organisatoriske rutiner og grensearbeid.

Selv om det finnes omfattende forskning på hva som hindrer utforskende lærersamarbeidsarbeid, har det vært lite empirisk fokus på tvers av ulike samarbeidsrutiner, og begrenset oppmerksomhet har blitt rettet mot hvilke typer profesjonalitet som ligger til grunn i lærersamarbeid. Norge er en interessant empirisk kontekst, siden lærerne her forventes både å anvende avansert faglig kunnskap og bruk av skjønn i møte med komplekse sosiale situasjoner, og samtidig være tolerante for økt administrativ kontroll.

Analysene i artiklene viser at selv om møterutinene var svært forskjellige når det gjaldt i hvilken grad eksterne aktører og skoleledere definerte mål ovenfra, tyder måten møtene ble gjennomført på i praksis på en noe begrenset profesjonalitet, også i møter der lærerne selv definerte sine mål. Dette kan relateres til et hovedfokus på de mest umiddelbare, 'her-og-nå' spørsmålene om undervisning og omsorg for elever, og en pragmatisk innramming av lærersamarbeidet gjennom en 'det som virker'-innstilling. Fokuset på her-og-nå var imidlertid ikke bare knyttet til det praktiske ved undervisning, men også til elevengasjement og trivsel i og utenfor klasserommet.

Og det var nettopp dette fokuset som også åpnet muligheter for mer utvidet profesjonalitet, der lærerne aktivt utøvet profesjonelt skjønn i samsvar med faglig kunnskap og verdier.

Det å studere lærersamarbeid på tvers av ulike møterutiner pekte på et underliggende mønster. Mangel på arenaer der lærere kan både løfte sitt faglig språk med teori og begreper og undersøke normative dilemmaer tilknyttet deres samfunnsmandat, så ut til å begrense lærernes handlingsrom når det gjelder planlegging og diskusjoner rundt elevenes læring og utvikling. Det så også ut til å begrense de tolkningsrammene som lærere kan se praksisen sin igjennom. Med andre ord var det ikke bare det at lærernes handlingsrom ble begrenset til den daglige beslutningstakingen på mikronivå, mens retningen for skoleutvikling ble bestemt ovenfra. Utfordringen var at lærernes profesjonalitet i daglig beslutningstaking ble svært begrenset av mangel på et mer språk og mer konseptuelle diskusjoner.

Avhandlingen bidrar til forskning om lærersamarbeid som en arena for profesjonsutvikling ved å fremheve betydningen av teoretisk kunnskap i lærernes daglige profesjonsutøvelse. Dataene tyder på at mer eksplisitt bruk av teorier og begrep ga lærerne mer handlingsrom og legitimitet, for eksempel når det gjaldt å frikoble skolens organisatoriske mål for å øke elevresultater fra mer kontekstsensitive hensyn til trivsel og utvikling av konkrete elever. Videre understreker avhandlingen betydningen av å synliggjøre og pakke ut normativ tvetydighet og dilemmaer knyttet til realisering av lærerens samfunnsmandat. Selv om tidligere forskning ofte fremhever en felles visjon og konsensus som viktige for lærernes profesjonsutvikling, kan et tydeligere artikulert og mer kritisk perspektiv på samfunnsmandatet og ulike tilnærmingene for å realisere dets idealer være like viktige for å utvide lærerprofesjonaliteten.

Konklusjonene peker i to retninger: Avhandlingens funn tyder på at det er viktig å se på forskjellige samarbeidsarenaer i skolen som nært knyttet til hverandre. Nærmere bestemt innebærer dette at lærere på den ene siden må innta en mer deltakende rolle i å definere retningen for skoleutvikling, og på den andre siden, at møterutiner der lærere diskuterer elevenes læring, utvikling og trivsel må bli bedre koblet til bredere faglig kunnskap, inkludert forskning, teori og data. Like fullt er det behov for samarbeidsarenaer der lærere får innsikt i og får teste ulike normative begrunnelser som potensielt kan stå i spenning når det gjelder realisering av lærerens samfunnsmandat.

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Shavard, Galina (2022). Teachers' collaborative work at the boundaries of professional responsibility for student wellbeing. *Scandinavian Journal of Education Research, 67*(5), p. 741-753. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2022.2042851

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Shavard, Galina (2022). Teacher agency in collaborative lesson planning: stabilising or transforming professional practice? *Teachers and Teaching 28*(5), p. 555-567. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2022.2062745

Part 1. Extended abstract

1 Introduction

The overall aim of this thesis is to better understand how teachers develop professionally through workplace collaboration. Since the 80s, breaking the norms of isolation in teaching has been advocated by researchers as a powerful lever for developing teacher professionalism (Kelchtermans, 2006; Little, 1990; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002; Timperley, 2011). Now, in many countries, schools are not merely encouraged but mandated to allocate time and space for teachers to meet regularly and work together on issues related to teaching and learning (OECD, 2020). In some countries, including Norway, structured collaborative work has become part-and-parcel of schools' organisational culture, with teachers spending substantial time in weekly meetings (Carlsten et al., 2021). These meeting routines can be seen as an essential context, in which teacher professionalism is explicitly and implicitly developed as teachers negotiate common ways to frame, investigate, and handle problems of practice, deal with uncertainty, cooperate with external actors, and relate to policy and reforms (L. Evans, 2019).

Sustained professional collaboration is broadly associated with opportunities for increased professional agency, understood as teachers' capacity and motivation to shape and influence their work practices (Datnow & Park, 2018; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). It is often contrasted with top-down approaches involving test-based accountability, measurement, and standardisation, which are seen as essentially de-professionalising, with reduced professional agency and an overall narrowing of what is valued in education to gains in student achievement (Au, 2011; Ball, 2015; Milner, 2013; Trujillo, 2014). However, the concept of professionalism has multiple meanings and does not relate only to teachers as a professional group moving towards or away from the golden standard of classic professions (Etzioni, 1969). It can also be seen as *ideals* held by different actors regarding what constitutes professionalism (Fournier, 1999; Mausethagen, 2021; Ozga & Lawn, 1981).

Previous research has shown that perspectives on which competencies, values, and loyalties should underline teacher professionalism vary significantly over time and among actors (Hall, 2004; Mausethagen, 2021; Servage, 2009). On the one hand, teachers are employed by the state and act under the public mandate, which to a great extent ties them to the organisational objectives of the school as a bureaucratic entity and current public consensus on values and priorities in education (Fournier, 1999; Hopmann, 2007; Mehta, 2013). At the same time,

educational policymaking at any particular moment is far from conceptually coherent and sets multiple, often conflicting expectations for teachers (Hatch, 2013; Wermke & Prøitz, 2021). Nor can teachers, as one of the largest professional groups, be seen as likeminded and self-governing actors to the degree that lawyers or architects can afford to be. Thus, multiple ideals of professionalism are likely to interplay and create tensions in teachers' day-to-day work (Afdal & Afdal, 2018; Mausethagen & Smeby, 2016; Stone-Johnson, 2014; Weiner, 2020). Meeting routines provide opportunities for investigation of the micro-dynamics of such interplays. They can be examined both as intended, structured, and patterned ways of working with colleagues and as actual 'performances' of routines which take place within the contingencies of everyday life at school (Pentland & Feldman, 2005; Sherer & Spillane, 2011).

In the last decades, the research literature has listed many benefits of teacher collaboration for professional development, indicating that merely providing time and space is insufficient for more extended forms of professionalism to emerge (Datnow et al., 2018; Horn et al., 2017; Kelchtermans, 2006; Little, 1990). Multiple studies have pointed to a constellation of factors, such as certain cultural norms and norms of collegial relationships, taken-for-granted discursive patterns, and a lack of structural conditions, which altogether make interpretative and generative work relatively rare. While the research on teacher collaboration is extensive, it has limitations. In particular, empirical studies tend to follow up on the current policy agenda and examine collaborative professional development (CPD) projects facilitated by external actors, who are often the researchers themselves (as noted, for example, by Askling et al., 2016; Hermansen et al., 2018; Weddle, 2021). Yet, such projects represent only a fraction of teachers' actual collaborative work (Carlsten et al., 2021). Even when collaborative work is narrowed down to formal meeting routines, work intended for school development or the development and wellbeing of individual students is often overlooked.

This is an important limitation. Research suggests that making the caring aspect of professional work more visible is essential not only because student wellbeing is a 'hot' policy theme, but because it is an intensely emotional aspect of professional work, one which brings teachers a deep sense of meaning, commitment, and joy but also significant ambiguity and stress (Elstad, 2009; Zembylas, 2010b). Because such collaborative work is not explicitly labelled as a context for professional development, however, it is in danger of slipping under the research radar (Evans, 2019). Moreover, the ideals of professionalism underpinning routines for collaborative work often remain taken for granted (Datnow & Park, 2018; Servage, 2009). Such ideals may range greatly and include (often a mix of) ideals related to service ethics, compliance to policy,

individual charisma, authoritative leadership, pedagogical creativity and risk-taking, advanced subject knowledge, evidence-based practice, researcher mindset, etc.

In sum, I made the following assumptions at the onset of this study. First, professional development takes place in collaborative work not only through formal CPD but also when teachers work together on day-to-day matters of practice. Thus, much can be learned about how teachers develop professionally from a look *across* different routines for collaborative work. Second, collaborative work can be a means to different ends and reflect different ideals of teacher professionalism. This highlights a need to look at how teachers are positioned and position themselves, where their attention is directed, what priorities are explicitly and implicitly set by teachers, school leaders, and external actors, what problems are (and are not) addressed, etc. Finally, ideals of professionalism held by teachers, local authorities, or policymakers, are not necessarily internally consistent or necessarily in conflict with one another and may differently interplay in practice.

1.1 Policy setting in Norway

Norway is an interesting empirical setting in which to examine these interplays. Although the core curriculum is universally defined by the Ministry of Education, extensive leeway has historically been given to individual teachers and schools in determining how teaching is to be developed and organised (Halvorsen et al., 2019; Helgoy & Homme, 2016). This leeway may be associated with an overall low power distance in the society, a relatively low-stakes educational policy, strong teacher unions, and a political orientation towards consensus, which requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders in policymaking (Mausethagen, 2021; Prøitz & Aasen, 2017). At the same time, this leeway should be considered within the context of a universal welfare state and a unified teacher education and school system. Within it, the state largely defines the premises of the teaching profession and positions teachers explicitly as agents for implementing national policies (Wermke & Prøitz, 2021). However, these policies are not always consistent and often result in clashes between the broader social mandate and shorter-term accountability demands (Hatch, 2013).

Test-based accountability came to dominate policy debates in Norway after the so-called ‘PISA shock’ of 2000 (Camphuijsen et al., 2020). Not only did Norway score much lower than expected, but the gap in reading skills between high- and low-performing students was more significant than in most European countries. The PISA shock brought about the adoption of top-down accountability, but arguably one with ‘a Norwegian touch’ in the sense of few

consequences attached to performance (Imsen et al., 2017; Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2017). Nonetheless, school performance has become increasingly monitored and been made visible by administrative instruments layered on top of one another over time (Camphuijsen et al., 2020).

Post-PISA policies placed teachers in the spotlight (Askling et al., 2016). This included, among other things, the introduction of new, non-administrative career paths, a transition from a 3-year to a 5-year teacher education programme, and exponential growth of large-scale CPD projects (e.g., Lower Secondary in Development [2012–2017], Culture for Learning [2017–2021], Assessment for Learning [2010–2018] and others). These developments can be viewed as supporting teacher professionalism both from-within and from-above (Askling et al., 2016). On the one hand, teachers as a professional group arguably became much better connected to wider knowledge networks and resources (Carlsten et al., 2021; Jensen et al., 2021). On the other hand, some policies bore a distinct compensatory character in the sense of teacher professionalism – at the level of the whole professional group – being considered insufficient and in need of external regulation in order to compensate for lower-than-desired student achievement (Caspersen et al., 2017). Put differently, large-scale CPD projects became an instrument of 'soft' governance (Kirsten & Wermke, 2017).

Thus, teachers' work in Norway can be seen as framed simultaneously by a political discourse of measurement and test-based accountability and one of trust in teacher competence. Teachers are assigned the task of realising the social mandate outlined in the introductory part of the core curriculum and the Education Act (Section 1-1). These central documents highlight the multidimensional and interrelated nature of education and schooling. In the Norwegian context, the social mandate is often referred to as a 'double mandate', pointing to the equal significance of academic competencies and 'all-round development', including socialisation and self-formation (UDIR, 2017). Teachers as a professional community are, therefore, entrusted with this double mandate.

Teacher collaboration has been part of educational policy since the 1987 reform. Since then, teachers' work contracts have mandated a share of working time for collaboration with colleagues, which at present approximates 3–4 hours per week plus 6 full days a year (Askling et al., 2016; Carlsten et al., 2021). Later reforms have extended this requirement by framing the role of schools as learning organisations and teacher collaboration as a context for both practice development and the development of professional knowledge (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2004, 2011, 2017). Indeed, the results of TALIS 2018 showed that teachers in Norway participate more in CPD than teachers in any other OECD country. Moreover, as many as 95% of

Norwegian teachers are satisfied with the collaborative culture at school, or more specifically, with the relationships of trust and support from colleagues as well as opportunities for experience exchange with colleagues (Carlsten et al., 2021). Interestingly, however, evaluation reports of recent large-scale CPD projects in Norway have highlighted that although teachers and school leaders report being largely satisfied with the results of those projects, 'objective results' in the sense of improvement in student achievement appearing to be minimal, if even noticeable (Blossing et al., 2010; Løddng et al., 2021; Postholm et al., 2017).

In the major curriculum reform of 2020, the professional community is a central concept (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). In the accompanying policy documents, the quality of education is directly related to the quality of teacher collaboration, with an emphasis on teachers' 'own aspiration to learn' rather than merely the obligation to take part in professional development (Meld. St. 28 [2015–2016] and Meld. St. 21 [2016–2017]). Furthermore, Meld. St. 14 (2019–2020) highlights professional development as emerging from routine workplace interactions, while Meld. St. 6 (2019–2020) underlines the role of research as a knowledge source in teachers' work. Finally, the most recent large-scale CPD project (The New Competence Development Model, 2019) marks a shift in policy thinking towards more decentralised governance, with the aim of responding to local needs rather than defining these needs from-above. An interesting finding in the preliminary evaluation of this project, however, is that conducting such a needs analysis is a rare and demanding competence for teachers and local stakeholders (Lyng et al., 2021).

When it comes to how collaborative work is organised at schools, research indicates that meeting routines in Norwegian schools are similar (Askling et al., 2016). Typically, there are two weekly routines: a plenary session for all teachers ('fellestid' or 'utviklingstid') and a grade-level team meeting ('teamtid' or 'trinntid'), plus sometimes discipline-focused meetings more characteristic of middle and high schools (Askling et al., 2016). With some variation, collaboration in plenums often takes place within large-scale CPD projects, while agendas for grade-level meetings are more teacher-driven. The TALIS 2018 data indicates that most teacher collaborative time is dedicated to coordinating work, scheduling, exchanging teaching materials, and discussing individual students, but rarely to peer feedback or discussions about new professional literature; 'discussions regarding the development of specific students' are by far the most common collaborative form (Carlsten et al., 2021).

1.2 Central concepts

Two concepts stand central in this thesis: teacher collaboration and teacher professionalism. I will now briefly introduce them.

1.2.1 Teacher collaboration

In many ways, Little (1990) foregrounded research on teachers' work outside the classroom or 'in the backstage', highlighting that teacher learning and practice development are social and dynamic processes. She conceptualised teacher collaboration as joint work aimed at improving professional practice and promoting student learning, and she outlined principles of interpretive and generative collaborative work such as revealing and probing problems of practice, providing evidence and justifications, making connections to general principles, building on the ideas of others, and offering different perspectives (Little, 1990, 2002, 2012). Since then, mounting research has documented the impacts of teacher collaboration on teacher engagement and learning, job satisfaction, wellbeing and, ultimately, better student outcomes (e.g., Papay & Kraft, 2017; Ronfeldt et al., 2015; Stoll et al., 2006; Vangrieken et al., 2017; Vescio et al., 2008). However, it has been found that even intensive and emotionally supportive collaboration is rarely grounded in the kind of joint work described by Little (Earl & Timperley, 2009; Grossman et al., 2001; Horn et al., 2017; Kelchtermans, 2006). Furthermore, teacher collaboration has also been found to serve very different ends, create a whole range of norms and practices, and support different ideals of teacher professionalism (Datnow et al., 2018; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Kennedy, 2014; Servage, 2009).

As shown in Chapter 2, just as with instruments like mentoring or teacher specialisation, collaborative work – viewed from different angles, in different social settings, and at different historical moments – can be interpreted as empowering or as part of a surveillance and micromanagement agenda (Hall, 2004). It can be tightly linked to student improvement in test-based achievement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) or understood in much broader terms as a context for transformative and critical pedagogy (Servage, 2009). This makes it important to consider the ideals of professionalism underpinning collaborative work beyond that formally intended for professional development (Evans, 2019). At this point, it is worth noting that in the empirical articles, I use the term 'contexts' to signify teacher collaborative work within grade-level meetings, school development plenums, and CPD sessions. In the extended abstract, however, I use the term 'meeting routines' interchangeably with 'collaborative contexts'. I do so to better align with the existing literature and to make better use of the concept of organisational routines,

which helps me explore how particular ideals of professionalism are both stabilised and transformed in everyday work (Pentland & Feldman, 2005; Sherer & Spillane, 2011).

1.2.2 Teacher professionalism

The concept of professionalism has gained much currency in research on teachers and teachers' work since 2000, not least in connection with the call for more collaborative cultures at schools (Hargreaves, 2000, 2019). It is, however, a concept with many possible entrances. Sociological analysis of professional work has differentiated professionalism as a special means of organising work, in contrast to the hierarchical, bureaucratic, and managerial control of industrial and commercial organisations (Freidson, 2007). A classic definition outlines such characteristics as specialised knowledge, the promotion of human wellbeing, service ethics, and relationships of authority and trust (Abbott, 1988; Carr, 2000; Freidson, 2007). Specialised knowledge is positioned as central, as it permits autonomy and requires discretion, which are both crucial in distinguishing professions from other occupations with more rote practice and hierarchal organisation of work (Molander, 2016). It also presupposes continuous professional development as primarily a collective process (Havnes & Smeby, 2014; Simons & Ruijters, 2014). Moreover, as opposed to the individual autonomy of craftspeople, it assumes a more collective perspective on autonomy and agency, one maintained and broadened by means of collective engagement with knowledge and embedded in wider social and professional networks (Gewirtz et al., 2008; Hermansen, 2017; Jensen et al., 2021; Winch, 2017b). However, as mentioned earlier, professionalism is a concept often used not so much to describe but to *legitimise* particular ideals regarding how practitioners should perform their work (Hall, 2004; Mausethagen, 2021; Servage, 2009). Distinguishing between professionalism as defined from-above, such as by administrators, managers, and policymakers, and from-within the profession itself is useful in examining the political dimension of professional work, that is, how different stakeholders assign meaning to professionalism (Evetts, 2003).

Another perspective I adopt in this thesis is that regarding restricted and extended professionalism[1] (as originally coined by Hoyle, 1974). Here, professionalism is seen as a continuum, broadly characterising different relations to professional knowledge. Restricted professionalism assumes the primacy of personal experience and intuition. It is guided by a narrow, classroom-bound perspective which prioritises matters directly related to the

[1] Hoyle (1974) applies this distinction to the concept of professionality, understood as a quality of individuals. As does Evans (2008), I use Hoyle's concept more broadly in relation to a collective notion of professionalism.

practicalities of teaching. Another form of restricted professionalism can be seen in an exclusive focus on implementing policies and applying research through highly scripted curricula and protocols for teaching (Winch, 2017b). For Freidson (2007), neither constitutes professionalism. At the other end of the continuum, extended professionalism presupposes a much wider vision of what education involves and what is demanded of teachers. It entails curiosity about the principles underpinning professional work, and critical awareness of the values on which professional work rests. Extended professionalism, therefore, bears clear associations with Little's (1990) concept of interpretive and generative professional work and presupposes substantial professional agency, in the sense of room for manoeuvre but also teachers' motivation to actively explore it.

1.3 Research questions and aims

The aim of this thesis is to better understand how teachers develop professionally in workplace collaboration. Put differently, I address the following research question:

How do teachers develop professionally in workplace collaboration?

This question is broken into three sub-questions, which cut across the three empirical articles and help to discuss the findings of the project as a whole.

1. What type of professionalism can be identified in common routines for teacher collaborative work at school?
2. In which ways do development driven from-within and from-above the profession interplay in different meeting routines?
3. How do those interplays of development from-within and from-above position teachers in workplace collaborative work in terms of more extended forms of professionalism?

1.4 Overview of the articles

The empirical articles draw on a data corpus consisting of observations, interviews, and documents collected over the year 2016–2017 with one teacher team. The first article takes a broader comparative look at how meeting routines at school were structured; the second explores teachers' collaborative work with issues of student wellbeing within grade-level team meetings; and the third centres on collaborative lesson planning as a central form of CPD (see Table 1). A detailed overview of the empirical findings can be found in Chapter 5.

Table 1. *Overview of the articles*

Title	*From school improvement to student cases: Teacher collaborative work as a context for professional development*	*Teachers' collaborative work at the boundaries of professional responsibility for student wellbeing*	*Teacher agency in collaborative lesson planning: stabilising or transforming professional practice?*
Research question	How are some of the common contexts for collaborative work structured? If there is variation, what are the associated limitations and opportunities for professional development?	How do teachers make sense of and conduct work at the boundaries of professional responsibility for promoting student wellbeing?	How is collaborative lesson planning structured as a space for professional agency, and how do teachers use this space agentically?
Empirical data	observations of plenaries, CPD sessions, grade-level team meetings, interviews, documentary data	observations of casework meetings, interviews, documentary data	Observations of CPD sessions, interviews with teachers, documentary data
Analytical tools	professionalisation from-within and from-above (Evetts, 2003) frame analysis (Benford and Snow, 2000)	professionalisation from-within and from-above (Evetts, 2003) professional responsibility and social mandate (Hughes, 1981; Solbrekke, 2008) collaborative boundary work (Langley et al., 2019)	organisational routines (Pentland & Feldman, 2005; Sherer & Spillane, 2011) ecological perspective on professional agency (Priestley et al., 2015a)
Findings	The findings reveal that meeting routines intended for school development offered only incidental opportunities for teachers to engage in problem framing. The 'what works' question was central in structuring CPD routines and often acted as a limiting frame. In contrast, grade-level meetings intended for work with student development and wellbeing involved broader opportunities for explorative problem framing. The analysis emphasises the role of framing questions in structuring teacher collaborative work.	The analysis centres on different patterns of handling ambiguity and tensions in everyday work with cases of student development and wellbeing. Conclusions highlight the significance of workplace routines oriented toward making normative tensions in wellbeing work more visible and approachable.	The findings show a substantial focus on the here-and-now of teaching in CPD sustained both from-within and from-above. The analysis highlights limitations related to little engagement with abstract knowledge and at the same time, opportunities that lie in teachers' close focus on student engagement and social dynamics.

1.5 Manuscript outline

The thesis has two main parts: I) the extended abstract and II) the empirical articles. The remainder of the extended abstract is organised as follows: Chapter 2 positions this study in relation to existing research. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical perspectives and analytical concepts used in the empirical articles and the discussion in Chapter 6. Chapter 4 elaborates on the methodological approaches and presents the data corpus and the analytical processes. This chapter includes reflections on validity, generalisability, and ethical issues. Chapter 5 summarises the empirical findings of the three published articles. Chapter 6 discusses the findings as a whole in relation to the main research question. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by outlining the contributions of the thesis and suggesting empirical, theoretical, and methodological implications.

2 Empirical research on teacher professional collaboration

In this chapter, I position the thesis within existing research on teacher professional collaboration in the workplace. I do so by outlining some organising themes in the empirical literature, which in different ways link teacher collaborative work to professionalism. In particular, the review shows how certain cultural norms, emotions, collegial relationships, discursive patterns, and structural arrangements explicitly and implicitly promote different ideals of professionalism.

The search and update of the literature were conducted between 2016 and 2022 with the help of literature mapping software. At the onset, the following search strings were used to find relevant articles: 'teacher collaboration', 'teacher teams', 'teacher collegiality', 'professional learning community', 'professional collaboration', and 'collaborative professional development'. For the most part, I followed a snowball method by tracking key publications and names, mapping bibliographies, and checking alerts for new publications. I used databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, and Oria. To trace Norwegian studies, I also used search strings in Norwegian. This chapter is therefore not a systematic review. Some publications can be considered key in the field, while others, more recent, are selected for relevance.

2.1 Systemic reviews on teacher collaboration

Because the empirical research on collaborative teacher work is large, I extensively used literature reviews to navigate the field. Initially, Kelchtermans' (2006) review directed my focus to the interplay of micropolitical (power, interests, influence) and cultural (sense-making, values, norms) contexts of teacher collaboration. A review by Horn et al. (2017) pinpointed the need to understand how various types of teachers' talk differentially support professional development with regard to the availability of conceptual resources. At a later stage, Lefstein et el.'s (2019) review on teacher collaborative discourse helped sharpen the focus on workplace interactions as a primary context for the enactment of professional agency and socialisation into the teaching profession. The review underlines how, through routine interactions with colleagues, teachers shape their understanding of the domains of practice, in which they are expected to act and take responsibility. A review of 95 empirical articles on CPD by Lindvall and Ryve (2019) further deepened the focus on teacher agency in collaborative work. Their review indicates a lack of research in which teachers are seen as actors in professional development rather than implementors of external initiatives. Finally, a review by Weddle

(2021) focusing on theories and methods underpinning teacher collaboration research allowed me to reflect on the rationales behind my own methodological choices. The review highlights three interrelated trends in the research, namely, a focus on success cases and best practices as opposed to more 'close-to-reality' cases; a focus on shorter-term professional development intervention (as opposed to day-to-day collaborative work); and a lack of research in which cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity in the classroom is addressed explicitly as a context of teachers' work, as opposed to a mere description in the methods section.

Much research on teacher collaborative work – this thesis included – builds on the work of Judith W. Little. Little famously questioned 'the optimistic promise' of teacher collaboration, arguing that 'the expectations that any interaction breaking the isolation of teachers contributes in some fashion to the knowledge, skill, judgement, or commitment of individuals and enhances the collective capacity of groups or institutions' is unwarranted without a careful investigation (Little, 1990, p. 508). Too often, she claimed, teacher collaborative work remains at the level of scheduling, story-sharing, and advice exchange, while critical, theoretically informed discussions and systematic experimentation with new ideas are rare. Decades of research supporting Little's conclusions point to a constellation of cultural norms, collegial relationships, discursive patterns, and structural conditions in teacher collaborative work and more broadly, the teaching profession. Aware that all these aspects interact with each other in practice, I pinpoint some central themes in the research; show how these themes interrelate; and situate my work.

2.2 Cultural norms in teacher collaborative work

Despite obvious differences in their sociopolitical and economic settings, classic publications on cultural norms in the teaching profession are surprisingly relevant. Almost 50 years ago, Dan Lortie (1975) observed that teaching has three interlocking characteristics: presentism (focusing on the short term), conservatism (concentrating on small-scale rather than whole-school changes) and individualism (doing teaching in isolation from other teachers). These characteristics have been largely associated with cultural norms of privacy and conflict avoidance. Coupled with time pressure, they seem to steer the focus towards the practicalities of teaching and away from a critical examination of the teacher's own and each other's practice (Kelchtermans, 2006).

Speaking to the theme of privacy, Little (2002) directed attention towards the transparency with which teachers share how they think and what they do in the classroom. A lack of specificity

and clarity in teachers' representations of practice is problematic because teaching can usually be only discussed with colleagues in prospect or retrospect and not in the moment (Barnes, 2004; Grossman et al., 2009; Loughran, 2019). Moments cannot be 'paused' and examined as they unfold, as opposed to the professional setting of architects or doctors who can discuss a complex case at the operation table or construction site. Empirical research has suggested a range of strategies to increase transparency through richer representations of practice, such as lesson plans, student work samples, 'multivocal' accounts of practice (Horn & Kane, 2015), and video records (e.g, Pehmer et al., 2015; Vedder-Weiss et al., 2018).

A lack of transparency is closely related to a tendency to avoid conflict, maintain the status quo, and prioritise consensus. Engeström and Kerosuo (2007) discuss the limitations of these norms, highlighting the power of confrontations and contradictions, which force reconsideration of taken-for-granted assumptions and promote a look beyond what is known and familiar. Confrontations, in this sense, are not obstacles but opportunities or even essential drivers for interpretive and generative professional development (Achinstein, 2002; Kelchtermans, 2006; Koffeman & Snoek, 2018; Lima, 2001). Such development would imply both tolerance for critical peer feedback and a mindset open to competing perspectives and ideas. Louie (2016) provides a common empirical example. She shows how a teacher team was regularly caught in a tension between conflicting discourses on mathematical competence, as unequally distributed and fixed versus achievable for all in a great diversity of ways. Louie argues that these contradictions in perspective presented opportunities for the teachers to critically examine and develop practice, although how teachers framed their collaborative work often stifled these opportunities. Specifically, by managing interpersonal relationships and focusing on providing emotional support and sharing advice, opportunities to learn from a critical examination of differences were missed (Louie, 2016).

2.3 Relationships and emotions in collaborative work

Emotions in professional practice can be seen as intimately connected with sense-making and shaped by cultural and organisational environments and by teachers' relationships with each other (Nias, 1996; Spillane et al., 2002). The benefits of strong emotional bonds are highlighted, for example, by Mintrop and Charles (2017), who examined teacher collaborative work in a context of low-performing and socioeconomically deprived neighbourhoods. They argued that the destress in dealing with emotionally intense problems related to children's vulnerability, such as trauma or disorder, indicates the need for a strong connection with colleagues as critical for their resilience (also Ekornes, 2017; Graham et al., 2011; Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014).

Large-scale studies indicate that in such contexts, social relations at school as a whole have paramount significance, far outweighing financial investments in impact on student achievement (Salloum et al., 2018).

Yet, although collegial support is the foremost benefit of teacher collaboration, working collaboratively entails a range of emotions from excitement and fulfilment to frustration and embarrassment (Weddle et al., 2019). Moreover, workplace cultures characterised by a strong orientation towards consensus and solidarity may hinder explorative work. Conversely, openly acknowledging and addressing emotions such as frustration and embarrassment may ultimately promote collaborative enquiry and innovation. For example, evidence suggests that although the use of videotapes in CPD often evokes emotions of embarrassment associated with feeling exposed and judged, these feelings are essential in de-privatising practice (Vedder-Weiss et al., 2019). At large, emotions of vulnerability, not only related to de-privatising practice but more generally to professional work of teachers, is an issue that requires particular attention for explorative work and pedagogical risk-taking to take place (Bullough, 2005; Kelchtermans, 1996; Wermke & Salokangas, 2021).

These studies focus on the more immediate emotional contexts of teachers' relationships with colleagues. However, emotions in professional work are also related to broader sociopolitical contexts, not least because teacher collaboration has become a central vehicle for reforms. Specifically, emotions are important in the extent to which teachers feel empowered, excited, powerless, and frustrated in the face of reforms (Weddle et al., 2019; Zembylas, 2010a). Saunders (2013, p. 330), for example, focuses on the empowerment arising in resistance to standardisation and performativity and emphasises the value of emotional bonds in developing trust and holding a shared vision which ultimately enables teachers 'to take risks and keep going when times were tough'.

2.4 Discursive patterns in teacher collaborative work

Discourse to a great extent shapes how we think about and see the world (Sfard, 2008). The categories – or frames – used to discuss professional practice are also those used to think about them (Barnes, 2004). Hence, the way teachers talk about educational aims, learning and teaching, professional knowledge, and what it means to be a professional are consequential for how they think about their work and themselves (Lefstein et al., 2019). In what follows, I will map out some important themes in a large domain of teacher discourse studies.

Lesson planning constitutes a significant part of teachers' task environment, and it is naturally in the research spotlight. Engeström (1994), for example, sees planning as 'imagining together', rather than a linear process. He characterises planning as open-ended, spiral talk ('what if we do it this way?') with circling back and repetitions of issues. Such talk kept the doors open for alternative solutions; however, it also relied almost exclusively on oral means of thinking and teachers' experience (also Helstad & Lund, 2012). Many studies offer similar observations and highlight that teachers tend to get caught in 'activity traps'. That is, they move quickly to working out solutions and procedures, while leaving considerations of why they do what they do tacit or taken-for-granted (Appleton, 2002; Katz et al., 2009; Klette & Carlsten, 2012; Lahn, 2012).

In a study of data-focused meeting routines in a Norwegian setting, Mausethagen et al. (2017) draw a similar conclusion arguing that although teachers drew on a range of knowledge sources not limited to test data, solutions tended to be short-term and often narrowly directed towards improving test results. Such short-term, instrumental thinking – or 'presentism' in Lortie's (1975) words – can cause a gradual detachment from 'big-picture' ideas and professional values (Biesta et al., 2015). A common pattern of such detachment, also noted in the Norwegian context (e.g., Bjordal, 2016), is reconciling the ideals of reducing social inequality with school performance, which involves linking social mobility tightly to the school's ability to reduce the importance of student socioeconomic background on test achievement. Taking a different angle, Horn and Kane (2015) drew a distinction between two discursive frames: 'planning as pacing' and 'planning as building off of students' current understanding' and link these frames to teacher agency. Taking an example of the problem with low student motivation, they show that while the first frame positions teachers as having no actionable response to disengaged students, the second frame urges teachers to investigate the issues of student motivation and spend more time developing specific strategies.

Another strand of teacher discourse studies examines how teachers discuss problems of practice retrospectively. Little and Horn (2007) show a pattern in which a teacher who shares a specific problem with colleagues is reassured that the problem is expected, common, and normal. They note that such 'normalising' and emotional reassurance often functions not as a means but as ends of collaborative work. A similar conclusion is drawn by Segal (2019), who shows a pattern in which sharing a story with colleagues about something important, confusing, or problematic tends to lead to further storytelling, blowing off steam, and ultimately forming 'story clusters', rather than to critical probing of the stories. Speaking to the theme of professional agency, Segal

describes story clustering in a conversation about ‘dealing with silence’ in the classroom. She shows that regardless of teachers’ age or experience, stories differently positioned them – as experts, who framed stories as success cases, or as learners, who framed stories as problems open for examination.

Smaller-scale interpretive frames, such as regarding student ability (e.g., ‘slow’, ‘lazy’, ‘weak’, ‘strong’) and student vulnerability and background (e.g., ‘problem family’, ‘resourceful family’), work in a similar way. These frames develop implicitly, through informal interactions rather than formal education, but have major consequences for teacher expectations and teaching practice (e.g., Babichenko et al., 2021; Bannister, 2015; Horn, 2007). Moreover, such frames are often closely interrelated. Lotta and Kirschbaum (2022) find, for example, that teachers’ judgments regarding students’ problematic behaviour was explained to a great extent by how students’ families were perceived as taking responsibility (or not) in relation to discipline and school assistance. That is, frames on students’ families were strongly associated with other frames, such as related to student motivation, abilities, and social behaviour. In addition, although developed in workplace interactions, teachers’ interpretative frames may be considerably influenced by the larger dominant discourses, such as discourses of measurement (Datnow et al., 2018; Louie, 2016) or mental health disorders (Babichenko et al., 2021; Rothì et al., 2008).

The conclusions in studies on teacher collaborative discourse have a common thread. They pinpoint a lack of nuanced, theoretically grounded language necessary to describe professional practices with specificity and critical distance. A bulk of research demonstrates that teachers tend to ‘play it by ear’, relying heavily and often fully on personal experience, assumptions, insight, and motivations (Atkinson, 2000; Edwards, 2012; Grossman & Pupik Dean, 2019; Horn et al., 2017; Lefstein et al., 2019; Putnam & Borko, 2000). In the absence of such common, technical language, there is a high risk of teacher discourse being ‘colonised’ by the language of market, measurement, and standardisation (Kvernbekk, 2015; Lillejord, 2020). External influences on teacher discourse, however, do not necessarily come from-above but also from professions working increasingly close to teachers. For example, Babichenko et al. (2021) find that framing problems through the ‘psychologised’ discourse of diagnoses and disorders tends to attribute responsibility to parents and students, ultimately making a perception of the scope of teachers’ own professional responsibility and agency more vague.

2.5 Structural conditions of teacher collaborative work

Yet, performativity pressure is by far the most-discussed threat to teacher agency. Extensive research shows that strong collegial cultures in schools can buffer and counterbalance such pressures (Hargreaves, 1994; Jacob & McGovern, 2015; Servage, 2009). Robinson (2012), for example, shows how despite the demands of standardisation, the presence of strong collaborative relationships enables teachers to construct professional agency by skilfully adapting policy requirements rather than directly implementing them (also Coburn, 2001; Saunders, 2013).

Some studies also show that while teachers rarely buy into performativity and accountability discourses as a whole, they may see certain instruments, such as external expertise, partnerships with researchers, access to data, and assessment tools, as supporting rather than undermining their professionalism (Mausethagen & Mølstad, 2015; Stone-Johnson, 2014). Furthermore, external structures do not always imply direct managerial control but often come in the form of guidelines, consultations, professional development projects, and guidance in popular professional development literature. Kirsten and Wermke (2017) show, for example, that while external CPD projects may significantly restrict the local autonomy of school leaders, they also create room for teachers' autonomy by making them less dependent on the school's micropolitics. Nevertheless, the role of school leaders remains important. For instance, in a study of six low-performing urban schools, Charner-Laird et al. (2017, p. 576) find that features of the school context and the principal's role in guiding the work of teams explained why, in some schools, teachers felt safe to express opposing views and explore new approaches (also Hargreaves & Shirley, 2020; Lillejord & Børte, 2020a; Penuel et al., 2013).

More broadly, Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018, p. 21) argue that 'effective collaboration needs specific designs, protocols, structures, and processes to guide conversations so that peers can improve their practice without jeopardising existing relationships, and it also needs solid expertise about curriculum, teaching, and learning'. Such external structures can be empowering and even essential for disrupting taken-for-granted practices of professional development, such as learning-by-doing, trial-and-error, and experience exchange (Horn et al., 2017; Koffeman & Snoek, 2018). Analysing teachers' work amidst the steadily expanding influence of external actors in the Norwegian setting, Jensen, Nerland, and Tronsmo (2021) conclude that such expansion has been important in promoting teacher interactions and more explorative modes of working with professional knowledge. They also argue that the availability and diversity of knowledge sources, such as research and student data, have

contributed to teachers taking up extended responsibilities and justifying their practices, thereby becoming more proactive in establishing legitimacy for their work.

At the same time, it appears that having to deal with multiple expectations from different actors in a high-stakes climate can create an 'autonomy paradox' for teachers (Wermke & Salokangas, 2021). It is a situation in which the more the decisions teachers are to make and the greater the number of stakeholders involved in decision-making, the more teachers restrict themselves in order to reduce the risk of doing something wrong (Wermke & Salokangas, 2021). Underscoring the increased need for agency, Jensen (in her earlier study, 2007) shows that in contexts of knowledge abundance, teachers tend to regress to practices which are 'good enough' rather than expansive and creative, signalling growing tiredness and a sense of disenchantment. To this end, Hermansen (2015, 2017) directs attention to *how* teachers relate to expanding knowledge sources by comparing two schools within a large CPD project on formative assessment in Norway. She found that while one school established multiple routines for circulating professional knowledge and developing new assessment tools, the other relied predominantly on informal and personal interactions. Hermansen (2015, 2017) draws attention to structural conditions, such as organisational routines and instruments, that support teachers' collective capacity to define the direction of practice development.

Various studies focus on specific instruments such as external facilitation and conservational protocols. An overarching conclusion is that protocols aiming to move attention away from specific teachers – and the threat of being judged – towards student learning do not automatically lead to changes in teaching practice (Andrews-Larson et al., 2017; Curry, 2008; Helstad & Lund, 2012; Horn & Little, 2010). Reflecting Little's argument regarding transparency in teaching practice, Levine and Marcus (2010) emphasise that routines and tools, such as protocols, can both facilitate and constrain collaborative work by influencing *what aspects* of their professional practice teachers make visible to others (also Grossman et al., 2009). This includes, for example, which episodes of teaching are highlighted as problematic or normal, the degree of specificity, and the kind of information about students made available. For example, in a study of 12 teacher teams, Handelzalts (2009 as cited in 2019) found that the most generative protocols in CPD about local curriculum development were those 'forcing' teachers to explicate their rationales and objectives. Nonetheless, the relationships and emotions involved in collaborative work, namely, relations of trust and tolerance for contractions and critical feedback, are likely more powerful than any protocols (Ohlsson, 2013; Segal et al., 2018).

The studies reviewed above focus on formal routines for CPD. However, little is known about more embedded collaborative work on day-to-day issues of teaching and learning (Evans, 2019; Weddle, 2021). In one such study conducted in a Norwegian setting, Kvam (2018) found that teachers' discussions were curtailed by a lack of a critical approach to problems of practice and each other's positions on teaching and learning. Overall performativity pressure limited grade-level collaborative work by keeping teachers at the level of describing events, supporting each other, and reaffirming encountered problems as normal and expected, while keeping the objectives of closing the achievement gap at the forefront. Reflecting this and much other research, Datnow et al. (2020) found that in low-performing schools, teachers' work with issues of curriculum planning or assessment were ultimately tied to the expectations of improved performance on tests, even when teachers' work was ostensibly focused on a much broader mandate (also Mausethagen et al., 2017).

2.6 Positioning the thesis within the literature

I will now summarise some central themes of the review. First, prior research shows that the cultural norms of privacy and conflict avoidance suggest the sort of professionalism that is individually rather than collectively developed and built on consensus and careful management of interpersonal relationships. Although strong emotional bonds and orientation towards consensus are important for professional resilience, research shows that professionalism develops by opening up to contradictions and uncertainty, not least through revealing one's own practice. Thus on the one hand, the closer the bonds among teachers, the more resilient and empowered teachers can feel in the face of nontrivial, emotionally intense problems and external pressures, while on the other, tight emotional bonds are often a hindrance to the open consideration of differences.

Furthermore, research suggests that while some discursive patterns and interpretive frames reinforce cultural norms of consensus and conflict avoidance, others better support more explorative work and professional agency. Research draws attention not only to a growing diversity of knowledge resources but also to how such discourses position teachers and how teachers position themselves in relation to them. In particular, it appears that the sort of discourse that positions teachers as defining their professional responsibilities is also likely to violate the norms of privacy and conflict avoidance. Another crosscutting finding is little uptake of 'formal' concepts and specialised language in interactions and a lack of routines characterised by 'collective interpretation', in which experiential and abstract froms of knowledge are put in contact (Horn et al., 2017). Furthermore, while some structures for teacher

collaborative work can cultivate conformity and be narrowly directed to policy implementation, others can better position teachers as actors with agency, rather than victims of performativity pressures. Indeed, some forms of external support, while limiting the autonomy of school leaders, may extend teachers' collaborative autonomy. For example, external expertise and CPD can empower teachers by providing routines, tools, and resources for more active use of abstract forms of professional knowledge. Facilitation and conversation protocols are often highlighted as useful, although collegial relations and cultural norms may critically decrease or increase the value of these instruments.

Although the research is extensive, two important limitations can be outlined. First, while most studies look at formal CPD and best practices, studies examining routinised, embedded collaboration are rare (as argued, for example, by Evans, 2019; Kennedy, 2014; Weddle, 2021). This limitation is also pinpointed in reviews of Norwegian studies. Askling et al. (2016) and Hermansen et al. (2018) showed, for example, that research predominantly examines large-scale CPD projects, leaving out much of other collaborative work. Second, although there is considerable focus on teacher professional development, theoretical perspectives on professionalism are often implicit or taken-for-granted (as noted by Datnow & Park, 2018; Servage, 2009; Weddle, 2021).

The thesis addresses these limitations as follows. First, I extend empirical evidence on the broader aspects of teacher professionalism by following different collaborative routines, beyond (but not excluding) routines formally labelled as CPD. More specifically, I capture the collaborative work of a teacher team over one school year, taking a flexible focus in the field. Second, I place teachers and teacher professionalism, rather than policy objectives, at the centre. This involves a focus on teachers' agency as a way to explore how they develop professionally from-within their local workplace environments, through day-to-day interactions and in response to specific problems of practice. Finally, the case examined in this thesis illustrates close-to-reality professional practice with its ups and downs, rather than necessarily a success story (Kelchtermans, 2015; Weddle, 2021).

3 Theoretical perspectives

To examine how teachers develop professionally in workplace collaboration, I draw on sociology of professions and theories from research on teachers and teachers' work as well as analytical tools of organisational routines, frame analysis, and boundary work. Most of the concepts are used in the empirical articles, while some are introduced anew to discuss the findings of this study as a whole.

My epistemological position in this study is grounded in the idea that our understandings of the world emerge through social interaction (Berger & Luckman, 1966) and participation in a particular discourse (Sfard, 2008; Vygotsky, 1987). This suggests that teachers' day-to-day interactions are critical sites in which they gradually develop common ways to understand, recognise, and speak about things that matter in professional work (Engeström, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991). I also assume that professional work, as a social phenomenon, is deeply situated in the broader sociocultural and political environments, and to a varying extent is shaping and being shaped by those environments, albeit never entirely determined by them (Abbott, 1988).

The chapter is organised into three parts. I begin with the concept of professionalism by outlining some of the core characteristics of professions. I then turn to the concept of professionalism understood as ideals held by different stakeholders both from-within and from-above the profession. The last part introduces the concept of professional agency against this broader theoretical backdrop.

3.1 Characteristics of professions and professionalism

One way to examine professionalism is to see a profession as a form of social organisation, distinct from the logic of competition and profit-seeking in the market and hierarchy and rule-centrism in bureaucracy (Freidson, 2007). Although definitions of a profession are situated in economic and sociopolitical contexts (Sciulli, 2016), specialised knowledge, the social mandate, autonomy and discretion make professions distinct from other types of work (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2007; Larson, 1977).

3.1.1 Professional knowledge

A central argument in the sociology of professions links public trust in professions to the kind of specialised knowledge that is not merely passed over hand-to-hand, but deeply embedded in theory and research (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2007; Larson, 1977). Professionalism is then built on the capacity of a professional group to effectively circulate, apply, and broaden professional

knowledge. The relationship that practitioners have to abstract and theoretical knowledge can be seen as a major driving force behind professional development (Nerland & Jensen, 2012; Styhre, 2012).

It is through substantial initial education and continuous professional development that practitioners develop ways of relating to knowledge (Havnes & Smeby, 2014; Hermansen, 2017). In the workplace, this presupposes both explicit, formally organised and more implicit professional development, which largely takes place in everyday workplace interactions and in close proximity to practice (Eraut, 2010; Evans, 2019; Koffeman & Snoek, 2018; Simons & Ruijters, 2014). That is, while some professional development is necessarily deliberate, analytic, and situated at some distance from ongoing practices, much of how teachers develop professionally is related to the cultural, emotional, discursive, and structural aspects of their day-to-day work (Kelchtermans, 2006).

Yet, unlike the knowledge of academic disciplines, professional knowledge does not draw on a coherent theoretical system (Grimen, 2008). It develops gradually by integrating abstract ideas and concrete experiences, rather than by undergoing explicit step-by-step development (Simons & Ruijters, 2014). As a result, there is often ambiguity in identifying precisely what the underlying knowledge sources are (Alvesson, 2001). In teacher professional discourse, not only may formal (scientific, abstract) and lived (spontaneous, contextual, everyday) concepts differently interact (Vygotsky, 1987), but some formal concepts, such as adapted teaching or inclusive education, may involve internal tensions as they belong simultaneously to professional and legal discourses[2] (Karseth & Møller, 2018). Altogether, in teaching, compared to other human-oriented professions such as nursing, professional knowledge – beyond that of a specific subject – has been often conceptualised as tacit and idiosyncratic, experienced more as a 'sense of knowing' (Shulman, 1991) than as codified, articulable knowledge (Nerland & Jensen, 2012; Putnam & Borko, 2000).

By far, the most widely discussed problem with professional knowledge is a theory–practice gap. It suggests that experiential knowledge, which originates in specific activities, interactions, and contexts, is weakly connected to abstract and theoretical knowledge, which organises professional sense-making across contexts. To borrow a metaphor from Havnes (2015), it is often assumed that a conceptual 'map' of educational theories does not quite match the 'terrain' of teachers' everyday practice. Paradoxically, however, while teachers often deny being guided

[2] In Norway, student rights for adapted teaching and inclusive education are enshrined in law.

by abstract theory or be unsure regarding the sources of their professional knowledge, it would be difficult to find a teacher who did not believe in the value of learning through experience, student collaboration, formative feedback, or the importance of developmental stages in children's learning (Atkinson, 2000).

Professional knowledge encompasses not merely theoretical and practical knowledge but multiple differently structured knowledge sources (Grimen, 2008; Shulman, 1987). Some are more practical and context-dependent, such as accumulated experience, personal beliefs, information about specific students, while others are more abstract, such as subject knowledge, standards, laws and regulations, theoretical models, concepts, research findings, and standardised data. Teachers' situated awareness of the classroom environment – a sort of intuitive, emotional connection to students and situation – is often seen as essential in integrating these diverse knowledge sources (Schön, 1983; Shulman, 1987). However, an ability to notice important and sort out irrelevant detail, think in scenarios, and act consistently in a high-paced classroom environment can also be considered as the very outcome of well-integrated professional knowledge, in which formal concepts and theory play a substantial role (Winch, 2017a).

3.1.2 Practical syntheses and informal moral taxonomies

Views on professional knowledge as theoretically fragmented and integrated through specific problems of practice are not exclusive to the teaching profession (Grimen, 2008). In medicine, for example, the domains of biology, care ethics, and communication are not tied together through a comprehensive theory but through practice, such as in patient consultations. The concept of practical syntheses ('praktiske synteser' in Norwegian, as coined by Grimen, 2008) describes that bits and pieces of knowledge from different sources are integrated because they become parts of a whole when brought together by the immediate demands of practice and not by theoretical coherence. These practical syntheses are formed within the boundaries of contextual, institutional, legal, and ethical constraints, and these boundaries are definitional of professional knowledge as they distinguish it from imagination, intuition, and common sense (Grimen, 2008; Kvernbekk, 2019). The development of practical syntheses is also enabled and constrained by the available professional discourse, which allows one to recognise and express what one 'sees' in a professional context and formulate judgements with necessary precision (Grossman & Pupik Dean, 2019; Lefstein et al., 2019; Winch, 2017a). It does not follow, however, that practical syntheses are good merely because they emanate from practice; they

can be unsubstantiated, biased, and characterised by the abuse of power, unpredictability, or arbitrariness (Grimen, 2008).

Practical syntheses often emerge from case-based reasoning, in which to determine a resolution, the case under consideration is compared to a similar precedent case, as opposed to the application of general principals. On the one hand, such reasoning promotes sensitivity to the particularities of cases, which helps to be more flexible when resources are scarce and rules do not offer clear guidance (Zacka, 2017). It also enhances continuous experience exchange among peers and provides a sense of shared responsibility. At the same time, such reasoning often lacks transparency and 'principled' coherence. That is, to the extent that disagreements, value dilemmas, and controversies are addressed in collegial interactions, they tend to be addressed as *practical problems* without the mediation of more formal concepts and principles (Zacka, 2017). The place of formal concepts and principles often take what Zacka (2017) terms 'informal moral taxonomies'. They can be viewed as a type of 'lived' concepts but with an element of moral judgement and categorisation (Section 2.4 offers some examples). Those taxonomies draw heavily on personal conceptions about what is or is not right, acceptable, and desirable. However, their development is a *collective* response to the complexities of professional practice; it is among peers that such informal taxonomies are disseminated and legitimised (Zacka, 2017). Given that teachers' moral conceptions are situated within broader values and discourses, it can be seen as much as a process from-within as from-above. For instance, a common informal taxonomy in the teaching profession categorising students as 'weak' and 'strong' is likely to be reinforced by a culture of measurement that ranks students according to test results.

3.1.3 Social mandate

Transparency and consistency of principles and values are important because, unlike in many other occupations, professions are explicitly concerned with promoting human wellbeing and the public good (Carr, 2000). Moreover, professions claim and actively shape their social mandate by influencing how health, justice, or education are understood in the society (Hughes, 1981; Vanderstraeten, 2007). On a broader scale, they do so through occupational control over professional education and licensure and political engagement as a professional group. On the scale of day-to-day practice, their mandate usually entails defining the needs of specific clients, patients, or students in specific situations, rather than merely responding to predefined needs.

However, professions' social mandates are rather contested because of the increasing number of stakeholders and increasing diversity and pluralism in the broader society. It not that there is

much principal disagreement regarding the ideals expressed in the national curriculum, such diversity, inclusion, or democratic participation. It is that the state, parents, communities, involved professions, and businesses may have different priorities and approaches to realising those ideals. They may differently prioritise the broader purposes of education, such as acquisition of knowledge and skills, socialisations into culture, history, democracy, and values, and student self-formation (Priestley et al., 2015a). The values of excellence, equity, and equality may also be given different weight (Green, 1983). Moreover, teachers, phycologists, social workers, and administrators also likely have a different professional perspective on the same cases (Kvernbekk, 2019; Solberg et al., 2021). Then, there might be variation in the orientation towards democratic equality, social efficiency, or social mobility (Labaree, 2005). Finally, interpretations of the social mandate are inevitably marked by teachers' personal, deep-seated assumptions about people and society and are thus closely related to religious and political views (Barnes, 2004).

To this end, neither teachers nor other professions can independently define their social mandate. To maintain public trust, they are forced to continually negotiate professional values and priorities to align with the current consensus in broader society regarding what quality education, fair justice system, or good healthcare is (Abbott, 1988; Fournier, 1999). These 'negotiations' imply an ability to reflect on the competing objectives and values to which professional work aspires (Afdal & Afdal, 2019; Solbrekke, 2008). It also presupposes an active, agentic position in relation to professional responsibilities, as opposed to a passive response to external demands and reporting back (Solbrekke, 2008; Winch, 2017b).

Within the contexts of normative ambiguity and unpredictability inherent in work with people and children in particular, problem framing and, thereby, the choice of a practical solution is always somewhat unclear because choosing one commitment requires ruling out what may be an equally appropriate alternative (Bullough, 2011; Helsing, 2007; Mausethagen et al., 2021; Munthe, 2003). Such choices imply a varied degree of risk, assessment of which is an uncertain business in itself as teachers' work is usually long-term and rarely involve immediate risks, comparative to the work of doctors or lawyers. At a more general level, managing risks – both by way of protecting oneself from them and by providing legitimate grounds for making risky decisions – is at the centre of professions (Evetts, 2003).

Furthermore, the social mandate indicates that professionalism has a strong relational and caring dimension involving a commitment to serve both social and individual interests (Carr, 2000; Vanderstraeten, 2007). The strong relational aspect of teachers' work necessarily grounds

it in the here-and-now of interactions with children (Klette & Carlsten, 2012; Noddings, 2019). As is the case with professional knowledge, one may argue that teachers' professional responsibilities are made sense of within a specific context of relationships, rather than merely as contractual rights and obligations (Carr, 2000; Solbrekke, 2008). To take an empirical example from Article 2, a choice of action to address a specific case of bullying will likely be deeply anchored in the specific relationships with students as individuals and as a group and within the school as a social system, rather than based solemnly on the abstract ideals of social justice and teachers' legal obligations. Teachers' professional practice often involves finding such compromises on the spot, with little or no time for considering options or reflection afterwards (Barnes, 2004). Moreover, while welfare professions typically require a face-to-face relationship with a patient or client, teacher-student relationships often last over child's formative years. Such relationships also require the development of complex social systems, rather than dyadic cooperation between a client/patient and professional.

In sum, while a professional mandate may appear clear and coherent at the policy level, it becomes inevitably complex in real-world settings and depends, to a great extent, on how professionals interpret the terms of their mandate in specific instances of practice (Hughes, 1981). In Article 2, I apply the concept of boundary work (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Gieryn, 1983) to examine how teachers handle ambiguity and tensions in work at the boundaries of professional responsibility for student wellbeing. The concept of *collaborative* boundary work emphasises the processes 'through which groups, occupations, and organizations work at boundaries to develop and sustain patterns of collaboration and coordination in settings where groups cannot achieve collective goals alone' (Langley et al., 2019). This focus stands in contrast to competitive practices aimed at mobilising boundaries to claim legitimacy and privilege among professions and organisations and configurational practices aimed at redefining boundary landscapes from a policy and leadership perspective (Liljegren, 2012). Work at boundaries often takes the form of negotiations (Langley et al., 2019), particularly in contexts characterised by high normative ambiguity and high stakes. Exploring different forms of such negotiations allowed me to unpack how teachers use their agency in situationally defining their social mandate.

3.1.4 Autonomy and discretion

Specialised knowledge and the social mandate lay the basis for professional autonomy (Freidson, 2007). Theories, the curriculum, laws, and organisational rules are by definition 'thinner' compared to the richness of their specific applications, leaving substantial room for

interpretation and improvisation (Molander, 2016; Zacka, 2017). To be able to make discretionary judgements in accordance with professional knowledge and values – rather than merely profit considerations or compliance to rules – is arguably a hallmark and an appeal of professions (Molander, 2016).

Autonomy is, however, a contested matter because extensive *individual* autonomy to define the terms of the social mandate may threaten such legal principles as predictability, legality, and equal treatment (Evans & Harris, 2004; Grimen, 2008; Zacka, 2017). In educational research, concerns of this kind have been raised regarding how teachers use their autonomy to uphold and perpetuate social inequity, for example, by 'categorising' children or their home circumstances in particular ways (see Section 2.4). Moreover, as discussed earlier, uncertainty regarding the extent to which teachers are and should be autonomous in their work can be related to weak theoretical orientation in their professional knowledge (Grossman et al., 2009; Winch, 2017b).

Historically, professional autonomy in the teaching profession has been confined to the classroom and described in terms of individual creativity and craft (as noted by Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975). Such individual autonomy has been substantially decreased by reforms focused on performativity and top-down accountability. However, a conclusion suggesting that decreased individual autonomy automatically implies less room for discretion is somewhat problematic, precisely because it largely rests on individual understanding of autonomy and professional knowledge (Evans & Harris, 2004; Frostenson, 2015; Noordegraaf, 2020). In contrast, a more collective understanding of autonomy grounds its legitimacy in collaborative approaches to developing professional knowledge and interpreting the professional mandate. For example, a professional ethical code may provide a framework for more proactive professional work in complex cases and therefore support teacher agency (Afdal & Afdal, 2019). That is, professional autonomy, understood as room for manoeuvre, and agency, understood as a capacity to act within it, rely on the density of knowledge networks *within* and *around* the profession (Jensen et al., 2021; Noordegraaf, 2020). Professional autonomy thus requires a thorough understanding of both one's local work practices and of the wider social and knowledge relations with which the local work is entwined. Ultimately, a more collective understanding of autonomy better positions teachers in justifying and accounting for professional practices by making their theoretical and normative foundations more transparent, thereby strengthening teachers as actors and supporting extended forms of professionalism (Gewirtz et al., 2008; Hermansen, 2017; Jensen et al., 2021).

3.2 Professionalism from within and from above

So far, I have accounted for aspects of professionalism such as professional knowledge, the social mandate, and autonomy and discretion. I now turn to the concept of professionalism understood as ideals held by different stakeholders to legitimise certain professional views and practices (Evetts, 2003; Fournier, 1999; Mausethagen et al., 2021; Servage, 2009). Power struggles in defining professionalism can be seen as taking place predominantly within the professional group (Hoyle, 1974) or within the policy (Ozga & Lawn, 1981). It is also possible to view these struggles and shifts as located on a continuum, the ends of which represent centres of power. On one end of the continuum is occupational professionalism, which is developed from-within the professional group and rests on trust in professional knowledge, values, and ethics (Evetts, 2003). Such trust, however, presupposes explicit professional knowledge and ethical positions and includes an ethical duty to conduct professional work in accordance with publicly validated research and common ethical codes (Afdal & Afdal, 2019; Bøyum, 2017; Winch, 2017b). Moreover, occupational professionalism does not presume elimination of control, but rather control and oversight in multiple forms from within the profession, such as collegiums, professional associations, and institutes (Evetts, 2014).

On the other end of the continuum, there is organisational professionalism, in which administrators, managers, and policymakers come to define and control work priorities and processes from-above and in which the development of professionalism is grounded in different forms of external regulation and control (Evetts, 2003). It indicates a loss of autonomy over professional knowledge to others, such as the developers of tests and interventions, data analysts, software manufacturers, and 'clearing houses' (Ball, 2015; Furlong, 2005; Milner, 2013; Trujillo, 2014). The underlying assumption is that relevant knowledge resides outside of the profession and school leaders are expected to communicate it to teachers and oversee that they follow up (Lillejord & Børte, 2020a). Moreover, the very organisation of school as an institution can be seen as bureaucratic in its roots, which creates a major obstacle to a more occupational form of professionalism (Cuban, 2013; Mehta, 2013; Tyack & Tobin, 1994).

At this point, however, it is worth noting that Evetts' (2003) conceptualisation and scepticism towards from-above development are grounded largely in Anglo-American contexts, in which professions developed for the most part independently (Sciulli, 2016). In most sociopolitical contexts in Europe, it is more common to see welfare professions, such as teaching, as public projects embedded in the larger bureaucracies of democratic governance (Hopmann, 2007; Molander, 2016). In practice, this often implies a mix of ideals at the policy level (Hatch, 2013;

Prøitz & Aasen, 2017). Such mix may include instruments explicitly linking development of the teaching profession with competition such as school ratings, instruments of external control such as school inspections, but also the 'soft power' of large-scale CPD projects (Kirsten & Wermke, 2017). The content of such CPD projects may be determined entirely by policy and organisational objectives, such as raising performance results. They may, in the words of Servage (2009, p. 166), promote teacher professionalism 'only to the extent that it reinforces education as managed, measurable, and objective performances on the part of teachers and students alike'. However, the opposite can also be the case – for example, when external involvement interrupts taken-for-given ways of thinking and doing by offering a broader knowledge perspective and acknowledgement of local expertise, thereby placing teachers in a position of renewed energy and agency (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Jensen et al., 2021).

Altogether, then, the concept of restricted and extended professionalism does not necessarily overlap with the concept of occupational and organisational professionalism. Rather, some interplays of from-within and from-above development may promote more extended forms of professionalism while others may promote more restricted forms. Put differently, ideals of professionalism held and enacted by teachers and by stakeholders outside the profession may compete and come into tension, but they may also reinforce one another, thus creating or narrowing opportunities for professional agency in everyday work.

In this thesis, I use the concept of *organisational routines* to empirically examine from-above and from-within dynamics in structured and sustained collaborative work in school settings. At school, as in any organisation, routines constitute a structural backbone and define work practices from one week to another by enabling and constraining interactions among colleagues (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Sherer & Spillane, 2011). Routines are important for upholding stability and reducing tensions regarding how work gets done and by whom, as well as for socialising new members into a particular culture and discourse. Conversely, routines – meeting routines being a telling example – can contribute to organisational inflexibility and bureaucratisation (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Sherer & Spillane, 2011). Organisational routines, however, are more than their explicit ostensive 'scripts', such as formally set objectives or conversation protocols (Sherer & Spillane, 2011). They can also involve implicit organisational scripts, such as aspirations for better student achievement (Bjordal, 2016; Datnow et al., 2020). Moreover, routines are performed by particular actors in particular contexts at particular times, which implies that in the performative aspect, teachers have some room for interpretation and improvisation (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Sherer & Spillane,

2011). These interpretations and improvisations can disrupt and reframe taken-for-granted ways of thinking and doing or be minor adjustments, but it is in these performances that teachers have room for professional agency (Sherer & Spillane, 2011).

3.3 Teacher professional agency

Professional agency, understood in broad terms as a capacity to act and influence work practices from-within as well as the motivation and enthusiasm to do so, is a central element of professionalism (Freidson, 2007). It has also become a much-used concept in the research on teachers and teachers' work (e.g., Buchanan, 2015; Datnow, 2012; Imants & Van der Wal, 2020; Toom, 2019). Hall (2004, p. 6) formulated the essence of teacher agency in the following way: 'Schools rely upon the energy, confidence, and commitment of teachers; teaching is fundamentally optimistic, active work, in which teachers should consider themselves as deliberate promoters of particular ends rather than neutral channels for providing a range of options'. The concept of agency also has wider relevance to the teaching profession. First, as earlier shown, because 'in education, most of the important issues come in the form of dilemmas to be managed, not problems to be solved' (Bullough, 2011, p. 346). Second, because professional work is largely about needs definition, including noticing and utilising potential in ordinary, non-dilemmatic situations (Hughes, 1981). Not least, the concept of agency can be seen as part of a counter-discourse to the language of standards, effectiveness, measurement, and accountability (Menter, 2008).

The concept of agency has multiple theoretical and methodological approaches (Coburn, 2016; Damşa et al., 2017; Eteläpelto et al., 2013). As a sociological concept, it has been extensively theorised, particularly in the ongoing structure–agency debate. In this debate, social theorists such as Giddens (1984) have focused on the relationship between agency, or the actions of individuals, and broader social structure. Others, such as Bourdieu (1984), have argued that culture plays a mediating role. Rather than make assumptions about the nature of agency, I consider it an object of empirical enquiry in this thesis (Coburn, 2016). I also align with the perspective on agency as socioculturally mediated (Edwards, 2015; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Hopwood, 2017), rather than residing primarily in individuals. The latter assumption makes it relevant to study professional agency in meeting routines. I further view agency as an *emergent* phenomenon, one taking place in relation to its structural, cultural, and material contexts as they come together in particular situations (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). This focuses the attention on 'the quality of engagement' – or disengagement – with those contexts (Priestley et al., 2015a). Finally, I consider agency as reserved for particular moments of change or resistance

but rather as something that is required of professionals as they engage in routine work practices (Hopwood, 2017).

Priestley et al. (2015) propose that agency encompasses the interplay of influences from the past, orientations towards the future, and engagement with the present. They refer to these three dimensions as iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative, respectively. The iterative dimension refers to the '*selective* reactivation' of past patterns of thought and action. This locates agency even in seemingly reproductive forms of practice, such as when teachers insist on traditional methods. In doing so, they act agentically to uphold the stability of practice. The projective dimension denotes 'imaginative generation' of possible future scenarios in which received ways of thinking and doing may be creatively altered in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). Finally, the practical-evaluative dimension entails 'practical and normative judgments … in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas and ambiguities of presently evolving situations' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). This dimension brings together iterative and projective orientations to make sense of and act in the present. In practice, all three dimensions are likely to play in, but the extent with which they do may vary greatly.

Although the concept of teacher agency is not explicit in all three articles, it is implied in the examination of how teachers handle ambiguity at the boundaries of professional responsibility (Article 2) and who and how sets the agenda in meeting routines (Article 1). In Article 1, *frame analysis* is used to examine how different ways of structuring meetings position teachers towards professional practice. Framing can be seen as a process generated in determining 'what it is that is going on here' (Goffman, 1974, Minsky, 1975; Schon, 1983). It is about defining, describing, and interpreting a problem, highlighting and attending to some of its aspects while downplaying or concealing others. Frames in professional work are important, as they may offer a radically different perspective on problems of practice (e.g., on cultural differences, student engagement, low achievement) and shape not only possible solutions but also the perception of who is responsible for and capable of dealing with the issue (Barnes, 2004; Benford & Snow, 2000; Coburn, 2006). In this thesis, I use the concept of frames in two ways. Sometimes, frames are referred to as 'default settings', through which teachers see students and interpret common events in professional practice. More often however, the concept is used to indicate that some ways of setting up – or framing – teacher collaborative work can create better opportunities to problematise and rethink one's own practices and, in doing so, position teachers as having the power, responsibility, and motivation to act.

3.4 Summary

I began this chapter by outlining core characteristics of professions. I indicated some differences between academic and professional knowledge, including how professional knowledge is developed and what knowledge sources it draws upon. I further highlighted that professionalism is essentially built on the capacity of a professional group to circulate and broaden professional knowledge. Moreover, relationships that practitioners develop to abstract knowledge can be seen as a major driver behind formal and more implicit professional development, which is woven in everyday interactions with colleagues. Those relationships can be traced in how practitioners form practical syntheses, that is when they integrate diverse bits and sources of professional knowledge to address a specific task. When links to abstract knowledge are weak, practical syntheses may take from of case-based reasoning characterised by a lack transparency and coherence of underpinning principles and values.

I further showed that transparency is important because professions are concerned with complex human problems. They do not merely respond to practical problems, but to a great extent shape our perceptions of good education, healthcare, and justice while at the same time, continuously align their own professional values to the public consensus regarding those social domains. The ideals of the social mandate are realised within a specific context of relationships, and forming such relationships is a substantial part of professional responsibility. Thus, while the professional mandate may appear clear and coherent at the policy level, it becomes inevitably complex in real-world settings. Professional knowledge and the social mandate presuppose some extent of autonomy. I pinpointed some limitations of individual professional autonomy and highlighted a collective concept of professional autonomy, which legitimacy rests on more collaborative approaches to practice development and the embeddedness in wider knowledge networks.

The chapter then turned to the concept of professionalism from-within and from-above and characterised the two ends of this continuum. I emphasised that the concept of restricted and extended professionalism does not necessarily overlap with the concept of occupational (from-within) and organisational (from-above) professionalism but some interplays of from-within and from-above development may promote more extended forms of professionalism while others may promote more restricted forms. I then showed that the concept of organisational routines is useful to empirically unpack some of those interplays. Finally, I introduced a perspective on professional agency and indicated how it can be applied to analyse teacher professionalism in collaborative settings.

4 Data and methodology

This chapter begins with a rationale for the study design. It then describes the study context and participants and provides an overview of the data material. Thereafter, it elaborates on the analytical approach and issues of research quality and ethics.

4.1 Study design

The choice of a study design ultimately depends on the research questions. This study pursued the following question, which remained relatively stable throughout the study period: How do teachers develop professionally in workplace collaboration? From the onset, I was also guided by several 'sensitising concepts' (Blumer, 1954) and the theoretical assumptions outlined in Chapter 3. Altogether, they presupposed qualitative methods, which add depth and nuance to how a particular phenomenon is understood. Moreover, because the research question implies an interest in 'how things work' (Silverman, 2006), I saw ethnographic tools as relevant. The study was therefore designed as ethnographically *inspired* with a dual focus on teachers' actions and interactions, as captured through observations, and broader structures and cultures of collaborative work, as captured through interviews and documents. The data were gathered during fieldwork conducted with one teacher team in a Norwegian elementary school from June 2016 to June 2017. The aim was to capture collaborative work in its breadth and I did not intend to follow development over time. The data corpus consists of 100 hours of observations of teacher collaborative work; group interviews at the start, middle, and end of the school year; 2 interviews with school administrators responsible for organising collaborative work; and diverse documentary data such as school planning papers, minutes and handouts from meetings, and other materials related to collaborative work (200 pages in total).

According to Van Maanen (2011, doing research ethnographically involves

> … subjecting the self – body, belief, personality, emotions, cognitions – to a set of contingencies that play on others such that over time, usually a long time, one can more or less see, hear, feel and come to understand the kinds of responses others display (and withhold) in particular social situations. (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 219)

The slow-paced tools of ethnography helped me focus on the immediate contexts of professional interactions. Additionally, looking across different routines and over an extended period allowed me to view collaborative work within its broader organisational and policy contexts. Compared to utterance-level studies, in which researchers typically drop in for a few

selected meetings, extended presence in the field provided a more film-like than snapshot perspective. Furthermore, it potentially reduced the kind of reactivity in which participants modify their behaviour in response to their awareness of being observed (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). The breadth of observations also helped mitigate the risk of choosing data for the analysis based on practical convenience or the assumption that everything that is observed 'can be assumed to be typical of what always happens there' (Hammersley, 2006, p. 5). Finally, although I entered the field with some sensitising concepts and some knowledge of previous research, my extended presence opened for unexpected and surprising occurrences. For example, although I was not surprised to see how deeply the teachers cared for student wellbeing, the amount of practical uncertainty and normative ambiguity this caring work involved took me aback.

This study, however, is not a classic ethnography. As opposed to the Chicago School tradition, I adopt a more interpretivist stance. Such stance presupposes that ethnographic material does not simply speak for itself and that fieldwork is always selective and underpinned by the researcher's perspective, analytical lens, and positioning (Geertz, 1973; Jerolmack & Khan, 2017). The researcher goes beyond documenting the phenomenon by asking questions 'unasked by the actors', by pursuing problems of little interest to them, by comparing and contrasting in ways that insiders cannot, and by being more rigorous than those on the social scene can afford to be (Rock, 2001, p. 31). Rather, the study can be seen as ethnographically inspired in its research process – extended fieldwork – and in its product – 'textwork' (Van Maanen, 2011). In my case, it implies articles based primarily on observational data. Thus, the study holds 'a sense of enquiry associated with long-term and intensive ethnography, but it is limited in terms of scope, time in the field, and engagement with data' (Parker-Jenkins, 2016).

Although fieldwork of an immersive sort is central in ethnography, I did not consider teachers' personal accounts as secondary data. On the contrary, observations of collaborative work would have been flat if not continuously contextualised by the teachers 'on the go' and reflected upon in the interviews. Thus, interviews were an essential tool for externalising teachers' thinking. The focus on externalising was based on previous research suggesting that teachers' interactions are often characterised by tacit, assumed argumentation (Grossman et al., 2009; Little, 2002). In addition, I considered externalising important because the team had long worked together and much of their reasoning may have been intuitively clear for those in the team but not to me. Finally, to contextualise the observational data, I used documentary data. Iterative communication between the data sources was possible because the interviews were

designed to follow up on specific instances in the observations. In sum, this triangulation of data adds volume and validity to ethnographic work and can be seen as its advantage (Jerolmack & Khan, 2014).

Certainly, there was also a risk of altering 'how things work' simply by way of my presence, even if this influence was minimalised by extended exposure, subtle use of notetaking, and relations of trust. I was particularly aware that my presence may reinforce cultural norms such as consensus-orientation and conflict avoidance. Regarding methods, this implied, for example, that I tried to follow up on tensions and uncertainties I sensed during the observations and formulate interview questions that could encourage the teachers to unpack them for me. To this end, my dual positioning as an outsider (a foreigner) and insider (a former schoolteacher) was helpful, as it allowed me to ask naïve and often delicate questions such as regarding work within student diversity (cf. Section 4.6.2). Below, I detail the context and process of fieldwork then turn to the analytical approach.

4.2 Choice of and access to the field

In qualitative research, sampling decisions are often made with a focus on specific people, situations, and contexts that may offer information-rich and explanatory perspectives. Such purposeful sampling is about empirically studying a conceptually framed phenomenon and not providing statistical generalisation from sample to population (Cresswell, 2013). However, an information-rich case does not necessarily equate a success story. I wanted to find 'a good example of practice' rather than (necessarily) an example of 'excellent practice' (Kelchtermans, 2015; Weddle, 2021). I understood 'good' to refer to how a phenomenon is represented and its potential to provide 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973). Thus, I looked for a school that could illuminate 1) the interplay of from-within and from-above development in collaborative work, that is, a school part of external CPD projects, with its own routines for collaborative work; and 2) collaborative work with a diverse agenda. I expected that, in the Norwegian setting, a school located in a relatively high-immigrant urban area could make a good example. Research suggests that such schools deal with a greater range of professional tasks and problems of practice related to, among other things, issues of social vulnerability, bilingualism, and differences in cultural background (Arnesen, 2017; Gaikhorst et al., 2017; Mintrop & Charles, 2017; Piot et al., 2010). In addition, in Norway as in many other places, such schools stand in a policy spotlight and are expected to be actively involved in development projects (Duke, 2012; Elstad, 2009).

Finding a school satisfying these sampling criteria and open to a year-long research project required internal sampling (Cresswell, 2013). For practical reasons, I considered municipalities in the eastern part of Norway so that I could physically conduct ethnographic research at least twice a week. I then contacted relevant municipalities and researchers from my network who had worked with similar research problems and school contexts, asking them to indicate schools located 1) in a high-immigrant setting and 2) known to have established structures for collaborative work, including participation in external development projects. I sent a letter of invitation and a project description to three nominated schools, and one showed interest in participating. I sent the school a preliminary project plan in April 2016.

Upon meeting with the school head, I was generously granted permission to shadow the collaborative work of a sixth-grade teacher team over the school year 2016–2017. I was offered access to weekly plenum meetings, where all teachers were present, and weekly team meetings of the sixth-grade team. I was also allowed to observe in the teachers' lounge whenever it was deemed relevant. The section head for grades 5 to 7 was formally appointed my gatekeeper. She sent me documentary data (school planning papers, strategy, plans for collaborative work, documents related to key development projects, etc.) and introduced me to the staff.

In June 2016, I had an hour-long introductory meeting with the teacher team. In August 2016 (upon the start of the school year and, formally, my fieldwork), I introduced myself and my project to all the teachers and administrative staff at the first plenary meeting. I was also generously invited to join a lunch and afternoon out with the teacher team on one of those first days. This helped build rapport with the participants, as did many informal half-hour walks to the train station on which some teachers joined me.

4.3 Study context and participants

The school I observed is a mid-size public elementary school with 500 students (grades 1–7) located in a relatively high-immigrant area in east Norway. In 2017, the area had 28% first- and second-generation immigrant populations (Statistics Norway, 2018). Students speaking Norwegian as a second language constituted up to 40%, according to school leaders. This context reflects the broader social landscape. Norway's immigrant population has increased from 1.5% of the total population in 1970 to 14.7% in 2020; another 3.5% of the population are children of immigrants (Statistics Norway, 2020). Many urban areas underwent large transformations; in Oslo, 40% of students are either immigrants or children of immigrants. On average, low-performing high-minority schools in Norway are not very similar to either high-

minority schools in Europe or urban schools in the U.S.; the impact of free school choice and marketisation reforms has led to the emergence of enclave high-poverty monoethnic schools (Helgoy & Homme, 2016). Norwegian teachers often encounter high diversity within schools in language proficiency; religious, cultural, and lifestyle orientations; socioeconomic backgrounds; differences in prior schooling experiences; and parents' educational levels and expectations from school.

At the school, teams typically comprised five to seven teachers. The sixth-grade teacher team consisted of five teachers and one teacher assistant collectively responsible for 75 students. They taught all subjects but, as is typical for primary schools in Norway, specialised in some, such as math, languages, or sports. They had worked together for several years and had a relatively balanced profile for experience (3+ years), age (26–60 years) and gender (one male and four female teachers, and a female teacher assistant). All teachers had higher education, and two had a master's degree. They all worked full-time. Since individual teachers were not the study focus, I did not include further information.

4.4 Data material

The data included approximately 100 hours of nonparticipant observations (70 hours of observation of meetings plus 30 hours of observing more informal interactions in the teacher offices and lounge proceeding or following the meetings), individual 'go-along' interviews before and after each observed meeting, three in-depth group interviews with the teacher team (4 hours in total), two in-depth interviews with school management, and documentary data.

I usually observed Monday plenums and Wednesday team meetings, from 13h to 16:30h. In addition, I observed three full days in June and three in August, which were set for kicking-off CPD projects and discussing school development plans for the year. On those days, I was in the field from 9h to 16h. The team had 50 plenums and team meetings set in the calendar per the school planning documents, of which I observed 46 (see Appendix 1) with a view to covering different collaborative contexts evenly but also considering what the teachers themselves considered of importance for me to observe. Some meetings which I skipped were logistical, such as an information meeting conducted by human resources and the union representative on salary issues or fire safety training. A few meetings were also cancelled due to sick leave. For practical reasons, I also did not attend 10-minute coordination meetings on Monday mornings, which were mandatory for all teachers and dedicated to room scheduling and a need for

substitutes. While I originally intended to attend these meetings, after some time in the field I considered them of little relevance to my project.

In a typical week, there were two meetings. Wednesday team meetings were a collaborative routine for planning and coordinating activities and reviewing current student cases, while Monday plenums were a collaborative routine 1) for discussing issues of school development and 2) for CPD. Plenums involved all teachers and were typically followed by 1.5–2 hours of focused teamwork connected to the plenum agenda. For instance, if a plenum focused on mathematical thinking and involved a guest lecture, teamwork afterwards included assignments for grade-level teams. During other afternoons, teachers usually worked independently. This weekly organisation is widespread in Norwegian schools (Askling et al., 2016).

4.4.1 Observations

From the onset, I considered observations my main data source and waited four months before setting up the second group interview. I wanted to build relations of trust with the participants, become familiar with the context, and collect cases, problems of practice, and questions to inform the interviews. In my observations, I focused broadly on documenting what themes, problems, and questions the teachers were engaged with and how their work was structured. Initially, my attention was largely directed to *who* identified problems, formulated the questions, prioritised the issues requiring attention, and defined the range of possible solutions in collaborative work (Evetts, 2003). However, I gradually moved towards a more nuanced focus on *the sorts of* questions and problems teachers engaged with and on how teachers positioned them.

At plenums, I typically sat with the teachers and took notes by hand or digitally. These notes were detailed because my presence with more than 50 teachers did not stand out. When observing, I tried to hold a dual focus on the overall flow of events and on the teacher team. I noted their questions and comments and, if there was group work, I followed the whole teacher team or one member when teams were reshuffled. When the opportunity presented itself, I asked clarifying questions or noted moments that caught my attention.

A few months into my fieldwork, the teachers got into a habit of casually commenting on their work for me. They were often eager to ensure I understood the context and provided explanations regarding what was going on and what they considered important about what they were doing. Partially, this was related to my position as a foreigner and previous teacher. Informal go-along chats ‘in the lobby’ were useful sources of information about the teachers’

immediate reflections but also more broadly about micropolitics at school (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Such spontaneous, unsolicited accounts often brought about themes, questions, and specific cases for in-depth interviews. Although I did not turn on the recorder for such interviews, I always reminded the teachers of my role as a researcher and that I considered our communication to be data, albeit fully anonymised. An example of a comment often shared with me in a go-along conversation is a casual annoyance with 'never-ending' external projects that the school signed up for. I followed up on this and other go-along reflections later in the interviews, but also found that the teachers' attitude towards from-above development is more nuanced that casual annoyance shared 'in the lobby'.

At team meetings, I rarely took continuous notes, as my notetaking was more visible and could potentially disturb interactional dynamics. Instead, I wrote concise notes with direct quotes. I used breaks to catch up on notetaking, ask for clarification, and double-check quotes. Later that day, I would compile a detailed fieldwork report. Such reports included both descriptive and analytic notes as well as 'power quotes' to support my observations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 150). Given the rather slow pace of the meetings, transcribing bits of direct speech was straightforward.

More than simply expressing what I saw in words, writing field notes was an interpretative process – the very first act of 'textwork' (Van Maanen, 2011). Although the notes cannot be regarded as objective recordings of 'how things work', I gradually developed a skill of descriptive writing and made sure to clearly separate my analytical and methodological notes from descriptive ones (Emerson et al., 2011). I wrote notes chronologically and in the present tense to support their descriptive quality.

Given my extended presence, teachers often asked me what I was writing in my field notes and what I found 'research-worthy' or nontrivial in their work. I usually responded by explaining the need for accuracy and detail in ethnographic research and often shared a question or problem which I had found particularly interesting in recent observations. These questions worked well as a departure for a go-along interview. Moreover, having to explain the project and updates in my work to the participants was also a way to ensure transparency in the research process.

Observing meetings centred on student cases was ethically and practically problematic. These meetings had a simple structure; the teachers typically sat with the school counsellor and went through cases, new and follow-ups. Cases were brought by the teachers and discussed with the help of the school counsellor and sometimes the school administrator. Much of what was

discussed required deep contextual knowledge and complex but usually partial, fragmented information about family circumstances, relational dynamics in the class, and previous experience from interventions. This knowledge was fragmented not only for me as an outsider but also for the teachers. Although the cases themselves were not my research interests, understanding how teachers worked with them depended much upon how well I could orient myself in the context. At these meetings, I was asked to make fully anonymised notes, but I was welcome to ask any clarification questions about 'how things work'. Considering issues of tact, I typically refrained from notetaking when observing such meetings and wrote anonymised field reports immediately afterwards, relying also on teachers' minutes and information gathered in go-along interviews. I also dedicated one group interview almost entirely to collaborative work with student cases.

4.4.2 In-depth and go-along interviews

Interviews served a somewhat different purpose than observations. In-depth interviews were essential for supplying context, clarifying details, and explicating the rationales, understandings, concerns, and dilemmas behind the practices observed (Silverman, 2014). I used a classroom for in-depth interviews and the staff lounge for go-along interviews. It was also a good place to tag along and observe informal conversations between meetings. Go-along interviewing – short interviews conducted while walking with teachers to and from the meeting room – is an interviewing technique variation. It helped explore teachers' situated reasoning and reflections in the immediate environment (Carpiano, 2009).

Interviews were conducted as initially semi-structured and then as more informal 1.5–2 hour conversations. The interview guide consisted primarily of open questions, which departed in specific instances of practice I earlier observed (see Appendix 4). At the onset, a 2-hour introductory group interview and go-along interviews also helped to establish rapport with the teachers and school leadership. Further in the process, the interviews allowed me to gain perspective on how meeting routines were structured. This was essential for team meetings, as their formal agenda was significantly 'thinner' than the actual one. The final in-depth interview (conducted in June 2017) allowed me to obtain an overview of the year, share and validate preliminary lines of my analysis, formally close the fieldwork, and express my gratitude. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. With the exception of one interview, a research assistant did the transcription. I repeatedly returned to the raw data to ensure that meaning was not lost in the translation. Selected quotes were translated into English for the articles.

4.4.3 Documentary data

Relevant documentary data included school strategy papers, year plans, minutes from the meetings, materials from CPD sessions, presentations, and similar documents. These documents were primarily used to contextualise and support observations and interviews. Some documentary data were also generated over the interviews, such as a chart of collaborative routines. These charts were informative for planning interviews and observations.

4.5 Analytical approach

In the following, I account for the specific steps I took in the analysis. In qualitative research, analytical work starts when one enters the field and undergoes as data are gathered (Cresswell, 2013). I entered the field with some sensitising concepts (Blumer, 1954), an overview of previous research, and the research question.

The concrete steps of the initial analytical work involved reading, re-reading, and reflecting on the field notes and interview transcripts. To reduce the bulkiness of raw data, I used a 'broad brush' technique to sort notes and transcripts into tentative, inductive categories (Cresswell, 2013). I also experimented with different mappings of the data. For instance, I looked across different meeting routines (plenums and team meetings), different agendas (CPD, coordinating activities, school development projects, discussions about development of students), and different facilitation forms (meetings facilitated by the teachers and by others). I also mapped observational data in terms of who set the agenda. In the process, I differently linked interview and documentary data to observational data, sometimes by connecting teachers' go-along comments and relevant documents to specific episodes in the observational data and sometimes by making connections between observations and the teachers' more general reflections. In addition, I used annotating memos to link emerging theoretical and methodological notes to the empirical data.

The analytical steps were aligned with Braun and Clarke's (2006) principles of thematic analysis including familiarisation, coding, categorisation, and writing up. Familiarisation was achieved in three steps. First, field notes were digitalised after each field visit, including data bits from go-along interviews and analytical memos. Second, all data were mapped and grouped differently to get a sense of the dataset as a whole. Finally, the data of relevance for each article were re-read. Throughout, I iterated between the focus on specific performances and the ostensive aspects of the routine (Pentland & Feldman, 2005; Sherer & Spillane, 2011). These iterations were important for tracing particular interplays of questions, problems, and priorities

that teachers bring to collaborative work situationally and questions, problems, and priorities that represent a stable, patterned part of the routine.

Once I had some overview of the data, I proceeded with coding. This time, I used more interpretive, theoretically informed codes. This process can be referred to as abductive, as I was driven by both insights emerging from the empirical data and theoretical perspectives (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Cresswell, 2013). Rounds of coding suggested a tentative structure of the thesis, with the first article looking at the broader patterns across the meeting routines and the other two focusing on the distinct interplays of from-within and from-above development in CPD and grade-level team meetings.

In what follows, I describe the analytical processes in each article.

In the first article, I focus broadly on how meeting routines were structured in terms of opportunities and limitations for professional development. I compared three meeting routines – plenaries intended for school development, collaborative lesson planning sessions, and 'case meetings' (which thematically constituted much of grade-level team meetings). To do so, I used frame analysis (Benford & Snow, 2000; Coburn, 2006) to code data in terms of *who* formulated diagnostic and prognostic frames for collaborative work (teachers, school leaders, or external actors, such as researchers, experts, and local policymakers) and *how* they did so (codes were assigned to categorise questions, tasks, problem settings, agendas, and propositions for solutions). I then considered how and why these frames may have provided limitations and opportunities for professional development as an interpretative and generative process.

In the second article, I examine how teachers handle ambiguity in work at the boundaries of professional responsibility. I focus on grade-level team meetings, specifically the part intended to discuss issues of student development and wellbeing. The dataset includes detailed fieldnotes with 2–5 cases per meeting and interview transcripts. First, I compressed the data by making descriptive annotations to cases and mapped them thematically with relevant interview excerpts. I then highlighted instances of ambiguity and tensions expressed, for example, through teachers' doubts, confusion, uncertainty, or frustration when trying to define the scope of their responsibilities in specific cases. I also coded for the kind of boundaries – or configuration of boundaries – at play, such as with families, social services, and school leadership. I then searched for patterns of handling tensions and ambiguity, that is, particular moves that helped the teachers transition from defining the problem they are dealing with to a practical solution or other resolution. This step resulted in identifying three patterns, which

differed in the degree of explicitness of teachers' rationales and dimensions of wellbeing in focus.

In the third article, I examine teacher agency in CPD, which is an example of an externally designed and partially externally facilitated organisational routine intended to be an instrument of from-within development. I focus on how the space for professional agency was set up and how the teachers used it. Codes were assigned to different ways of presenting new perspectives for learning and teaching and guidelines for collaborative work. I also used interview data to explore whether and how the ostensive aspects of the routine were adapted at the school level and with what rationales. Then, observational data were examined in terms of how the teachers used the space for interpretation and improvisation. For this, I used codes pointing to how teachers set objectives and formulate rationales in planning and debriefing lessons. I also extensively used teachers' on-the-spot reflections from go-along interviews.

4.6 Issues of research quality

Quality in qualitative research can be addressed by accounting for different aspects of validity, such as descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity, as well as a researcher's positionality and generalizability of the findings. These issues refer to quality of craftsmanship, that is, to choices made throughout the research process (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

4.6.1 Validity

Descriptive validity refers to the accuracy of the data (Maxwell, 1992). Glaser and Strauss's (1967) concept of 'credibility' captures the same principle. The data must accurately reflect what a participant has said or done. In this study, accuracy was ensured by drawing on different data sources and by relating them differently to each other. Interviews and documentary data were used to contextualise observations and nuance them. Iteratively, observations provided specific cases and problems to elaborate on during the interviews. In addition, accuracy was ensured by empirical richness by way of data triangulation but also by collecting detailed fieldnotes over an extended period of time and in different contexts, as evenly as was practically possible and relevant for the research question. The reporting of the data must also reflect the same accuracy, which means that transcriptions and field notes carry an accurate account of what was said or how events unfolded (Maxwell, 1992).

Interpretive validity captures how well the researcher reports the participants' meaning of events, objects and/or behaviour (Maxwell, 1992). Ethnographically inspired research is inherently interpretive, partial, and subjective; therefore, the criteria that guided my

methodological decisions and the steps I took in analytical interpretations must be made transparent. Silverman (2014) emphasises two main ways of doing so: by making the research process explicit through describing the research strategy and data analysis methods and by paying attention to theoretical transparency. This has been done in the articles and in this chapter. On a personal note, becoming more consistent, thorough, and explicit in analysis and interpretation has been an important learning curve for me.

Being transparent is essential for ensuring theoretical validity. Patterns, concepts, categories, and dimensions in the analytical perspective must fit together to create constructs that tell a coherent story of the phenomena. To ensure such coherence, the findings and my interpretations have been subject to communicative validation through regular presentations and discussions with other researchers and to respondent validation through presenting preliminary findings and interpretations at the final meeting with the teacher team (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). The researchers, who provided feedback, were from the fields of educational research and sociology of professions, as well as within the Norwegian and international contexts. Such feedback and discussions have been important to explore particularly interesting findings and lines of analysis, as well as moments specific to the Norwegian context and requiring elaboration. The latter was important when writing for an international audience.

4.6.2 Positionality

Reflecting and keeping a critical perspective on your own position as a researcher is of high relevance in qualitative research. In ethnography, extended contact and depth of immersion may create tension between the need to establish relations of trust and to keep a critical distance (Van Maanen, 2011). Being reflective on my position in the field was important to me throughout. Although I had no previous or further connection to the selected school, I had previously worked as a teacher for 7 years. The field with its language, cultural norms, and daily rhythm was familiar to me. I felt that this greatly contributed to relations of trust with the participants. It helped to be accepted as a colleague with whom one has common professional experience and may speak the same language. However, the insider perspective carries risks, such as missing out on the obvious and familiar in professional practice (precisely what I was after) and unintentionally becoming an empathising advocate for the participants (Parker-Jenkins, 2016).

To this end, being an outsider was helpful. The field was simultaneously somewhat exotic to me, as I am not a native speaker of Norwegian and only partly a product of its educational system. Such positioning helped me to continuously ask naïve, clarifying questions, and keep

an open eye for the surprising in the field. I also felt a great advantage of being part of an interdisciplinary research centre. Being exposed to analytical perspectives from outside the domains of educational research, for example by presenting article drafts at research seminars, helped interpret the data and field relations from a more critical distance. Staying grounded to analytical concepts throughout the research process was also important to depart from the participants' emic perspective. In this study, I see my double positioning as both an insider and an outsider as an advantage.

4.6.3 Analytical generalisations

Given the study design, claims of generalisability in this thesis are not based on specific populations or contexts, but rather on what is broadly described as analytical generalisations and theoretical interpretations (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014; Hammersley, 2006). Analytical generalisations are made possible through providing transparency in the analysis and interpretations in the discussion, for example, by drawing upon previous research and providing clarity and coherence in the analytical perspective.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are a large part of quality considerations in research. This project was approved by The Norwegian Social Scientific Data Services before I started my fieldwork (Appendix 6). Furthermore, the study was underpinned by ethical arrangements in data collection and analysis and by a process of reflexivity towards fieldwork practice and relations (Hammersley, 2006). Written information about the project was provided to participants in advance, and participation was voluntary. The teachers also signed a written consent form after the introductory meeting in June 2016 (Appendix 5). In addition, I sent an information letter with a brief project description to the school leaders and teachers. Providing such information is important in research ethics, even if it may influence behaviour in meetings and interviews. Although when data collection lasts for several months, information given at the onset may matter to a lesser extent. Throughout the year, I was often asked by the teachers about my observations and the project as a whole. I felt responsible for providing sufficient and transparent answers, and I gladly took these opportunities to ensure that the teachers were aware of what the project is about. I tried to share my reflections in the form of open-ended, exploratory questions raised in the observations. These questions made me more reflective as a researcher, as I was continuously learning to make my agenda transparent for the participants and refining its focus for myself.

Ensuring informants' confidentiality implies not exposing their identities. While external confidentiality refers to protecting informants from being recognised by someone outside the field, internal confidentiality refers to informants not being able to recognise each other. All the informants were anonymised and assigned different names in the articles. Due to both the sensitivity of issues discussed in the meetings and the specificity required by ethnographically inspired textwork, I also slightly edited details of student cases to protect informant and student anonymity but not distort the accuracy of the observational and interview data. This refers mostly to Article 2.

4.8 Limitations of the research design

The small sample size and situated nature of teachers' professional work necessarily limit generalizability. Moreover, the study design does not allow conclusions regarding development over time or causality. Inferences are all that are possible given the small scale of the study and the choice of ethnographic methods. However, as Johnson et al. (2018, p. 34) argue, such small case studies are valuable, as there is value in 'moving iteratively between studying large and small samples and relying on both qualitative and quantitative data to better understand how teacher collaborative work can be used effectively'. Another important limitation, and a practical challenge for me, is related to adapting ethnographic data to the format of journal articles in a way that would not entirely replace observations with interview data and ensure accuracy and empirical richness. Here, this included many rounds of trial-and-error in learning how observational data can be written up without losing much of its 'thickness'.

The third limitation is the absence of audiotapes. The choice not to tape was twofold. First, it had to do with the aim of observing teachers' collaborative work in its breadth without a pre-selected focus on a particular aspect or theme. Taping all observations and transcribing afterwards would have been impractical. Second, and most importantly, I was not allowed to audio tape meetings, as school management and the team considered much of what was discussed in team meetings confidential. Most of the meetings I observed contained sensitive information such as student names and other identifying and sensitive information. Thus, not having tapes can be seen as both an advantage and disadvantage. On one hand, having audio recordings, as opposed to detailed field notes, would have opened ways for close analysis of interactions. On the other, it allowed me to gain access to meetings which rarely become research data. Making this part of teachers' collaborative work visible and considering it along with other collaborative contexts directly centred on classroom teaching allowed for a more complex account of how teachers develop professionally in routine collaboration.

5 Article summaries

This short chapter summarises the findings reported in the empirical articles and links them to the main research question. Methodological and theoretical approaches are described in the articles and in other chapters of the thesis.

5.1 Article 1

From school improvement to student cases: Teacher collaborative work as a context for professional development

The first article examines professional development by looking broadly at the core meeting routines: plenums for school development, CPD sessions, and weekly grade-level team meetings. The article discusses how and why different ways of structuring these routines mattered for teacher professional development, understood as both explicit and implicit processes. The findings signal distinct patterns in how problems of practice were framed and how those frames positioned teachers. The analysis indicates that while it mattered whether the frames originated from-within (i.e., were formulated by teachers) or from-above (i.e., were formulated by school leaders, local authorities, or policymakers), the sorts of questions and tasks, which framed collaborative work, played a significant role in directing teachers' attention and shaping opportunities for professional development. The following patterns were identified.

An organisational routine intended for school development was not a weekly but rather a biyearly routine. It spread over six full days, including a three-day plenum before the start of the school year, a one-day plenum mid-year, and a two-day plenum before summer holidays. Plenums had approximately the structure of a policy briefing followed by teambuilding activities for grade-level teams. The policy briefing part, planned externally at the district level and therefore universal for all neighbouring schools, informed teachers on policy objectives and strategies for school development. These briefings were typically followed by a more interactive part, in which teachers were asked to 'recall' the strategies presented earlier.

The briefings involved a mix of policy objectives, some of which were framed as broad priorities, such as 21st century skills, digitalisation, and values such as multiculturalism and

diversity, while others were tied closely to the early intervention project[3] and the school's 'contribution effect', expressed in student achievement. What often aligned these two frames together was a focus on the teachers' mandate to reduce social inequalities and the 'what works question' posed by the school leaders as a way to connect teachers' ongoing work to school development strategies. These links were rarely problematised, and when they were – such as in the case of the plenum dedicated to digitalisation – the dominant 'work works' frame seemed to sideline more critical questions raised by teachers. Other big concepts, such as multiculturalism and diversity, were recurrently referred to in plenums as core values of the school; however, collaborative work on what they imply for day-to-day professional practice was limited to making student diversity visible. This was typically understood in a symbolic way as in, for example, hanging flags on the wall. In interviews, the teachers described their work on school development with the metaphors of 'juggling a lot of balls in the air' and 'a Christmas tree culture', both highlighting the never-ending nature and some randomness of external development projects.

Routines intended for collaborative professional development were designed from-above, mostly as part of large-scale CPD projects, but some were designed internally by the school leaders. Although designed by researchers and school leaders, these routines were ostensibly focused on stimulating teachers' engagement and professional development from-within. They offered guidelines rather than detailed protocols for collaborative teacher work. Thematically, large-scale CPD projects centred on introducing new conceptual perspectives on mathematical thinking and complex literacy. All formats for collaborative work were developed locally, by the school leaders. They were of two sorts: experience exchange sessions, meant to 'maintain continuity' between grades, and collaborative lesson planning cycles, intended to 'do together what is usually done alone'. Across these routines, the findings point to a strong focus on the here-and-now of teaching, that is, on feasible and fun activities that stimulate student engagement and productive social dynamics in the classroom. A dominant frame for such work were the questions 'what works' and 'what doesn't work', posed as often by the teachers as by the school leaders. Although common, it was not the only frame used to structure interactions in CPD. More critical frames, such as concerning the meaning of 'mathematical conversations' or the underlying dilemmas in teaching the Health and Food subject to students of diverse

[3] Early intervention [Tidlig innsats] is a national project that involves, among other things, increased diagnostic testing in primary school.

cultural backgrounds, were sporadically evoked by teachers as ‘side-lines’ of the main conversation about ‘activities that work’.

Finally, routines for grade-level teamwork focused on such issues as curriculum alignment, timetabling and catching up, but, most commonly, on ongoing cases of student development and wellbeing and social dynamics in and outside classrooms. These included specific cases of learning difficulties, socioemotional learning, classroom climate, peer relations, and similar issues. This organisational routine was driven explicitly from-within by teachers and provided ample opportunities to define and handle problems of practice in accordance with teachers’ professional knowledge and values. This was usually achieved by structuring collaborative work through a chain of explorative framing questions, such as ‘what is that going on in this case?’. Rather than directing the focus immediately to solutions, these questions ‘complicated’ cases and allowed teachers to alternate between possible diagnostic frames, which encouraged teachers to look beyond familiar ways of thinking and doing. Moreover, engagement with defining the needs of specific students, rather than with externally set policy objectives, created a stronger sense of professional responsibility. Yet, for their knowledge sources, grade-level interactions relied almost exclusively on teachers’ cumulative experience and contextual information about specific students. With some notable exceptions, teachers’ frames were tightly linked to specific cases, with only sporadic references to broader issues of values and concepts related to teaching and learning.

5.2 Article 2

Teacher agency in collaborative lesson planning: Stabilising or transforming professional practice?

The second article explores teacher agency in two externally introduced CPD projects. While these projects were ostensibly aimed at supporting teacher development as a from-within process, agendas and procedures came from-above in the form of guidelines, seminars, and supporting materials, such as video clips and online resources. One of the projects focused on developing student mathematical thinking, and the other on complex literacy. Both took the form of an introductory ‘input’ seminar led by either an external coach or a member of the school leadership, followed by a cycle of collaborative lesson planning in teacher teams. Although the school leaders generally followed the slides and guidelines produced by researchers, they sometimes added their own references to policy objectives regarding student

achievement. The analysis in the article looks at both how the space for professional agency was structured within the CPD routine and how it was used by teachers.

Two patterns emerged in the data. For the most part, both the planning and debriefing phases of lesson planning indicated a strong, almost exclusive orientation towards student engagement and productive social dynamics in the classroom, whereas the conceptual perspectives introduced at the seminars did not play much part and were not referenced in the stated objectives of lessons, which the teachers planned. The guidelines for collaborative work developed at the school level were light and indicated only main steps, such as developing a learning objective, planning activities, observing the lesson, and evaluating its results. The evaluation step was specified with a 'what worked and didn't work' question. These broad guidelines, on the one hand, offered room for interpreting and improvising with instructional methods. The teachers did this by setting up multiple activities involving student group work. At the same time, the guidelines did little to interrupt taken-for-granted ways of thinking about mathematics and literacy. This made it possible to perform a CPD routine by 'slow motioning' familiar ways of planning and focusing on the team's cumulative experiences.

Sometimes, however, teachers' sustained attention to student engagement resulted in the uptake of conceptual perspectives during the debriefing step. In these cases, the role of conceptual perspectives, including particular terms to identify and speak about 'mathematical conversations', was significant in changing the focus from what students do together (i.e., if anyone 'falls off', if groups function well) to how students think together (i.e., if they are engaged in 'thinking mathematically'). Video representation of students' work, although originally intended for the purpose of engaging students in the task rather than for teachers' professional development per se, played a role, too, by supplying a detailed replay.

5.3 Article 3

Teachers' collaborative work at the boundaries of professional responsibility for student wellbeing

The third article focuses on work at the boundaries of professional responsibility and draws on the data from weekly grade-level meetings. It examines how teachers handle practical uncertainty and normative ambiguity in order to find practical solutions in day-to-day work with issues related to student development and wellbeing. Interview and observational data revealed somewhat different aspects of practical uncertainty (a lack of clarity regarding what needs to and can be done) and normative ambiguity (a lack of clarity regarding the right thing

to do in a specific case). In the interviews, the teachers primarily expressed doubt, stress, and frustration in defining the boundaries of their professional responsibility with regards to external factors, such as the diversity of student backgrounds, increasing knowledge demands regarding issues involving mental health and domestic abuse, documentation requirements, and 'power struggles' with parents. However, observation indicated that how the boundaries were defined in situ, within a hectic environment of weekly meetings, depended much on how the teachers themselves handled normative ambiguity and negotiated the competing perspectives on wellbeing at play in specific student cases. Without making an explicit distinction, they did so by considering both students' subjective experiences of feeling unhappy, lonely, or exhausted and more objective indicators of wellbeing understood in terms of social mobility in the future. These subjective and objective indicators were closely interwoven in teachers' discussions and were far from being clearly defined. In other words, they reflected the value dilemmas inherent to educational practice and social relations more generally. There were three main patterns in how the teachers handled normative ambiguity: by steering towards more stable boundaries of responsibility, by downplaying ambiguity in communication at the boundaries, and by explicating normative tensions underpinning specific cases.

Steering towards more stable boundaries of responsibility sometimes implied a reframing of a complex issue related, for example, to behaviour or short attention span, into a problem of learning difficulties, so that a practical solution could be found and put forward. In other cases, the teachers evoked more formal boundaries to set clearer limits to professional responsibility, such as by stating that they cannot be responsible for students' social dynamics during summer holidays.

Downplaying tensions at the home–school boundary was a pattern particularly evident in meetings facilitated by the school counsellor. Her role was that of a boundary spanner, in the sense of being both a member of the school leadership and a consulting colleague of the teachers. She was not merely coordinating contact with families and external professionals but was also facilitating case discussions and coaching teachers in appropriate conduct in communication across boundaries. Specifically, her way of spanning boundaries involved buffering, mediating, networking, and preparing teachers for sensitive conversations with parents and social services. In this, the counsellor was particularly focused on downplaying tensions that could potentially stall work at the boundary and delay help. Her focus was primarily on discursive practices (such as I-statements) that can reduce emotional tension and misunderstandings in communication.

One pattern of explicating normative ambiguities revealed a subtle but notable difference. It involved making ambiguities and tensions more visible and thereby an open subject for discussion. A good example of such a tension was found in how teachers alternated between different ways of framing student abilities and problematising a link, often taken for granted in high-minority settings, between student wellbeing, academic achievement, and future employability. Making such perspectives explicit was often risky and uncomfortable, but it also extended teachers' capacity for agency by way of opening up more options for interpretation and intervention. However, while dealing with ambiguity related to student wellbeing often involved an exploratory consideration of a problem, grade-level meetings remained for the most part at the level of case-by-case discussion, with very few such problems ever taken up for more conceptual and principled consideration. Put differently, although teachers alternated between different diagnostic frames, some of which clearly implied a particular conceptual perspective (e.g., a deficit vs. asset view of student abilities), they rarely explicitly referred to them.

6 Discussion

The aim of this thesis is to better understand how teachers develop professionally in workplace collaboration. In this chapter, I address this research question and the three sub-questions of the thesis. Specifically, I discuss 1) what types of professionalism can be identified in common routines for teacher collaborative work at school; 2) in which ways development driven from-above and from-within the profession interplay in different meeting routines; and 3) how these interplays of development from-within and from-above position teachers in terms of more extended forms of professionalism.

In the first part of the chapter, I argue that although the meeting routines differed significantly in the extent to which external actors and school leaders defined their objectives and content from-above, how the routines were performed suggested a somewhat restricted form of professionalism, including when the objectives and content were defined by the teachers themselves. I show that in the performative aspect of the routines, a more restricted form of professionalism was associated with a strong focus on the here-and-now of teaching and caring tasks and, in the ostensive aspect, with the framing of collaborative work through a 'what works' question. However, the focus on the here-and-now was not related merely to the practicalities of teaching, such as pacing and classroom management, but rather to student engagement and wellbeing in and outside the classroom. It was this particular focus that also opened up opportunities for more extended professionalism, including the use of more diverse knowledge sources, the consideration of possible interpretations of a problem at hand, and some experimentation with approaches.

In the second part, I suggest that although presentism, shorter-term thinking, and preoccupation with activities are common themes in the literature on teachers' work, looking *across* meeting routines makes it possible to pinpoint an underlying pattern. In particular, a lack of routines in which teachers critically examine formal and 'lived' concepts (Horn et al., 2017) and unpack normative dilemmas related to realising the ideals of the social mandate (Zacka, 2017) seemed ultimately to reduce professional agency in the here-and-now of planning lessons and discussing student development and wellbeing by limiting the scope of interpretive frames through which they 'saw' the here-and-now of practice (Winch, 2017a). Put differently, it was not simply that teachers' agency was narrowed in its scope to day-to-day decision-making, while the direction of school development was decided from-above. It was that professionalism in day-to-day matters was restricted by a lack of more conceptually informed discussion. The

main argument I put forward in this chapter is that collaborative routines, in which teachers engage with the more principal issues of professional work, are essentially *pragmatic*, as they help broaden the scope of possible interpretations and, thus, the scope of possible solutions.

6.1 How do from-above and from-within development interplay in different meeting routines?

I will now look closely at the three examined meeting routines in light of the theories introduced in Chapter 3, focusing attention on the interplay of from-within and from-above development (Evetts, 2003).

6.1.1 Numbers and values in the routine for school development

As Article 1 indicates, a meeting routine intended for school development was largely structured from-above, taking its departure from local and national policy objectives. This implied that teachers were, as a rule, informed about the direction for school development, rather than involved in defining it. In plenums, school development was framed through several overarching concepts, such as 'a multicultural school', 'adapted teaching', and 'early intervention', as well as the objective of raising student achievement. The concepts, which were meant to define the school values and core principles and indicate development strategies, seemed to never be explicitly related to one another, but rather tied to student achievement. Put differently, the question of how the ideals of a multicultural school or the principles of adapted teaching interplay in practice with the methods of early intervention were never explicated but linked directly to student test results.

The link between the purposes of teacher collaboration and student achievement was drawn explicitly by the school leaders in the interviews, but also in how the priorities were set for the upcoming year, and what teachers were praised for in plenums, namely, showing a better than average 'contribution effect' of the school. Teachers' responsibility to improve student achievement was primarily associated with the critical importance of early intervention for dropout rates in high school. On the one hand, this was an implicit ostensive script of measurement ('contribution effect') and accountability (for reducing risks of dropout) that underpinned teacher collaborative work throughout the year, shifting attention to test results (as in the studies by Datnow et al., 2020; Kvam, 2018; Mausethagen et al., 2017). Coming from policymakers and local authorities, it was to a great extent reinforced at the school level. On the other hand, organisational objectives of raising student achievement were framed at the school level as much by the language of measurement and accountability (expressed in numbers

and graphs), as by a strong, idealistic discourse on the role of school in reducing social inequality in the society and teachers' responsibility to promote student wellbeing (expressed as values).

While in no way mutually exclusive in principle, framing collaborative work on school development through numbers and values placed contradictory demands on teachers in practice by creating ambiguity when specific approaches and interventions were to be decided on. Although competing values lie at the heart of education as a social domain (Hatch, 2013; Mausethagen et al., 2021), what comes forward in this study is not merely the presence of implicitly competing values, such as that of excellence versus equality (Green, 1983) or competing objectives of qualification, socialisation, and self-formation (Priestley et al., 2015b), but competing discourses regarding *shared* ideals, such as ideals of social equality and cultural diversity.

Research suggests that contradictory views on how exactly social inequalities should and can be reduced in school settings bring about intense emotions, particularly for teachers working within high-minority and socially deprived contexts (Elstad, 2009; Mintrop & Charles, 2017; Zembylas, 2010b). In this study, however, emotions of stress were not so much associated with the consequences for 'underperforming' (e.g., closing the school) than with a perceived social mandate that kept the stakes very high for both the teachers and the school. There was hardly a meeting in which the teachers would express concern for the future of students and not become stuck in a tension between wellbeing understood in terms of opportunities for social mobility in the future and wellbeing understood in terms of joy in childhood (cf. Article 2). As the interviews show, a broad, emotionally felt but weakly articulated social mandate was often a source of frustration – partly because its ideals were distant from what the teachers were able to achieve in reality (cf. Rothì et al., 2008) and partly because a broader 'contribution effect', as perceived by the teachers, was time-lagged, profoundly uncertain, and not to be captured objectively due to the contested nature of social constructs such as wellbeing (Watson et al., 2012).

Earlier research has shown that even in a mild policy climate (Camphuijsen et al., 2020; Hatch, 2013), test-based accountability can leave little elbow room for experimentation and a longer-term professional perspective (Bjordal, 2016; Kvam, 2018; Lillejord & Børte, 2020b; Mausethagen et al., 2017). Moreover, the pressure of test-based accountability coupled with the high, often competing ideals and expectations expressed in the social mandate may dramatically reduce motivation and the capacity to act, that is, reduce professional agency (Jensen, 2007;

Wermke & Salokangas, 2021). As the data in this study suggests, strong ideals of social equality held by the teachers and their considerations about the prospects of specific students in terms of their further education and participation in the labour market were emotionally intense, prompting both a heightened sense of responsibility and a sense of powerlessness. To this end, the analysis underlines the role of diverse forms and sources of professional knowledge in extending the space for manoeuvre, such as in balancing out the discourse of test-based achievement as a key predictor for future wellbeing with other discourses and arguments regarding student wellbeing and development in a broader sense.

6.1.2 The focus on here-and-now in the routine for CPD

The routine formally intended for CPD had an in-between pattern of from-above and from-within dynamics. Two large-scale external projects and two smaller-scale in-house professional development sessions were ostensibly focused on teachers' experience and local needs and provided sufficient leeway for local adjustments, both at the school level and in teacher group work. In its performative aspect, such from-within development involved both the school leaders and the teachers prioritising collaborative lesson planning and experience exchange sessions as the main forms for professional development. These two forms were more than 'pacing' (Horn & Kane, 2015) and 'story clustering' (Segal, 2019), Rather, they entailed 'imagining together' in a sense of building off each other's ideas and experiences (Engeström, 1994). Nevertheless, they were ultimately focused on the accumulation of activities and procedures as a primary way to build professional knowledge from-within (Horn et al., 2017; Lahn, 2012).

The role of the school leaders was significant in the adoption of external CPD projects, such as in framing teachers' work in terms of 'slow motioning' what teachers usually do alone, rather than grounding collaborative work in 'needing to know' (Earl & Timperley, 2009). However, orientation towards the here-and-now of teaching was largely supported by how the teachers themselves routinely guided their work with a 'what works' question. To highlight the power of these framing questions, Article 1 shows how the two frames – 'what works' (in collaborative lesson planning) and 'what is it that is going on' (in discussions regarding student wellbeing and development) – opened markedly different opportunities for teachers to use different sources of professional knowledge, such as their own previous experience, knowledge about the students and their social dynamics, and more abstract knowledge.

It is notable that teachers' focus on activities and procedures 'that work' was strongly oriented towards student engagement (as opposed to, for example, orderly behaviour or learning

outcomes). Such a focus is hardly surprising, given that no advanced pedagogical work is possible without students' genuine attention and motivation (Winch, 2017b). However, the data suggests that the focus on student engagement in the routine for CPD tended to become the end in itself, rather than a means 'to build off students' thinking' (Horn & Kane, 2015). That is, the teachers' focus on 'activities that work' (Appleton, 2002; Katz et al., 2009) implied largely what works in getting students socially engaged, as expressed in enthusiastic reactions, lively group work, and staying on task. For example, the teachers spent a great share of planning time grouping students based on knowledge regarding their current social dynamics and on making sure no one would 'fall off', such that they barely touched upon the concept of mathematic thinking in the planning stage. Indeed, 'falling off' was one of the most commonly used 'lived' concepts in teacher interactions.

6.1.3 Informal taxonomies versus conceptual language in the casework routine

By far, most of their collaborative time teachers spent in grade-level team meetings, which reflects TALIS data on Norway (Carlsten et al., 2021). Among the three routines, this one was distinctly teacher-driven, with advice and facilitation of the school counsellor and school leadership offered in response to teacher concerns. Moreover, the teachers' work was grounded explicitly in searching for compromises 'in the best interest of the child', rather than in implementing policies (Solbrekke, 2008). This routine was, in other words, largely about the process of defining needs from-within.

However, although team meetings were usually framed by open, explorative questions, the teachers drew primarily on their personal trial-and-error experience with interventions, knowledge of specific students and, for the most part, 'oral means of thinking' (Engeström, 1994; Grossman et al., 2009). More abstract knowledge, such as concepts related to learning difficulties or multilingualism, was almost never explicitly used. A notable exception were case reports intended for communication at the boundary with other professions and external services, which teachers continuously struggled with in terms of putting their observations and conclusions into words. This does not, however, imply that teachers were entirely disconnected from the abstract knowledge, but rather that these connections remained largely implicit (Atkinson, 2000) and that many of what were essentially value dilemmas, such as those related to promoting student wellbeing, were addressed as practical problems (Zacka, 2017).

Although some of the teachers' talk – particularly absent of the counsellor's facilitation – could be characterised as 'story clustering' with no concrete outcomes (Little & Horn, 2007; Segal,

2019), for the most part, grade-level meetings took the form of resolution-oriented case-based reasoning (Zacka, 2017). This reasoning implied that practical syntheses – that is, judgements regarding what the present problem is and what needs to be done about it – were made primarily on the basis of collective experience with similar cases and always partial, often intuitive knowledge of individual students and their life circumstances. Such work was marked by the prevalence of 'lived concepts' (Horn et al., 2017) and 'informal moral taxonomies' (Zacka, 2017). The data in this study does not allow for a fine-grained discourse analysis, but previous research suggests that workplace interactions, in which such informal taxonomies and lived concepts develop over years of casual interactions, are of critical importance. They shape teachers' expectations of students and the ways in which teachers interact with students over the years. In particular, research shows how significant taken-for-granted categorisations of student abilities (e.g., 'strong'/'weak', 'fast'/'slow', 'motivated'/'lazy' students) can be in a high-stakes environment, which creates and reinforces them (Datnow & Park, 2018; Horn, 2007; Lillejord, 2020). They are even more critical in a high-diversity context, where there are more risks of making false assumptions and misleadingly supplying details to those aspects of student life contexts that teachers have only fragmented information about (Lotta & Kirschbaum, 2022). Teachers do not invent those taxonomies and lived concepts but are rather socialised into them through routines in which they discuss the development and wellbeing of individual students.

6.2 How do interplays of development from-within and from-above position teachers towards more extended professionalism?

So far, I have argued that, although the meeting routines were differently structured, the way they were performed suggested a somewhat restricted form of professionalism. In the routine for school-wide development, this implied emphasis on the teachers' role as implementors of policy. However, in the context of close relationships between the welfare professions and the state in social democracies, such conclusion must be interpreted with caution as automatically a sign of restricted professionalism (Molander, 2016). I rather suggest that teachers' more passive role of being 'informed about' rather than 'involved in' school development was associated with a lack of routines in which teachers made contradictions and ambiguity related to their social mandate more explicit and therefore approachable. Further, in the routines for CPD, a more restricted form of professionalism resulted from a strong focus on the here-and-now of ensuring student engagement, reinforced both from-above and from-within the teacher

team. Yet, as I show below, this very focus was also a window to more conceptually informed conversations about student learning and wellbeing. Similarly, in grade-level team meetings, more restricted professionalism was maintained by the implicitness of concepts and normative principles underpinning teachers' practical decision-making.

I will now briefly revise two practical syntheses drawn from the data in Articles 2 and 3 to illustrate the significance of more abstract forms of professional knowledge for expanding interpretive frames and, thus, professional agency. An empirical example from Article 3 shows how, in the process of debriefing a lesson, the teachers collaboratively reformulated a practical synthesis regarding student engagement in group work. From 'the students do not engage with each other but talk to the screen', they moved to 'students do not engage in mathematical conversation but recall correct answers'. As the analysis in Article 3 indicates, the uptake of a formal concept of a mathematical conversation made a significant difference to the teachers' interpretative frame. Two issues deserve additional attention in this shift. First, it was a video clip that helped the teachers notice a problem with student engagement in the first place, while in all other instances they relied on unstructured personal notes and memory. There was overall surprisingly little attention given to the teachers' own materials produced while planning, observing, and debriefing. This underlines research on the representations of practice in the teaching profession, highlighting significant differences comparative to how other professions document their work for learning purposes (Grossman et al., 2009; Little, 2002). Second, it is notable that a change in teachers' interpretive frame from 'student engagement' to 'student engagement in a mathematical conversation' did not imply a radical change of an activity but seemingly minor adjustments. Rather, it was explication of the rationales and principles underlying a specific activity that allowed for subtle – to an external eye – but significant changes in how the activity was re-planned.

Article 3 gives another interesting example of a practical synthesis. When thinking about how they could help a child not yet speaking Norwegian, the teachers took a risk by setting aside the objective of acquiring the majority language as soon as possible and, instead, situationally focused on their broader social mandate of making sure the boy was experiencing self-efficacy in learning and joy at school. The use of concepts in this case was tacit, and a teacher's practical synthesis was rather grounded in what she 'heard at the conference'. However, it was clearly not atheoretical (Atkinson, 2000) and can be interpreted not just as a reference to an external knowledge source (conference pitch) but to a formal concept of deficit versus asset orientation. On the one hand, teachers' risk-taking seemed to be related to a shared, albeit rarely articulated,

broad vision of the social mandate to ensure student wellbeing, as opposed to a narrower vision of the early intervention project. That is, teachers' collective agency in choosing a non-trivial problem framing was clearly supported by shared values (as in the studies by Robinson, 2012; Saunders, 2013). On the other hand, a reference to an external knowledge source and a formal concept itself, even though described in the teacher's own terms, seemed to have played a significant role in legitimising a somewhat risky solution (Gewirtz et al., 2008). Ironically enough with regard to teachers often characterised as 'short-term' thinkers(Lortie, 1975), it was indeed a short-term solution in the sense of aiming for immediate results. And yet, it was clearly underpinned by a longer-term professional perspective, a deeper understanding of the social mandate, and not least the embracement of possible risk (Evetts, 2003).

6.3 Concluding remarks

Extending earlier research, this thesis highlights the significance of conceptually informed teacher discourse for the development of more extended professionalism. It shows, with empirical examples, how the uptake of formal concepts supported teachers' agency in realising their 'double' mandate of promoting both academic competences and all-round development. It was not that there was necessarily a 'gap' to be bridged between those formal concepts on one side and teachers' 'lived' concepts and informal moral taxonomies on the other. Rather, the uptake of formal concepts extended teachers' professional perception and a range of interpretive frames (Barnes, 2004; Winch, 2017a). To elaborate on the metaphor of a map (theory) and a terrain (practice) (Havnes, 2009), conceptually richer discourse made teachers' 'maps' more detailed and complex, allowing them to 'read' the terrain of practice through different conceptual lenses and normative logics, see more possible paths for action, justify riskier solutions, and go beyond own previous experience and 'how things are usually done'. It arguably allowed for more agency and legitimacy, for example, in the pursuit of 'decoupling' organisational objectives of raising student achievement and political discourse surrounding the early intervention initiatives from more context-sensitive considerations regarding the wellbeing and development of specific students.

Furthermore, the thesis underscores the need to continuously 'unpack' normative ambiguity related to the ideals of the social mandate in teacher collaborative work. To take some concrete examples from this study, such unpacking presupposed tolerance for conflicting views on social inequality and the role of school and teachers in reducing it, on 'good' childhood and 'adequate' parenting, on subjective and objective student wellbeing, and so on. I argue that although much of the prior research highlights the power of a shared vision for professional agency (that is,

consensus on values and approaches), quite the opposite may also be the case. A more articulate and critical perspective on the social mandate, underpinned by references to more abstract knowledge sources, can be equally important for extending agency. First, the process of deliberating normative principles with colleagues – in relation to the broader frameworks of the curriculum and the context of practice – can substantially increase a sense of ownership (Engestrom & Kerosuo, 2007; Koffeman & Snoek, 2018; Louie, 2016). Second, a perspective on the social mandate as in some ways *bounded* in realisation by the presence of competing values and the need to make normative compromises in practice (Afdal & Afdal, 2019; Solbrekke, 2008) may lower the pressure of 'high stakes' and reduce frustration related to perceptions of the impact of efforts as limited (e.g., Rothì et al., 2008). Finally, while recognising normative ambiguity may lower 'perceived' stakes, it also actualises the need for abstract knowledge, such as theories, research, and data, to justify and make compromises more transparent, conceptually consistent, and less risk-averse (Zacka, 2017). Ultimately, such a perspective on the social mandate may increase teachers' emotional resilience, which is critical for teacher commitment over the 'long haul' as well as retainment at a more general level, particularly in schools working in high-minority and socially deprived settings (Winch, 2017b).

As much of the research suggests, a way to develop a more conceptually informed discourse from-within the profession is to support the quality of teacher engagement with professional knowledge by increasing the density of knowledge relations and the diversity of knowledge sources and networks in the profession (Hermansen, 2017; Jensen et al., 2021; Noordegraaf, 2020). In this thesis, I would add two points to this claim. First, I would suggest that at a school level, supporting the quality of teacher engagement with professional knowledge requires a view of collaborative routines as closely interrelated. More specifically, teachers' more proactive, participatory role in defining the direction of school development may better connect micro-level, day-to-day work on student development and wellbeing to broader professional knowledge, including research, theories, and data.

Second, I would suggest that the quality of teacher engagement with professional knowledge will benefit from exposure to different 'repertoires of normative justifications' (Zacka, 2017), as opposed to being merely provided with research summaries of 'what works'. Although normative justifications may seem to be more relevant to the 'all-round' development aspect of the teachers' double mandate, this thesis – along with much of earlier research – highlights a tight connection between teachers' focus on the here-and-now of student social dynamics and engagement and their capacity to integrate new concepts on teaching and learning in practice.

Exposure to different normative justifications may include investigation of how some specific problems of practice are viewed from different ethical logics, different epistemic positions on teaching, learning, and caring, and different perspectives taken by the professions working 'at the boundary' with teachers. Such work may take the form of case analyses and more debate-like, rather than briefing-like, collaborative work in plenums. Admittedly, taking specific cases from teachers' ongoing work as a departure for professional development from-within is hardly a novel suggestion. However, a difference should be made between the use of specific cases to exchange experience and the focus on deconstructing how teachers form practical syntheses in specific cases, including what knowledge sources and normative logics they build on (Grimen, 2008). For this purpose, an external perspective and expertise from outside the immediate professional context can be particularly useful offering an example of how development from-above and from-within can productively interplay towards a more extended form of teacher professionalism.

7 Contributions and implications

One important purpose of research is 'to make practice problematic' (Lytle, 1993, p. 21). In this thesis, my intent was to problematise 'the optimistic promise' of teacher collaboration (Little, 1990) by examining forms of professionalism that do or do not sustain such promise in practice. This final chapter describes how this thesis has contributed to empirical research and theory and the ways in which these contributions can inform professional practice, educational policy, and scholarly discussion.

7.1.1 Empirical contribution

This thesis provides a broad look at teacher professionalism as it is enacted in different routines for workplace collaboration. The conclusions extend the literature in two ways. First, they point to the interconnectedness of meeting routines, highlighting the need for teachers' more critical participation in shaping the direction of school development and, at the same time, for stronger links to broader professional and knowledge networks and more diverse knowledge sources in routine collaborative work regarding student development and wellbeing. Second, the use of ethnographically inspired methods can be seen as a methodological contribution to research, which in the Norwegian context is often marked by shorter-term studies focused on policy implementation. Longer-term fieldwork and breadth of observations allowed for a micro-level perspective on teacher professionalism both within and beyond routines formally intended for professional development.

7.1.2 Theoretical contribution

A theoretical contribution of this thesis can be seen in the application of concepts drawn from sociology of professions and theories from research on teachers and their work. Combining diverse theoretical perspectives helped me view teacher professionalism as profoundly grounded in knowledge, the social mandate, and collegiality (Freidson, 2007) and developed at the interplay of the micropolitical environment and local cultural norms at school (Kelchtermans, 2006). Seeing the concept of professional agency as essential to more extended professionalism directed me to questions of when and how aspects of organisational structure, in my case meeting routines, influence teachers' initiatives and interactions and how these, in turn, reinforce or alter rules, norms, and relationships at school.

As Cynthia Coburn (2016) critically notes, much educational research ends up with the same lessons learned over and over again. Collaboration matters. Leadership matters. Relationships matter. She suggests that theories that allow us to examine how structure and agency interplay

may be one way to dig beneath these clichés and uncover *in which ways* these factors matter (Coburn, 2016). In this thesis, I aimed to do so by using concepts such as organisational routines, professional agency, boundary work, and from-within and from-above professionalism. On a broader scale, these concepts may help in understanding why certain well-intentioned policies aiming to support professionalism from-within end up having little impact on teachers' day-to-day practice (Askling et al., 2016) and what sorts of external resources and regulations can interrupt 'business as usual' on the ground and extend teachers' capacity and motivation to act in contexts of normative ambiguity and practical uncertainty.

7.1.3 Implications for practice

In the rush and bustle of the school day, teachers rarely have the luxury of a detached viewpoint on their practice. Rather, hectic workdays present an environment in which 'doing teaching' becomes paramount in order to manage multiple expectations, especially in relation to student achievement in a high-stakes setting. This is reflected in how school leaders and teachers themselves oftentimes see teacher professional development as oriented towards accumulating activities and procedures (Horn et al., 2017), and policymakers – as 'compensating' for the perceived lack of professional competence necessary to achieve external performance benchmarks and resolve social problems such as persistent inequalities in society (Caspersen et al., 2017).

In contrast, this thesis highlights the significance and pragmatic value of collaborative routines, in which teachers critically shape the direction of school development and their own professional development rather than 'catch up' with recent policy. A specific implication for professional development and initial teacher education, one which follows from the analysis, is the importance of addressing issues of normative ambiguity related to realising a double task of the social mandate. This may involve a focus on tensions related to different conceptions of schooling and its purposes, different ideals of childhood and wellbeing, but also competing perspectives on teaching and learning. This claim does not undermine the need for emotional bonds among colleagues. Rather, it highlights a particular workplace culture in which shared values and priorities are not achieved by streamlining them in a top-down fashion but rather through open, critical discussions in close proximity to teachers' ongoing practice.

A critical part of making these tensions more explicit and thus approachable is routines and structures supporting the development of professional discourse. Without it, essential but intricate aspects of professionalism related to ethics, building relations, and care remain tacit and are therefore difficult to explicitly teach, evaluate, and develop (Grossman & Pupik Dean,

2019; Lefstein et al., 2019). Moreover, in many cases, teachers inevitably have to rely on personal accounts of practice when seeking ad-hoc consultation and cooperation. Much research shows that the development of discourse can be achieved through partnerships with universities, professional networks, the development of tools such as conceptually framed conversation- and observation protocols, and the development of forms for representing teacher professional practice in ways that make its contexts and details accessible for investigation. While video records are an increasingly common form of such representations and this thesis provides clear evidence of their value, there are practical, ethical, and emotional limitations to their use, particularly in relation to long-term work with issues of student wellbeing. This underlines the need to develop diverse forms of representing practice for cooperation with colleagues, other professions, parents, school leaders, or researchers, which may include databases of cases, logs, and other written and material forms constructed for the purposes of knowledge development rather than administrative reporting. In sum, representing broader aspects of professional practice reinforces the need for a more conceptually sophisticated discourse helping to construct practical syntheses grounded in both local, experiential and more abstract forms of knowledge (Grimen, 2008; Grossman & Pupik Dean, 2019).

7.1.4 Implications for policy

The conclusions of this study can be seen in light of upcoming public sector reforms in Norway which emphasise decentralised governance, and, more generally, the media debate, driven foremost by teacher unions, regarding the need to trust teacher professionalism as opposed to micro-managing its development from-above. Hereof, this thesis points in two directions.

At a more general level, the conclusions suggest the importance of policy that supports the development of denser and more diverse knowledge networks, including more horizontal and reciprocal partnerships with researchers and universities. A more specific implication can be drawn in relation to recent evaluations of large-scale CPD projects in Norway. The evaluations highlight that in a context where priorities for and forms of school development and teacher professional development are defined from-within, there is a need to focus on the competence of needs analysis of teachers and school leaders. This thesis suggests that such competence is closely related to the uptake of conceptually rich professional discourse and a more critical engagement with normative justifications that are at play in realising the ideals of the social mandate. This leads to the second implication underlining the need to focus broadly on collaborative routines at school as an epistemic environment (Borko, 2004; Hermansen, 2017), where how teachers casually talk about student development and wellbeing is deeply connected

to how they collectively interpret the terms of their social mandate and to more principled discussions regarding the direction of school development.

7.1.5 Implications for further research

Limitations of this study have been addressed in Section 4.8. In a nutshell, I highlight that given its small scale, this thesis can only tell *a* story, not *the* story about teacher professionalism in workplace collaboration. However, some limitations can be viewed as paths for future research. One line of enquiry I find interesting is to explore teacher professionalism as it is constructed in digital and hybrid collaborative environments and in the interplay of workplace routines and broader professional and knowledge networks, not least in social media and in the partnerships with universities. Another path is to examine how the social mandate with its double focus on academic and all-round development is reflected in emerging programmes for professional development, that is, which of its aspects are given priority and why and what sorts of professional knowledge and evidence are considered valid for different aspects of teachers' work.

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9 Appendices

Appendix 1. Overview of the observational data

Week	*Plenary sessions*	*Team meetings*
32	Kick off and strategy session, 6h	Team meeting, 2h
33	Resource teams (collaboration with social welfare and counsellor services), 2h	Team meeting, 2h
34	Lesson Study, 3h	Lesson Study, team work, 2h
35	Lesson Study, 3h	Lesson Study, team work, 2h
36	Lesson Study, 3h	Team meeting, team work, 2h
37	Lesson Study, 3h	Case analysis meeting with counsellor, 2h
40	Use of I-pads in teaching, 2.5h	Team meeting, 2h
45	Språkløyper (Language and literacy competency project), 2.5h	Språkløyper, team work, 2h
46	Språkløyper , 2.5h	Case analysis meeting with counsellor, 2h
47	Språkløyper, 2.5h	Team meeting, 2h
49	Språkløyper, 2.5h	Team meeting, 2h
3	Seminar on PALS (Framework of developing positive behaviour), 2.5h	Team meeting, 2h
5	School's business plan, 2.5h	Case analysis meeting with counsellor, 2.5h
6	Seminar on traumas, 2h	Team meeting, 1.5h
8	Språkløyper, 2.5h	Team meeting, 2h
9	Språkløyper, 2.5h	Case analysis meeting with counsellor, 2h
10		Team meeting, 1.5h
12		Team meeting, 2h
15	Lesson Study, 3h	Case analysis meeting with counsellor, 2h
16	Lesson Study, 3h	Lesson Study, team work, 2h
17	Lesson Study, 3h	Team meeting, 2h
18	Lesson Study, 2h	Team meeting, 2h
22	planning activities for the next year, 3h	Team meeting, 2h
23	planning activities, 4h	
23	planning activities, 2h	

Appendix 2. Observation guide

Dato:

Tid:

Tema:

Setting antall, hvem leder møtet, hvordan sitter lærerne, hvilke artifakter brukes osv	
Kommunikasjon hvem tar ordet, dialog/monolog, hva blir sagt, engasjement, passivitet	
Tematikk hva vises til i presentasjonen eller diskusjonen, hva er objekt av samarbeid og diskusjon (elevene, lovverk, prosjekter osv), hva blir sagt og hvilke meninger kommer frem	
Andre observasjoner	

Appendix 3. Overview of the interview data

	date, duration	**key themes**
introductory meeting	June 2016, 1h	introduction of the project, fieldwork process, issues of ethics
interview with the section head	September 2016, 1.5h	broad focus on collaborative work at school, its history, organisational routines, priorities
first group interview	November 2016, 2h	focus on collaborative work more generally, teachers' priorities, concerns, and central themes for different collaborative contexts. Also, a particular focus on plenums (structured contexts for professional development)
interview with the section head and the principal	December 2016, 1h	focus on how particular contexts for collaboration are structured at the school, municipal and national levels
second group interview	February 2017, 2h	focus on teachers' collaborative work with student cases and more generally, teachers' doubts, dilemmas, and reflections on the work in the context of high diversity of student backgrounds
third group interview	June 2017, 1.5h	a scoping focus on the past year, teachers' reflections on the structure and foci of collaborative work

Appendix 4. Interview guide example

- presenter oversikt over formål og struktur med intervjuet
- koble det første spørsmålet med det lærerne snakket om på mandag – samtalemodeller i lærersamarbeid (Språkløype prosjekt).

Samarbeid

- Hva synes dere om de begrepene XXX bruker for å framheve det som begrenser lærersamarbeid – repeterende samtaler, og det som utvikler – utforskende samtaler?
- Hun snakker også om det 'å utfordre hverandre', hva synes dere om dette?
- Hva synes dere generelt om innholdet på deres team- og personalmøtene?
- Brukes det for mye/for lite tid på enkelte saker? Hva skulle dere gjerne hatt mer tid til å jobbe med?
- Dersom dere skal planlegge undervisningen i et nytt emne (et nytt kompetansefokus), hvordan finner dere ny kunnskap og ressurser?
- Hvordan oppdaterer dere dere faglig i de fagene dere underviser i? I pedagogikk?

Lærerplaner

Det var spennende å se hvordan dere jobbet med lesson planning (del av Språkløype prosjekt). Mens matematisk tenkning som temaet og lesson plaaning som metodologi ble bestemt på kommunenivå, resten av arbeidet var stort sett opp til dere.

- Ville dere valgt det samme tema og metode for utviklingstid hvis det var opp til dere? Hvorfor?
- Kan dere se noen effekter av slikt arbeid for dere som et team, som enkelte lærere, for skolen som helhet? Hvordan kan slikt arbeid oversettes til deres daglige praksis?
- Hvordan vurderer deres arbeid med prosjektet? Hva ser dere som prestasjoner/oppnåelser og svake områder med behov for videreutvikling for dere?
- Jeg vil gjerne snake litt med dere om noe som kanskje jeg ofte går glipp av – utvikling av læreplaner. Kan dere fortelle hvordan dere arbeider med læreplaner på ukentlig basis og strategisk?
- Altså, hvordan formulerer dere langsiktige og kortsiktige mål? Hvordan finner dere innhold og tilpasser det?
- Hva legger dere vekt på i undervisningen og hvorfor?
- Har dere noen spesielle teorier eller verdier som rettleder dere?
- Bruker dere noen spesielle arbeidsformer eller metoder i undervisningen og hvorfor?
- Bruker dere noen spesielle tilnærmingsmåter nå?
- Dere har et ganske stort kulturelt, språklig og evnemessig mangfold i klasserommet. Hvordan påvirker dette deres planleggingsarbeid og daglig undervisning?

Ovenfra/innefra

- Et par uker siden hadde dere en kort diskusjon om lærerplaner og dere merket at dere mangler 'føringer' og at sånn type ordning krever mye planleggingstid. Kan dere utdype dette litt?
- I en spørreundersøkelse om lærerrollen vi på Senteret har foretatt i fjor, rapporterer lærerne både at de ønsker stor frihet og å ta selvstendige faglige valg, samtidig som de ønsker klare instrukser for arbeidet selv om det begrenser handlingsrommet som lærer. Kjenner dere dere igjen i dette?

- På hvilke områder opplever dere frihet i arbeidet som lærer? Har det alltid vært slik?
- På hvilke områder opplever dere at andre bestemmer over arbeidet ditt? Hvem bestemmer for mye? Hva kan være konsekvensene av dette?
- Er det noen områder dere opplever at andre kunne bestemt mer over hva dere skulle gjøre? Hvorfor er det slik? Tror du andre på skolen vil være enige med deg?
- Hvilke forventninger til arbeidet deres opplever dere som sterkest akkurat nå?
- Hvem kommer forventningene fra? Fra politikere? Kommunen? Ledere? Foreldre?

Flerkulturell sammenheng

- Mye av deres arbeid og snakk går rundt sjonglering av sosiale, faglige og personlige utviklingsmål, elevers forskjellige utviklingsbaner, forskjellige behov, forskjellige hjemme kontekster osv. Jeg har observert mange tilfeller der dere koordinerer posisjoner og diskuterer mulige retningslinjer for handling (på møtet med XXX men i mange andre tilfeller også). Hvordan organiserer dere sånt 'case analyse' arbeid gjennom hele året, strategisk og taktisk sett? Hva er det vanskeligste i dette arbeidet? Hvordan bestemmer dere hva som må gjøres og hvorfor?

Oppfølgingsspørsmål

Hva mener dere med …?

Kan dere si noe mer om …?

Overgangsspørsmål

Kan dere fortelle om …?

Hva er deres erfaring med...?

Avslutningsspørsmål

Alt tatt i betraktning, hva er viktigst for dere; kan dere oppsummere deres syn på dette?

Er det noe annet dere vil legge til? Kommentarer?

Appendix 5. Letter of consent

Prosjekt: *Lærernes kollegiale kultur i 'urbane' skoler*

Støttet av Senter for profesjonsstudier (SPS) ved Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus skal jeg gjennomføre et doktorgradsprosjekt som omhandler hvordan lærere driver samarbeid i urbane flerkulturelle skoler og særlig hvordan lærere involverer seg i profesjonsfellesskapene. Fokuset på flerkulturelle skoler er motivert ut fra antagelser om at lærernes samarbeid i disse skolene preges av mangfold og kompleksitet i de faglige og pedagogiske oppgavene. Studien er designet som organisatorisk etnografi (skoleår 2016–2017) og vil ta i bruk metoder som individuelle og gruppeintervjuer samt observasjon av lærersamarbeid.

På skolen vil jeg observere i forbindelse med teammøter og andre typer lærersamarbeid. Gjennom samtykke til observasjon sier du ja til at jeg er tilstede på noen møter og andre typer samarbeidsaktiviteter, etter avtale tar opp samtalen på lydbånd og tar notater av det som skjer. Jeg vil også intervjue lærere for å supplere informasjonen jeg får gjennom møtene samt for å se nærmere på hvordan samarbeid og kollegial kultur i skolen oppleves. Det kan være aktuelt å gjennomføre ett eller to individuelle intervjuer, samt ett eller to fokusgruppeintervju. De individuelle intervjuene vil vare i maks en time. Gruppeintervjuene kan vare i opptil 90 min. Både intervjuene og kommunikasjon på møtene vil bli tatt opp på lydbånd, anonymisert og transkribert i etterkant (av undertegnede). Notater og lydopptak vil bli oppbevart uten tilgang for andre, og det vil ødelegges etter at prosjektet er avsluttet. Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Alle data vil bli anonymisert innen prosjektslutt. Notater og transkribert materiale vil ikke inneholde informasjon som kan identifisere deg (og evt. elever).

Funnene fra studien skal gi datagrunnlag for tre artikler som er planlagt i internasjonale tidsskrift på engelsk og de vil også bli formidlet i populærvitenskapelig sammenheng i seminarer og konferanser. Prosjektet forventes avsluttet innen utgangen av 2020. Deltakelsen er frivillig, og du kan trekke deg når som helst i studien uten å måtte oppgi grunn. Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Har du spørsmål i forbindelse med deltakelse, kan du gjerne kontakte en av oss på e-post eller telefon: Galina Shavard (galina.shavard@hioa.no, +4740307385, evt. Sølvi Mausethagen, veileder, solvi.mausethagen@hioa.no)

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)
Jeg samtykker til å delta i prosjektet

Appendix 6. Ethical approval from NSD

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48881	*Teachers' collegial cultures in urban schools*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Galina Shavard*

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Part II. Articles

Article 1

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From school improvement to student cases: teacher collaborative work as a context for professional development

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ABSTRACT

Research has extensively linked teacher collaborative work with opportunities for both explicit and implicit professional development. However, while teachers work together more often than before, little is known about how workplace collaborative contexts are structured in terms of who and how frames the problems of practice. Drawing on an ethnographically inspired case study, this article examines three common collaborative contexts and discusses how and why different ways of structuring them through problem framing mattered for professional development. The findings reveal that the context intended for school improvement offered only incidental opportunities for teachers to engage in problem framing. The 'work works' question was cen tral in structuring the contexts intended for professional development and often acted as a limiting frame. In contrast, teachers' work with student cases involved broader opportunities for explorative problem framing. The analysis emphasises the role of framing questions in structuring teacher collaborative work.

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Introduction

The literature shows that collaborative work is essential both for formally organised professional development and for what Evans (2019) terms 'implicit' professional development – development, which is not explicitly labelled as such and resides in day-to-day practice, particularly in professional interactions (Imants 2002, McLaughlin and Talbert 2006, Stoll *et al.* 2006, Vescio *et al.* 2008). However, a collaborative organisation of work does not automatically result in professional development underpinned by pedagogical enquiry, experimentation and reflection (Kelchtermans 2006, Horn and Little 2010, Kennedy 2014). In this regard, some studies draw attention to the deep-seated norms of classroom privacy and consensus-orientation, which narrow collaborative work to non-threatening and repetitive discussions (de Lima 2001, Engestrom and Kerosuo 2007, Little and Curry 2009). Others point out the limitations of externally imposed collaborative work, in which teachers are positioned as implementers of progressive ideas defined by policymakers (Hargreaves 2000, Talbert 2010, Kennedy 2014).

Indeed, some countries not just recommend but mandate schools to organise teacher collaborative work. To this end, one interesting example is Norway, which in the last decade has swayed back and forth between the reforms inspired by the new public management and more social-democratic, egalitarian approaches (Helgoy and Homme 2016, Imsen *et al.* 2017). How teacher collaborative work is currently structured is illustrative. On the one hand, collaborative forms of 'explicit' professional development typically come to schools as part of externally designed projects

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intended to promote novel perspectives on teaching and learning (Kirsten 2020). At the same time, many of these projects emphasise teachers' explorative, agentic position towards professional development (Hermansen 2017, Tronsmo 2018). Moreover, schools are required to provide time, space and support for routine collaborative work, which can be seen as an important context for implicit professional development.

Put in Evetts' terms, opportunities for professional development come both 'from above' and 'from within' the specific professional settings. Mausethagen and Smeby (2016) emphasise that rather than forming a dichotomy, the 'from-above' and 'from-within' axes structure the space for workplace professional development in sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting ways. It concerns not only logistical aspects (such as how often teachers get to work together) but also particular ways of structuring collaborative work through problem framing. This makes it interesting to explore how and who gets to frame professional problems as well as how different ways of framing may matter for professional development as a process taking place explicitly and implicitly.

Against this background, this article focuses on structured contexts for workplace collaborative work in broader terms – both explicitly intended for professional development and those intended for routine professional tasks such as, for example, discussions of student cases. Empirically, the article draws on an ethnographically inspired qualitative study, in which collaborative work of one teacher team in a Norwegian school was followed closely for one year. The research questions are as follows: How are some of the common contexts for collaborative work structured? If there is variation, what are the associated limitations and opportunities for professional development? These questions do not tie professional development exclusively to collaboration but place individual perspectives on learning beyond its scope. Moreover, it is not suggested that collaborative work should necessarily bring about professional development, but rather that such opportunities can be better structurally integrated into daily practice.

In what follows, I first review some of the cross-cutting themes in the earlier research on teacher collaborative work as a context for professional development, provide an analytical perspective and detail the study design. I then present the findings and discussion concluding with implications for workplace collaborative work.

Previous research

Studies investigating teacher collaborative work as a context for professional development comprise a large field (Vangrieken *et al.* 2017) with multiple entrances and a long history (Clark and Lampert 1986, Day *et al.* 2012). A recurrent argument, which also foregrounds this article, is that although collaborative contexts are essential for teacher professional development, establishing them does not guarantee transformative and sustained changes in professional practice. Some studies show that even when given space for collaborative work, teachers often remain at the level of logistics, story-sharing or help-seeking and rarely engage in critical, theoretically-informed discussions and systematic experimentation with new ideas (Kelchtermans 2006, Stoll *et al.* 2006, Vescio *et al.* 2008, Horn and Little 2010).

The existing research outlines conditions for workplace professional development. These conditions include, for example, the focus on how students learn – rather than how teachers teach (Vescio *et al.* 2008), de-privatisation of classroom practice (Little 2002, Levine and Marcus 2010) and presence of open, critical discussions, in which disagreements are addressed rather than avoided (Achinstein 2002, Engeström 2005, Markauskaite and Goodyear 2014, Koffeman and Snoek 2018). At the same time, research indicates that the focus on student learning does not in itself prevent what Appleton terms 'activity traps' (2002) – collaboration centred on planning activities with little consideration of underpinning conceptual perspectives on teaching and learning (Earl and Timperley 2009, Biesta *et al.* 2015). In part, activity traps can be linked to how teacher professional knowledge is described in the literature – as complex but fragmented and activated in

response to specific situations (Markauskaite and Goodyear 2014). In addition, some studies highlight personal teaching experience, in contrast to more abstract knowledge, as often a sole source for implicit professional development (Lahn 2012, Mausethagen *et al.* 2017).

The studies above focus predominantly on the explicit forms of professional development and single initiatives. In contrast, research into how workplace collaborative work is structured as a whole – over an extended period of time and inclusive of both intentional professional development and routine collaborative work – has been limited. Moreover, while there has been an elaborate conceptual critique of teachers' shrinking autonomy and increasingly subordinate position towards the state (Vanderstraeten 2007, Hopmann 2015, Biesta 2015a), few empirical studies analyse this relationship at the micro-level of teacher collaborative work. This article aims to extend the existing lines of enquiry by focusing on workplace collaborative contexts as a whole, with opportunities for and limitations to both explicit and implicit professional development. These opportunities and limitations are thought to potentially come both from above and from within the school and teachers' immediate professional context (Evetts 2003).

Analytical perspective

This article combines two analytical tools – Evetts' (2003) concept of professionalisation 'from within' and 'from above' and Benford and Snow's (2000) work on frame analysis. Evetts (2003) suggests a continuum that describes how professions develop – some predominantly 'from above' while others – more 'from within'. The ideas of development as a process stemming from within schools are prominent in the literature emphasising teacher autonomy (Buchanan 2015, Frostenson 2015). However, as previously mentioned, such development may be limited by the norms of privacy and non-confrontation. Conversely, from-above development is typically associated with standardisation and managerial control (Jeffrey 2002, Ball 2015). At the same time, structural support is also a means for ensuring transparency of professional practice and sustainability of local initiatives. This suggests that from-above and from-within development is better seen not as a dichotomy but as a relationship, within which problems of practice are differently framed, and thus different opportunities for professional development are afforded (Mausethagen and Smeby 2016).

How problems are framed is a twofold process. Benford and Snow (2000) make a distinction between the two forms – diagnostic and prognostic framing. Diagnostic framing problematises the field and focuses on an issue, suggesting a particular perspective and interpretation. This interpretation indicates and sometimes prescribes a certain way of thinking. In Goffman's (1974) terms, a frame sets an interpretive context that communicates the answer to the question of 'what is it that is going on here?' It also creates rationales, assigns responsibility and delineates the scope of what is possible and meaningful to do in particular situations, leading to some solutions and eliminating others (Benford and Snow 2000). Moreover, who and how formulates the problems of practice may differentially position teachers as agents capable and willing to make a change (Coburn 2006, Horn 2007). For instance, framing achievement in a primary school in terms of tests results suggests a notably different course of action than framing it as the development of curiosity and socio-emotional skills. The process of formulating a specific course of action and solutions is referred to as prognostic framing (Benford and Snow 2000).

Together, these two analytical tools help to illuminate how workplace collaborative work is structured as a whole by focusing on the often-implicit level of problem framing, which underpins opportunities for explicit and implicit professional development.

Empirical setting and method

The study builds on a qualitative, ethnographically-inspired case study carried out with a 6th-grade teacher team. In Parker-Jenkins' terms (2016, p. 12), it can be viewed as 'an ethno-case study' that

'conveys a sense of conducting an inquiry with people, employing techniques associated with long-term and intensive ethnography but limited in terms of research time, engagement with the data and the extent of the findings'. Such an immersive approach helped to obtain a broader and more in-depth picture of workplace collaborative contexts over one school year.

A middle-size public primary school (550 pupils) located in an urban area in the Eastern part of Norway was selected using purposeful sampling as an information-rich site for observing systematic teacher collaboration (Flyvbjerg 2006). The selection was intended not as 'best practice' but rather as 'a good example of practice' (Kelchtermans 2015). Moreover, it was assumed that a diverse student profile offers a complex empirical picture of professional problems and tasks as well as a better outlook on the from-above/from-within dynamics, seeing that such schools often receive close attention from policymakers and local authorities in Norway (Elstad 2009).

The team included six teachers collectively responsible for 75 students. The pseudonyms are as follows: three headteachers (Hedda, John and Mary), a subject teacher (Alice), a pedagogical assistant (Rose) and a department head (Anna) who occasionally participated in meetings. The principal's pseudonym is Katherine. The team had worked together for several years and had a relatively balanced profile in terms of experience (from 3 years onward), age (from 26 to 60) and gender (one male teacher). The data was collected throughout the 2016–2017 school year, including in total 70 hours of non-participant observations, 'go-along' interviews, three in-depth group interviews (4 hours in total) and documentary data such as planning papers, meeting handouts and minutes. The field notes sought to capture as much of the content as possible, focusing on central topics and substantive turns of talk.

Throughout the year, the team met 43 times, of which 22 meetings were observed with a consideration to cover different collaborative contexts evenly. On a typical week, there were two afternoon meetings, participation in which was required. One was intended for routine planning and ongoing student cases and another – either for school improvement or professional development activities. The contexts intended for school improvement and professional development involved all teachers at school, but a plenary was typically followed by one or two hours of focused teamwork. Such an organisation of structured collaborative work is typical for Norwegian schools. The findings section provides a further description of teacher collaborative contexts.

Out of 22 analysed meetings, excerpts from five meetings were selected as most typical and information-rich in terms of by whom and in which ways problems of practice were framed. Specifically, this included excerpts from two school improvement meetings (out of overall three such meetings held that year), one day-long meeting intended explicitly for professional development (out of ten observed and analysed meetings) and two casework meetings (out of ten observed and analysed meetings). Selecting focal meetings across a broader range of data allowed us to draw a more ethnographically detailed account of collaborative work. In addition, the interview data helped to clarify the background to the issues discussed over the meetings and teachers' perspectives. The excerpts are reconstructed and abridged from the field notes taken during the observations with the quotes written down on the spot.

The analysis followed two steps. The data was first mapped with open, descriptive and then with focused, theory-derived codes (Brinkmann and Kvale 2014). The open codes were used to group the observations thematically by the type, theme and objective of the meetings, which were then supplemented with relevant interview excerpts (Saldana 2012). Then, the analytical perspective and research questions guided the analysis. The objective was to unpack various configurations of diagnostic and prognostic framing focusing in addition on how particular frames (in the form of questions, tasks, problem setting) structure collaborative work. At the third step, the data was explored as to how different ways of problem framing worked towards creating opportunities for and limitations to professional development.

This use of ethnographic methods in the study was underpinned by ensuring ethical arrangements in the conduct and the analysis of data and by the process of reflexivity towards fieldwork practice and relations (Hammersley 2006, Brookfield 2009). This required awareness of my

positioning as an outsider – a researcher and a person with a different cultural background, but also an insider as a teacher in the past. Such positioning played to my advantage, allowing to ask clarification questions while being generally treated as a colleague. To ensure the validity, the findings and possible interpretations were discussed with other researchers as a method for communicative validity and, at an earlier stage, with the teachers as a way for respondent validation (Brinkmann and Kvale 2014). The analysis offers theoretical interpretations and analytical generalisations; thus the external validity of the findings might be limited to schools with similar policy and organisational contexts (Brinkmann and Kvale 2014).

Results

The following analysis examines three contexts constituting structured collaborative work at the examined school: 1) meetings intended for school improvement, 2) meetings intended for professional development and 3) routine team meetings. The contexts differed functionally but also signalled distinct patterns of problem framing. Specifically, the findings suggest that routine work on student cases involved ample space for from-within diagnostic problem framing, whereas the contexts explicitly intended for professional development relied on a more limiting prognostic frame of 'work works'. For the most part, the context intended for school improvement supplied diagnostic and prognostic framing 'from above', leaving the teachers in the position of implementers.

School improvement as policy alignment and teambuilding

Data for the first collaborative context involve two meetings intended as a 'primary discussion and planning space for strategic school development', as per the school documents. The meetings were similarly organised as a plenary presentation held by the school principal, followed by a task for teacher teams and a reflection round. The meetings shared a pattern, in which the work was structured mainly as policy briefing aimed to provide an externally developed perspective, while teachers' active participation was expected in teambuilding activities. Diagnostic and prognostic framing of the issues related to school improvement originated mostly from above school with the teachers being walked through the strategy rather than included in the framing process.

The first plenary meeting provides an example. Katherine, the principal, began the plenary by introducing long-term objectives. She was using professionally made slides provided by the local competence centre, which laid out 'the challenges of the 21 century' and 'evidenced solutions for schools'. Some challenges like digitalisation were more general, while others were more context-specific, such as rising dropout rates in local high schools. Katherine pointed to the slide visualising test data and talked about the importance of early intervention in primary school. She pointed out that it was their 'responsibility zone' and that they need to think about their long-term impact. 'What is the shortest way to get there?' she asked and transitioned to the slide with solutions. She also stressed that the school's current 'contribution effect' is 3.7%, which was 'somewhat higher than average', and that 'it meant that the measures worked'.

This excerpt supplies an illustration of diagnostic and prognostic framing stemming 'from-above'. The meeting outlines a policy landscape as a way of diagnostic framing and sets a specific prognostic frame – early intervention for student achievement. Katherine further narrows this frame with an efficiency-focused question ('the shortest way there') and the emphasis on test results. When she concludes the presentation by asking for clarification questions, the teachers remained largely silent but livened up during the break and warm-up activities. Later that day, as part of teambuilding, the teams were invited to complete a three-question assignment. They were asked to '1) to reflect on the school vision, 2) share what they know about the school history and 3) recall what the new policy plan is called and what its focus areas are.' To address the questions, the teachers briefly recollected the points Katherine made earlier, often borrowing wording from the

slides. It is notable here that collaborative work is structured through questions for understanding, rather than a critical examination of policy perspectives, and teambuilding activities. Later during the interview, the teachers referred to the issues brought up at the meeting as mainly beyond their discretion ('beyond my pay grade', as one of them put it), highlighting however that they do not 'fundamentally disagree' with the external frames and often find them 'in theory relevant', 'making sense' and 'inspiring'.

However, while distancing from the issues of school improvement cut across the data, there were nuances to the pattern. One such example comes from the second planning meeting, which began with the same slides as a context framer followed by a teamwork assignment, this time focusing on digitalisation objectives. The task question for teams asked 'to reflect on the work in the first semester from the perspective of digitalisation objectives'. In workgroups, teachers brainstormed activities involving technology, which they found to 'be working'. There was nevertheless an interesting departure from the main pattern when Mary interrupted her suggestion in the brainstorming by pointing out that she finds digitalisation rhetoric 'somewhat empty of pedagogy'. Her statement redirected the discussion towards a more critical exchange of perspectives related to the role of digital solutions in teaching. However, at the reflection round, the teachers only briefly mentioned this part, focusing instead on presenting a brainstormed list of activities 'that work'.

Collaborative work in this excerpt is structured similarly – it starts with a pre-set diagnostic frame. However, it proceeds with a more open framing question for group work. Interestingly, this question does not prescribe a focus on prognostic framing and brainstorming with the 'what works' framing question is evoked by teachers themselves. This has an important outcome of zooming in from a more principle discussion about digitalisation to more specific brainstorming of activities. The optics zoom back out when Mary suggests a reframing question. However, her question and the following discussion are not picked up further at the reflection round, overridden by the focus on activities.

The data reveals that the context intended for school improvement was to a large extent limiting in terms of opportunities for formulating diagnostic and prognostic framing formulated from within the school. In the first example, collaborative work is framed largely as policy alignment and team building. The framing questions are didactic – formulated in a from-above manner to elicit correct answers, rather than inviting for more horizontal and critical exchange of positions and reflection. In contrast, the second example involves a more discursive question for prognostic framing. However, with some incidental exceptions, the teachers structure collaborative work as brainstorming, shifting the focus from the broader educational problems to the specificity of classroom activities. Such dive into specifics gives a glimpse of a pattern characteristic to the collaborative context explicitly intended for professional development.

'What works' as a primary frame for explicit professional development

The collaborative context intended explicitly for workplace professional development included two large- and three small-scale professional development projects held in the year of data collection. These projects involved either some form of collaborative lesson planning or experience exchange. The school administration designed small-scale seminars in-house, whereas larger development projects, such as Lesson Study, were curated by the local competence centre in line with the national guidelines. In total, the data for analysis included ten meetings, excerpts from one of them are provided below as typical and information-rich. What comes strongly across the analysed meetings is an extensive focus on producing prognostic frames while outsourcing or bypassing development of diagnostic frames. The focus on prognostic frames generated positive resonance as useful and relevant learning, and the framing question of 'what works' was routinely used by the teachers. There were, however, some limitations to this frame.

The following excerpt from the end-of-the-year experience exchange workshop illustrates the pattern. Objectives for this meeting were formulated by the school administration: 'to stimulate

professional reflection' and 'develop better continuity across the grades'. There were two rounds of meetings, in which teams worked together. The task was to share and discuss 'what worked and did not work that year'. Alice started the meeting by introducing the Food and Health subject as 'the focus area for all sixth-graders as per the national curriculum'. She detailed the logistical plan, read out the objectives from the national curriculum, showed a homework template and concluded with 'some tricks' about temporary ability grouping. This was all that the teachers prepared, so they decided to use the remaining time on brainstorming suggestions for the other team. Activities and small projects like as a cooking workshop or a windowsill garden were brainstormed on the whiteboard. In the process, the teachers engaged with one another's ideas by asking for elaboration and sharing similar experiences. They also noted activities, which did not work 'because they took too much time' or 'were not well-suited for the age'. Brainstorming was absorbing, and the other team left with a long list of activities and tips. Later that day, when the teams were sharing reflections at the plenary meeting, they presented this list of activities as a takeaway. In the follow-up interview, they clarified that 'what worked' to them implied in this instance 'what the kids enjoyed', 'what I was actually able to pull' and 'what gives results'.

The following week the team had a routine team meeting, in which they expressed content with the experience exchange workshop characterising it as 'practical', 'useful' and 'inspirational' because 'there was so much interesting one can do [in the classroom]'. However, when asked why they considered certain activities 'working' and others not – beyond the logistical reasons of limited time and resources – the teachers shared that they found some 'conceptual challenges' in teaching Food and Health. For example, Rosa explained that '[their] students come from the families holding different perceptions about what "health" and "healthy food" mean'. She added that this makes 'teaching good food and health habits complicated and challenges [their] own ideas about good habits'. The other teachers came with more examples noting that they 'do not really get to discuss those challenges in-depth' and 'do not have good solutions for them'.

On the one hand, the 'what works' framing question in these excerpts steers the teachers' attention towards the specificity of prognostic frames leaving the underpinning pedagogical rationales implicit and taken-for-granted. This pattern is prominent across the data making from-within development of diagnostic frames (similar to the abovementioned frame problematising varied perceptions of good food habits) limited to incidental opportunities, which take place mostly outside the structured contexts for collaborative work. Furthermore, the excerpt from the reflection round at the plenary meeting suggests that without articulating diagnostic frames, prognostic frames may become too loosely connected to the pedagogical rationales and instead become tied to more immediate concerns ('what was possible to pull'). On the other hand, the interview data indicates that the focus on concrete activities and solutions offered a sense of productivity and relevance.

The pattern characterising the collaborative context intended explicitly for professional development stands in some contrast to how the teachers engaged with ongoing student cases during weekly team meetings.

Explorative diagnostic questions as a frame for casework

Weekly teamwork constituted the third structured context for collaborative work. It involved curriculum alignment, timetabling and catching up, but most commonly, it focused on systematic work with ongoing student cases and social dynamics in and outside classrooms. This included specific cases of learning difficulties, socioemotional learning, classroom climate, peer relations and multiple issues connected to student wellbeing. Although this collaborative context was not explicitly intended for professional development, the data suggests that it provided opportunities for teachers to develop not only prognostic but also diagnostic frames. This was typically done through a chain of questions problematising teachers' former experiences, building contextual background and exploring alternative solutions. Moreover, casework resonated strongly among

the teachers as an essential context for implicit professional learning. The following excerpt illustrates how a typical case meeting was structured.

The meeting focused on Mike – a new student recently transferred to school from a refugee introduction course. Hedda started by sharing observations on what was happening to Mike, 'He is spending much time with an assistant outside the classroom; it's difficult for him to follow instruction and he is not participating in social interactions either'. She added that 'it is important to include him in the classwork as much as possible'. 'What do you think? What are your observations? Asked she. The teachers followed up by gathering the context such as family circumstances and observations from different school contexts. Then, taking her turn, Mary expressed some doubt, 'I am not sure here … I think Mike needs more language tutoring'. To that, Hedda posed a discursive question, 'So … I wonder if it is a lack of inclusion that hinders language learning in this instance or poor language skills that prevent inclusion. How do we approach this?' After an exchange of perspectives, John asked the following question, 'In this concrete case, what is in Mike's best interest? I think that it is to make him feel more confident and included.' Later, the teachers decided on a solution – to temporarily use more English as a language of communication in the classroom 'to help Mike grow confidence and start building relationships'. In the follow-up interview, they noted that this was 'somewhat original' as it is 'much more common to simply add more language tutoring in such instances'.

This excerpt starts with the teachers supplying the context and opening the case for interpretation. They come up with two possible diagnostic frames – one taking departure in language learning and one in inclusion. Framing here is structured by three diagnostic questions coming from different teachers. The first builds the context ('what is happening to the student?'), the second problematises it by contrasting alternative perspectives ('is it more about language or inclusion?') and the third shifts the attention from a possible deficit perspective (from what is wrong with Mike) to the student's current needs (what is in his best interest?). These framing questions functioned differently than the 'what works' question in the context intended explicitly for professional development. Rather than focusing on generating solutions on the onset, the questions helped unpack the case and create space for different perspectives. These perspectives, however, were rarely explicitly linked to more abstract knowledge regarding second language acquisition, learning or development of social-emotional skills but rather to personal experiences.

Another example of how a chain of explorative diagnostic questions framed collaborative work comes from a meeting focused not on individual cases but social dynamics in the class. The agenda was brought up by John and concerned 'distractions and disruptions' in the learning environment after the summer break. The case was first unpacked from several perspectives using the framing question 'what is it that is going on'. This included a review of John's current instructional strategy and other teachers' ongoing experiences with these students. The second step was framed by a specifying question ('what is it that we are struggling with?) and the third – by the question of students' current needs and teachers' available resources. As a result, the team decided to focus on developing more 'collaborative experiences' through facilitating daily outdoor games and testing if 'this experience transfers to other learning contexts'.

The two above excerpts illustrate a notable observation across the data on casework – a way of structuring collaborative work through explorative diagnostic questions, which signal the limits of teachers' current knowledge and open space for reframing and ultimately a broader scope of possible solutions. Later in the interview, the teachers referred to this as 'important learning about what we don't know'. They added that socioemotional learning is an area 'with a lot of dilemmas' and 'many subjective experiences'. They emphasised that casework involves much learning because 'it builds a collective knowledge base of cases'. Moreover, discursive questions oriented the teachers towards the solutions with a potential impact within their competence and resources. They shared that casework 'makes [them] feel vulnerable and very responsible', noting that 'responsible' to them was a feeling of 'having to and being able to make a difference'. Hence, the data from casework meetings provides multiple examples of explorative problem framing

formulated by the teachers and stemming 'from within' the local professional practice. At the same time, opportunities for professional development in this collaborative context may be, in some respects, limited because diagnostic frames remain specific to cases with personal experiences being almost an exclusive knowledge reference in discussions.

Discussion

This article shows how some of the common contexts for teacher collaborative work are structured in terms of who and in which ways frames the problems of practice. The analysis indicates that while it mattered whether the frames originated from within or from above the specific professional setting, the type of questions framing collaborative work played at least an equally significant role in shaping opportunities for explicit and implicit professional development. In what follows, the findings are first summarised and then discussed in terms of opportunities and limitations that framing questions carry for explicit and implicit professional development. To this end, the three collaborative contexts provide an interesting variation.

The first context intended for school improvement was structured mainly as teambuilding and policy briefing with pre-set diagnostic frames. Whereas teachers' work was often framed by didactic rather than discursive questions, teachers sometimes themselves re-framed externally formulated explorative questions into more specific 'what works' questions. Moreover, discursive questions posed by the teachers in connection to the issues taken up at these meetings were rarely picked up for deeper exploration in structured collaborative work. This happened, for example, with a discussion regarding underpinning pedagogy in digital solutions, which got sidelined by the brainstorming of activities and never reached a wider plenary. Overall, the data suggests that this collaborative context positioned teachers to a greater extent as implementers of external ideas and bystanders in relation to more principle issues of school improvement.

The second context intended explicitly for professional development reveals a similar pattern, in which the question of 'work works', sometimes formulated from-above and sometimes by the teachers themselves, acted as a primary frame. It focused the attention on brainstorming activities, which left the process of diagnostic framing largely under-articulated and peripheral. In part, these findings resonate with the existing research in highlighting the focus on prognostic framing as, on the one hand, productive, relevant and inspirational but, on the other hand, lacking a conceptual perspective (Earl and Timperley 2009). Moreover, sharing hands-on experience and activities that 'did not work' to some extent helped to 'de-privatise' teaching practice (Horn and Little 2010). However, de-privatising here did not extend to discussing possible tensions in the underpinning perspectives on teaching and learning but remained caught up in 'activity traps', where ideas were built on one another rather than critically deliberated as alternatives (Appleton 2002, Markauskaite and Goodyear 2014). In this, the analysis concurs with the existing research in noting that the focus on 'what works' have limitations for pedagogical enquiry and experimentation because the choices are likely made in favour of more predictable and familiar solutions (Atkinson 2000, Biesta 2015b). In sum, the findings suggest that this collaborative context provided many opportunities for professional development as a cumulative process of extending prognostic frames but few opportunities to problematise existing practices through articulating and negotiating diagnostic frames.

In contrast, routine work on student cases supplied multiple examples of from-within diagnostic framing. This was achieved by structuring collaborative work through a chain of explorative framing questions. Rather than shifting the focus to solutions ('what works best?', 'what is the shortest way to get there?), those questions "complicated" cases and signalled the limits of teachers' knowledge, encouraging them to look beyond the familiar ways. As the teachers reflected, collaborative diagnostic framing created a stronger sense of responsibility as they tested different frames, within which their professional actions could make a difference. At the same time, casework relied almost exclusively on teachers' experience and contextual information as knowledge sources. In addition, developed diagnostic frames were tightly linked to specific cases

and rarely left team meetings to become a subject for more conceptually informed discussions in the contexts intended explicitly for professional development. This observation may illustrate the fragmented nature of teacher professional knowledge and its heavy reliance on personal experience (Lahn 2012, Markauskaite and Goodyear 2014, Mausethagen *et al.* 2017). In this regard, student casework can be seen as having considerable untapped opportunities as a context for implicit professional development underpinned by pedagogical enquiry, experimentation and reflection.

Across the three collaborative contexts, the analysis emphasises the role of framing questions. In particular, framing questions substantially differed in relation to the scope of problems addressed. More zoomed-in, case-specific collaborative work was framed with discursive, problematising questions while more zoomed-out, principle issues of school improvement were framed through didactic and efficiency-focused questions. Whereas the 'what works' frame was often suggested by the school administration, it was also a common from-within frame evoked by the teachers, particularly in the contexts explicitly intended for professional development. One possible way to explain why it was so is to look at the structural relationship between the teachers as a professional group and the state. The literature notes that teachers' space for professional autonomy has been historically bound to the choice of classroom methods whereas more fundamental issues of education were considered the domain of the state (Vanderstraeten 2007, Hopmann 2015). This analysis suggests that distancing from the more fundamental educational concerns and pedagogical rationales is limiting in terms of opportunities for explicit and implicit professional development.

However, rather than merely pointing to the areas where the teachers lacked autonomy, the analysis suggests that collaborative work related to the issues of school improvement and explicit professional development may benefit from being structured through more discursive and problematising framing questions. This is important in at least two respects. First, it is because teachers' professional problems are increasingly broader and deeper than those related to individual student cases and a choice of relevant classroom activities (Hopmann 2015, Biesta 2015b). Even in casework, the teachers dealt not just with student problems but also with student potentials and larger pedagogical aspirations. Moreover, problems in education do not exist as objective facts of nature but are value-laden, politically charged and socially contested (Coburn 2006). And so are different ways of framing these problems, including the questions that routinely structure teacher collaborative work. This may imply that teachers' work requires a much wider scope of diagnostic frames and perhaps a different type of questions to frame collaborative work as well as better availability of conceptual resources to support the framing process. Second, as the data suggests, framing questions are linked to teachers' sense of professional agency and responsibility. Specifically, structuring collaborative work through discursive, problematising questions not only stimulated novel and alternative perspectives but also shifted the focus towards pedagogical strategies, in which teachers feel that they make a greater difference. This sense of commitment and personal investment was, however, much more evident in relation to student socio-emotional development than more academic aspects of pedagogical work or school development.

This takes the discussion to the more practical takeaways. Specifically, to what kind of from-above support, structures and resources bring about opportunities for professional development as a collaborative process stemming from within the local professional practice. The analysis suggests a need for more explorative, teacher-led collaborative work that goes beyond student casework and teaching methods and involves diagnostic framing related to more principle issues of professional practice. For instance, while it does not follow that extending collaborative contexts will necessarily broaden the scope of professional problems, collaborative work may benefit from more content-focused, explorative facilitation within the already existing contexts. As some studies suggest, such facilitation or conversation protocols can work towards breaking the persistence of 'activity traps' and encourage a more critical and more conceptually-oriented stance (Andrews-Larson *et al.* 2017). In this regard, it is important to further empirically examine collaborative contexts, in which

teachers engage with a broader scope of professional problems than those related to classroom practice and student cases.

Conclusion

Over the last decade, extending contexts for teacher collaborative work has been a popular policy idea, based on a firm belief that it brings about opportunities for both implicit and explicit professional development. This study suggests that such confidence may be of little avail if explorative problem framing remains primarily limited to work with student cases while school improvement and explicit forms of professional development are framed increasingly through the 'what works' question and policy alignment. The analysis particularly stresses the role of framing questions in structuring teacher collaborative contexts.

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Teachers' Collaborative Work at the Boundaries of Professional Responsibility for Student Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

Wellbeing is a current theme in educational policy. However, responsibility for ensuring student wellbeing is an underexplored aspect of teacher professionalism. Although the scope and boundaries of those responsibilities are becoming to a greater extent defined externally, this does not make teachers' work more straightforward. This article examines how teachers handle ambiguity and tensions in order to find practical solutions in routine work with issues of student wellbeing. Extended observations of collaborative work in a Norwegian primary school and interviews with teachers form the dataset. The analysis centres on different patterns of handling ambiguity and tensions in everyday work. The conclusions highlight the significance of workplace collaborative contexts oriented toward making the complexity and underlying normative tensions of wellbeing work more visible and approachable.

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Introduction

Caring for students beyond their academic performance has always been a critical part of teacher professionalism, attracting people to the profession and contributing significantly to professional commitment and self-fulfilment (Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991; Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1996). This work, however, had long remained on the margins of policy and the concept of student wellbeing only recently entered policy documents not merely as a condition for better academic outcomes, but as an outcome of education itself (OECD, 2017). In many countries, the curriculum has become more elaborate in describing non-academic aspects of schooling and more instruments of development and accountability are being installed, such as school climate surveys or antibullying campaigns. Thus, the scope and boundaries of teachers' professional responsibilities for student wellbeing are no longer defined situationally and intuitively by individual teachers and schools (Coleman, 2009; Graham et al., 2011; Spratt, 2017).

This article explores teacher collaborative work on issues of student wellbeing in the Norwegian context. In Norway, students are entitled by law to "a safe and good school environment that promotes health, wellbeing, and learning" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017a). The curriculum outlines teachers' responsibilities regarding such dimensions of wellbeing as mental health, socioemotional welfare, coping skills, inclusion, agency, peer relationships, and experience of meaning and joy. This caring aspect of professional work, however, has become more regulated in the recent years. In particular, the law requires schools to take measures on wellbeing

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concerns within set deadlines, document casework, and justify decisions to other actors and families (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017b). Those developments reflect a broader trend toward better transparency and accountability of teachers' work, often achieved through external oversight and standardisation of professional practices (Cohen et al., 2017; Mausethagen & Smeby, 2016).

Yet, wellbeing is a contested, "catch-all" concept covering a wide range of complex, interrelated issues at individual and group levels (Coleman, 2009; Dodge et al., 2012). It can refer to subjective experiences of happiness, meaning, empowerment, and self-actualisation, but also to objective indicators, such as socioeconomic status, education, health, and social networks (Fisher, 2019). Moreover, growing diversity brings along competing perspectives on wellbeing and demands sensitivity to particular social and cultural contexts in professional work (Spratt, 2017). At the school level, wellbeing work involves cooperation with increasingly more professional groups including counsellors, social workers, and nurses, which come with their own agendas, perspectives on wellbeing, and professional languages (Borg & Pålshaugen, 2019; Guvå & Hylander, 2012; Isaksson & Larsson, 2017).

Therefore, although the scope and boundaries of teachers' responsibilities are becoming to a greater extent defined and regulated externally, this does not make wellbeing work more straightforward and professional boundaries necessarily clearer. Rather, the existing research claims that teachers' work at such multiple, high-stakes boundaries is filled with ambiguity and tension. Some authors associate it with high external expectations and tighter regulation of professional work (Carlbaum, 2016; Dahl, 2017; Dodge et al., 2012). Others point to the central role of teachers' tacit and often conflicting assumptions regarding students' socioemotional needs (Biesta et al., 2015; Graham et al., 2011; Rothì et al., 2008). Altogether, previous research suggests that the scope and boundaries of teachers' professional responsibility for student wellbeing require continuous negotiation from within the local professional context, by teachers themselves and not merely in terms of methods—in terms of what needs to be done—but also in terms of defining problems at hand. From a practical standpoint, understanding how teachers do so is important for supporting the development of teacher professionalism from within schools and the profession (Evetts, 2003).

Against this backdrop, the article pursues the following research question: How do teachers handle ambiguity and tensions in work at the boundaries of professional responsibility for student wellbeing? The analysis draws on observations of weekly grade-level team meetings collected over one school year in a Norwegian primary school and in-depth interviews with the teachers. Team meetings were a central organisational routine for wellbeing work, particularly for student cases requiring communication and cooperation with families and external actors. The choice of a school in a high-minority neighbourhood provided a complex perspective on issues related to cultural, socioeconomic, linguistic, and religious diversity. Furthermore, choosing observations as primary data was important for revealing how ambiguity and tensions involved in work at the boundaries were handled situationally, in direct response to problems of practice, rather than in hypothetical terms. Extended observations also made it possible to see teachers' work in a long-term perspective within different structural contexts.

The article is organised in the following way. First, I review some important themes in the existing research on teachers' work with issues of student wellbeing. I then introduce the analytical perspective on professional responsibility. The methodological approach and the findings are presented thereafter. The analysis concentrates on the patterns of handling ambiguity and tensions in wellbeing work. The findings are, thereafter, placed within the larger discussion regarding teacher professional responsibility and teacher professionalism more generally.

Previous Research

The relational and caring aspects of teachers' work are intensely emotional (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1996). Caring for student wellbeing is an important source for professional commitment and self-fulfilment but it is also a source of frustration and vulnerability (Isenbarger & Zembylas,

2006; Kelchtermans, 1996). We know that the more important teachers regard the demands of the caring aspect of their profession, the higher is stress, uncertainty and a sense of vulnerability in striving to meet those demands (Ekornes, 2017; Graham et al., 2011; Kidger et al., 2010; Rothì et al., 2008). Some studies suggest that teachers in high-minority urban schools experience a particularly devastating sense of uncertainty regarding the limits of their professional responsibilities (Elstad, 2009; Gaikhorst et al., 2017; Kelchtermans et al., 2009; Mintrop & Charles, 2017). Mintrop and Charles (2017), for example, highlight the significance of collaborative work for professional confidence in such contexts.

Most commonly, however, professional uncertainty and vulnerability are related to increased external control. For instance, Carlbaum (2016) shows how a growing use of parent complaint systems leads to more individual problem-solving strategies with reference to law and, thus, more risk-averse, contractual relationships at the home-school boundary. Similarly, a study by Dahl (2017) indicates that increasing accountability pressures can make teachers act in stricter compliance with bureaucratic regulations rather than in the spirit of the social mandate. Moreover, some studies find that the emphasis on standardised learning outcomes deepen the confusion in how teachers perceive their responsibilities for student wellbeing and narrow the attention to concerns directly linked to achievement (Adelman & Taylor, 1999; Rothì et al., 2008; Samnøy et al., 2020). For instance, Rothì et al. (2008) illustrate how a fear to lose control in the classroom and fail to produce better results makes teachers more included to interpret students' problems as behavioural and, thus, apply disciplinary measures rather than consider classroom climate as a more complex wellbeing issue.

Moreover, tensions often arise in finding common language and methods at professional boundaries, for example, with special needs teachers, social workers, or nurses (Borg & Pålshaugen, 2019; Guvå & Hylander, 2012; Isaksson & Larsson, 2017). An example is a tension between increasingly psychologised, as opposed to pedagogical, discourses used to frame wellbeing issues. Spratt (2017) points out that prevailing discourse of illness, difficulties, and deficiencies tend to shift teachers' role to the background and may narrow wellbeing work in school settings. Another boundary, at which teachers' role is challenged, is with families. The research indicates that teachers experience significant stress when communicating wellbeing concerns to parents, which has been in some contexts associated with different cultural perspectives on parenting and schooling, while in others—with high expectations coming from well-educated, wealthy parents (Bæck, 2010; Gaikhorst et al., 2017; Piot et al., 2010).

So, we know that, on the one hand, narrowing of teacher responsibilities and more risk-averse professional work can be related to increasing external involvement and control. On the other hand, existing research suggests that a narrower understanding of wellbeing, reduced to what is easily observable in student behaviour or to what is familiar to teachers from their own experience, can follow from a lack of specialised knowledge required, for example, to spot early signs of mental health issues or domestic abuse (Rothì et al., 2008; Solberg et al., 2020). Not least, teachers personal values, beliefs, and attitudes towards students' social and emotional needs play a critical role in what sort of wellbeing issues are noticed and prioritised (Biesta et al., 2015; Graham et al., 2011).

Altogether, the existing literature points out that tensions and ambiguity in work with student wellbeing come both externally and internally. However, while much of earlier research focus on teachers' perceptions regarding their responsibilities for student wellbeing, how teachers *handle* ambiguity and tensions at the boundaries of such responsibility in situ has been explored to a limited extent. This study addresses this question by looking at teachers' day-to-day collaborative work on student cases and their reflections on it. The article offers a situated perspective on student wellbeing as it is explicitly or implicitly taken by teachers in specific cases. In broader terms, it discusses teacher professionalism, in contexts where external regulation is growing while at the same time, there is an emphasised need for situated, context-specific professional judgement.

Analytical Perspective

The analytical perspective in this article assumes that the scope and boundaries of professional responsibilities are being continuously defined both externally and internally—by policy, the national curriculum, ethical standards, broader social norms, organisational culture, other professional groups, as well as by teachers themselves, not least situationally in a direct response to emerging problems of practice (Evetts, 2003). Moreover, teacher professional work presupposes normative tensions and ambiguity, which have to be negotiated in everyday practice (Biesta, 2015; Green, 1983; Mausethagen et al., 2021). Such a "processual" perspective on professional responsibility—and professionalism more generally—requires attention to micro-processes of boundary work, through which ambiguity and tensions are handled (Langley et al., 2019; Little, 2002).

This view on professional responsibility presupposes that teachers do not merely choose methods to address students' social and emotional needs, but to a great extent define those needs (Biesta, 2015). Put differently, teachers' responsibility involves "a legal, moral, and intellectual mandate" to define not only the terms of practice in specific instances but the very terms in which it is appropriate to think about complex social phenomena, such as wellbeing (Hughes, 1981). Thus, the boundaries of professional responsibility depend on how teachers handle ambiguity and tensions associated with having to interpret the terms and norms of wellbeing in a particular context. Such interpretation may, for example, involve balancing out student subjective experiences and more objective conditions of wellbeing (Fisher, 2019).

The concept of collaborative boundary work offers a useful supplementary perspective to empirically explore how the boundaries of responsibility are being negotiated by teachers in situ. It emphasises processes "through which groups, occupations, and organizations work *at* boundaries to develop and sustain patterns of collaboration and coordination in settings where groups cannot achieve collective goals alone" (Langley et al., 2019). This stands in contrast to competitive practices aimed at mobilising boundaries to sustain legitimacy and privilege among professions and organisations and configurational practices aimed at manipulating boundary landscapes from a policy and leadership perspective (Gieryn, 1983; Liljegren, 2012). In other words, this article is concerned with how teachers handle ambiguity and tensions in work where the boundaries of professional responsibility cannot be clearly and universally defined, rather than, for example, how jurisdictional boundaries are disputed with other professional groups. In work at boundaries, the role of boundary spanners is significant.

Boundary spanners are people and objects that are formally or informally positioned to facilitate cooperation and coordination at the boundaries and hold some authority and power as guides, mediators, translators or brokers (Bowker & Star, 1999; Penuel et al., 2013). In school settings, human boundary spanners are, for example, counsellors or administrators with a good overview of the boundary landscape—involved actors and their relationships, available resources, relevant policy, and knowledge. Boundary objects can be reports, schemes, and templates that facilitate, formalise, and expedite coordination with external actors.

Empirical Setting and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative approach. A mid-size public primary school (550 students) located in an urban high-minority neighbourhood in the Eastern part of Norway was selected using purposeful sampling as an information-rich site for observing teacher collaboration. The research was undertaken with a 6th-grade teacher team consisting of six teachers collectively responsible for 75 students. They had worked together for several years and had a relatively balanced profile in terms of experience (3 years +), age (from 26 to 60) and gender (one male and five female teachers). The study covers a full school year (2016–2017) and involves interviews with the teachers (two group interviews, 4 hr), 40 hr of observations (19 meetings), and go-along interviews

conducted right after meetings. Agenda for meetings was shaped by emerging concerns regarding student wellbeing, rather than by response to policy directives. The school counsellor was often present at meetings and the teachers relied on her involvement and advice regarding cooperation with families, special needs teachers, and external services.

Non-participant observations were undertaken evenly throughout the year and in-depth group interviews were conducted in the middle and the end of the year. The interviews were conversational and approximated naturally occurring data, which aimed to give participants space and prompts for approving, resisting, and explaining viewpoints (Saldana, 2012). Interviews were taped, transcribed, and relevant extracts were translated into English. Observations rely on fieldnotes due to the sensitivity of information shared in the meetings and limitations placed by the school administration on audio recording. There are also no references to specific teachers to protect anonymity and the data was further anonymised by removing details that could identify the school or students. However, all quotes in the interview extracts and observational accounts are teachers' member-checked unabridged speech. Iterative communication between the data sources was possible because the interviews were designed to follow up on specific instances of practice. From here, more general perspectives on student wellbeing and teacher professional responsibilities were elicited. Such triangulation of data can be seen as strengthening trustworthiness of findings and conclusions (Jerolmack & Khan, 2014; Merriam, 1998).

The analysis followed a process of identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning guided by the research question and the analytical perspective (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The dataset included detailed fieldnotes with 2–5 cases per meeting and interview transcripts. On the first step, I compressed the data by making descriptive annotations to cases, some stretching over several meetings, and mapped them thematically with relevant interview excerpts. In this pool of cases, I highlighted instances of ambiguity and tensions expressed through teachers' doubt, confusion, uncertainty, or frustration in trying to define the scope of their responsibilities in specific cases. I coded also for the kind of boundaries—or a constellation of boundaries—at play, such as with families, social services, school administration, etc. I noticed at this point that practically all cases evidenced significant ambiguity and tensions, as opposed to being examples of smoothly following guidelines and routines. However, ways of handling ambiguity and tensions differed.

I then looked closely within and across cases to identify patterns. In this, my thinking was supported by the existing research on student wellbeing and more general literature on dilemmas in teachers' work (Ehrich et al., 2011; Green, 1983; Mausethagen et al., 2021). Data triangulation helped to see different layers of ambiguity and tensions within and across cases. Specifically, the interview data largely aligned with the earlier studies and indicated ambiguity related to increasing external regulation and diversity of student backgrounds. At the same time, the observations pointed to tensions associated with being squeezed between competing social values, professional commitments, and different perspectives on wellbeing. The next step was guided by the concept of boundary work. I looked for patterns of handling tensions and ambiguity, that is, particular moves in collaborative work that helped the teachers transition from defining what problem they are dealing with to a practical solution. Those patterns differed considerably in the degree of explicitness regarding perspectives on wellbeing at play.

The study assumed ethical considerations in the conduct and the analysis of data, including reflexivity towards fieldwork practice and relations (Hammersley, 2006). To ensure the validity, the findings and preliminary interpretations were discussed with other researchers as a way for communicative validity and, at an early stage, with the teachers as a way for respondent validation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). The analysis offers theoretical interpretations and analytical generalisations, which means that external validity might be limited to teachers working in similar structural, social and organisational contexts. The research adheres to the guidelines for the ethical conduct of the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics.

Findings

This section presents an account of teachers' collaborative work on student cases. It takes departure in specific cases from the observations but also uses the interview excerpts to put forward teachers' voices. The interview and observational data revealed somewhat different layers of ambiguity and tensions. In the interviews, the teachers primarily associated doubt, stress, and frustration in defining the boundaries of their professional responsibility with external factors, such as diversity and complexity of student backgrounds, increasing knowledge demands about mental health and domestic abuse, documentation requirements, and power struggles with parents. However, how the boundaries were defined within a hectic environment of meetings held after a whole day of teaching depended much on how the teachers handled ambiguity and tensions in order to find practical solutions. They did so in three ways (1) by steering away from ambiguity and tensions toward more stable boundaries of responsibility (2) by downplaying ambiguity and tensions in communication at the boundaries, and (3) by explicating tensions and ambiguity.

Steering Away from Ambiguity and Tensions

Steering away from ambiguity and tensions, particularly associated with student relationships and cultural differences in parenting practices, was a sporadically used way of working at the boundary. It sometimes implied reframing a potentially complex wellbeing problem into an issue of learning difficulties so that a practical solution could be found and put forward. In other cases, the teachers evoked more formal boundaries to set clearer limits to professional responsibility. One such example comes from a meeting in August.

The meeting started with one of the headteachers sharing her frustration with parents' expectations. She had been earlier informed about an episode in the social media, which some parents considered bullying. It happened during summer holidays and involved students from her class. They expected the headteacher to intervene and the teacher's name was tagged in the social media. The episode escalated to the level of parents and the headteacher was called to get involved. At the meeting, the other teachers validated her frustration for being dragged into student conflicts "off the clock". They agreed that mediating student relationships on social media in summer is beyond their responsibility. This move may be interpreted as a way to steer away from ambiguity regarding *whose* responsibility mediating student behaviour and relationships are by setting more formal boundaries. In a go-along interview, the teachers nuanced their position by adding that they felt that the word bullying was often used by parents "manipulatively" "to shake off their share of responsibility". This follow-up comment suggests a power struggle at the home-school boundary, in which defining the terms of wellbeing in specific cases is tightly linked to negotiating whom responsibility for finding a solution is assigned to and where the limits of professional responsibility are drawn.

A rather different way of steering away from ambiguity and tensions had to do with a need to find solutions for complex wellbeing issues directly correlating with academic performance. The following extract from a meeting in December illustrates how the teachers strived to assume responsibility and find a workable solution. They did so, however, by gradually shifting to more stable boundaries of professional responsibility for academic performance.

In the following excerpt from an interview, the teachers supply background to a student case discussed earlier at the meeting. The case is about a boy, whom the teachers observed to be lonely, absent-minded, and exhausted in the past months. The case was taken up repeatedly that year, and the teachers' reflections on it provide an important insight into the normative tensions underpinning professional responsibilities for student wellbeing.

Teacher 2: We have children from very different homes. Many do not get any support with homework at home. Some go to a religious after-school, they have no free time, they are at this school 24 hours per week, in addition to regular school.

Teacher 6: We shouldn't go into others' private lives, we cannot. But we must just emphasise that this is important …
Teacher 2: For me, this is tempting to say that school should come before religion, that it is a priority. But this is wrong to say so. I do not dare say this!
Altogether: No, you cannot!
Teacher 2: But what I mean is that when you move to Norway, you should much effort at school to manage in the society later.
Teacher 3: They lose in the end, do not cope with the curriculum. In addition to all they learn at school, even more must be done at home.
Teacher 5: We only want best for them, so I think they need time for homework like all others. There are more issues. They become exhausted because of no free time. And children have the right to play! They have the right to enjoy childhood! [pause]
Teacher 2. Well … I do not think much about cultural differences, I think they are … weak. It has nothing to do with culture. This is just they have another background. We do not notice anything about religion …
Teachers: No!
Teacher 6: Children are just children. But there are … challenges, that we see a lot.

The excerpt shows the teachers getting squeezed in a tension between social values and norms and professional commitments. They bring up respect for religious views and practices of the family, which is reflective of the broader social values of tolerance, inclusion, and multiculturalism. They emphasise, however, a right to enjoy childhood, play, and get support at home. Across the observational data, teachers' perspectives on diversity, childhood, and schooling often collided in a similar way, making it difficult to explicate the values and rationales behind problem-solving. In this extract, it is also interesting how the teachers initially come close to explicating a perceived tension point ("I do not dare say this"), but then steer away from it toward clearer boundaries of responsibility for academic performance ("I rather think that they are weak"). A quote below from the same interview expands on how the teachers looped back weak academic achievement to student wellbeing.

> We can say that in a few years, many of them will drop out of high school, and this will be because they did not have enough foundation to continue studies. They will be in a much weaker position than others to get a job. And then? Unemployed. This is something we want to see and correct.

What comes forward in this excerpt is how teachers' situational perspective on wellbeing fluctuated from being framed in terms of rights to enjoy childhood to prospects of future employability and social integration. Such reframing moved the teachers toward more stable boundaries of responsibility for academic performance and opened up ways to be more proactive. It did, however, potentially narrowed the scope of possible solutions to remedial measures.

Downplaying Ambiguity and Tensions

Downplaying tensions at the home-school boundary was another common pattern in case work. This pattern was particularly evident in the meetings facilitated by the school counsellor, who helped to review student cases and wellbeing issues in the grade more generally. Her role can be seen as a boundary spanner. She was not merely working at the boundary with families, external professionals, and the school, but was actively setting the culture and rules for such work. Her way of spanning the boundaries involved buffering, mediating, networking, and preparing teachers for sensitive conversations with parents or social services. In this, the counsellor was particularly focused on downplaying tensions that can potentially stall cooperation at the boundary and delay help.

One example is a case of a boy, whose father required him to bring a detailed daily report accounting for what he had done at school and how he had behaved. The teachers explained that the boy looked scared and seemed to hate school because of the pressure at home. They expressed a strong opinion of the father's parenting practices and the impact on the boy's wellbeing.

They also, however, saw the case as a sensitive issue of sociocultural differences. To their understanding, the parents considered such control as necessary for ensuring better academic performance and, consequently, future wellbeing interpreted in terms of being able to find a well-paid, high-status job. The tension between different perspectives on wellbeing—as in the lived moment and in the desired future—prompted the counsellor to re-direct the meeting with the following question: "What is it that is happening with the boy, how is he feeling?" He looks miserable and scared, the teachers answered. The counsellor emphasised the student's subjective experience of wellbeing and moved to solutions: "What can we do for him now?" The teachers suggested that they should act indirectly and scaffold his relationships with peers by encouraging him to join a sports team and make extra effort to support him in the aspects of learning he enjoys.

Spanning the boundary here can be seen as delicate downplaying of tensions between how wellbeing was defined by the teachers and the family. This case makes also visible how context-specific the terms of wellbeing are in professional practice, if students' subjective experiences of joy and meaning are emphasised, and how much practical solutions depend on those underlying values. A similar way of spanning the boundaries involved equipping the teachers with concrete tools to downplay tensions with parents to focus the attention of student experiences, rather than on differences in interpreting norms of student wellbeing. For instance, the counsellor regularly insisted on particular communicative strategies at the boundary, such as "I-statements" ("I observe that your child is often feeling lonely"). An example is a case of a girl, who according to the teachers, "watched too much Polish TV at home". The teachers were, on the one hand, concerned that watching too much TV in a family language hinders her opportunities for learning and socialising in Norwegian. However, they also expressed concerns regarding giving parents patronising advice about watching TV. In a go-along interview, they explained ambiguity by actually "seeing some value in the exposure to the family language". The counsellor's advice, in this case, was to frame communication with the parents in terms of finding solutions for socialising ("We observe that your daughter is seeking friendships at school"), rather than emphasising insufficient Norwegian skills. In most observed meetings, it was such precise but careful language that the counsellor emphasised as central to boundary work.

Explicating Ambiguity and Tensions

Another case involving language difficulties and wellbeing issues reveals a subtle but notable difference in how the teachers handled ambiguity and tensions, namely, by way of making them more visible. The case comes from a routine grade-level weekly meeting. It concerned a boy, who had been recently transferred from a refugee camp and spoke very little Norwegian. He lagged behind academically and developed no friendships at school. The teachers expressed concerns for his wellbeing in terms of social integration and emphasised his low chances for further education and employability. They had already started developing a plan for more one-to-one language tutoring, when one of the teachers offered a change of perspective. She suggested that the boy may rather benefit from "more experiences of success" and for that, they could use his skills in English and "temporarily adapt some of the classes for [the use of] English". That could help him—and his family—feel more included, she emphasised.

What the teacher did can be interpreted as a move of explicating and problematising an often taken-for-granted perspective on wellbeing in a high-minority setting, which links wellbeing tightly to future employability and focuses the attention firmly on academic performance. The teacher explicitly contrasted it with a perspective of schooling as a place, where children are given chances to experience success and joy in the moment. It was, in other words, a deliberate choice to situationally prioritise one perspective on wellbeing over another in order to find a context-sensitive solution, rather than focus merely on learning difficulties.

Interestingly, explicating different perspectives on student wellbeing and underlying values was also evident in how the teachers worked and reflected on the routine of writing case reports. Reports

were used as a boundary spanner to document and communicate information across professional boundaries to external specialists and social services. Here is how the counsellor described this relatively new routine.

> Teachers have little experience in writing down their observations and rationales. They often ask for help from people who have knowledge in particular fields, like special needs pedagogy. We also developed templates and try to make sure all our planned measures are actually implementable. So that teachers are able to do their work.

It is notable that while the counsellor is firmly focused on workable solutions, explicating rationales stands central in her explanation. More informal observations in the teacher lounge suggest that the teachers, often afraid of misinterpreting or being misunderstood, put much thought and effort into formulating those rationales. The following excerpt from the interview with the teachers unpacks some of the reasons.

Teacher 5: This is part of the job. If you have a suspicion, there are considerable consequences. Those situations are painful. They actually hurt.
Teacher 4: I have been in situations, when parents understood me in a completely different way than intended, and this became an issue. You can quickly be called to the principal's office if parents feel that what you said or wrote is "not ok". And then you have to lay low …
Teacher 1: Always lay low.
Teacher 4: Always just accept. You should not say "No, this is not what I meant, you are wrong". You must lay low.

On the one hand, the excerpt shows teachers' vulnerability, which such boundary spanners as case reports may reinforce as they put into words often intuitively made observations and conclusions based on partial information. However, while the teachers sometimes spoke about reports as a bureaucratic routine that "steals valuable time from actual wellbeing work", they also saw it as a professional routine. In particular, the observations indicate that when informally consulting each other on writing reports, the teachers felt pushed to explicate their rationales and situated perspective on student wellbeing in a way that goes beyond the needs of academic performance. A distinct reference in such reports, according to the counsellor, was children's rights—a right to play, enjoy free time, peaceful environment at home, opportunities to develop friendships. In many ways, being more explicit about underlying, possibly conflicting values helped the teachers to be more transparent and confident in coordinating positions and efforts at the boundaries—among the teachers as well as with families, counselling services, and other actors.

Discussion

This article investigates how teachers handle ambiguity and tensions involved in everyday work on issues of student wellbeing. Three patterns of collaborative boundary work came forward in the analysis: steering toward more stable boundaries of responsibility, downplaying ambiguity and tensions, and explicating them. Rather than demarcate the lines of responsibility, those moves helped the teachers find practical solutions at the boundary with families and other actors (Langley et al., 2019).

This study looked at teachers' work with diverse wellbeing issues and in a hectic environment of afternoon meetings held after a whole day of teaching. In such an environment, strategies of steering away from or downplaying tensions were largely unavoidable to address as many student cases as possible (Mintrop & Charles, 2017). Thus, the findings to some extent reflect the existing literature in pinpointing the focus on solutions in teacher collaborative work, rather than unpacking problems of practice and making underlying rationales explicit (Lefstein et al., 2019). Moreover, in line with some earlier studies, the teachers in this study pointed to vulnerability and stress associated with external factors, such as accountability and differences in how student wellbeing and teachers' responsibilities were interpreted by families (Carlbaum, 2016; Dahl, 2017; Gaikhorst et al., 2017).

The observation data extends those findings by showing that rather than external factors alone, much of ambiguity and tensions can be related to how teachers themselves made visible and negotiated often competing perspectives on wellbeing at play in specific student cases. They typically did so by considering both students' subjective experiences of feeling unhappy, lonely, or exhausted and more objective indicators of wellbeing such as possibilities for further education and social integration (Fisher, 2019). Subjective and objective indicators, however, were closely interweaved in professional practice and were far from clearly and universally defined. Rather, they reflected value tensions inherent to educational practice and social relations more generally (Biesta, 2015; Green, 1983; Mausethagen et al., 2021).

One example of a normative tension, which the teachers faced in this study, was between the social norms of respect for diversity of religious practices on the one hand, and the values of equal opportunities for education and teachers' own perspectives on children's wellbeing, on the other. Those values were only rarely explicitly discussed as interrelated and potentially competing. Another example of a normative tension, particularly relevant for high-minority contexts, was a perspective on wellbeing as experienced in the moment, including the value of playing, having free time, and enjoying childhood, and a more instrumental perspective related to future employability and social integration. Reflecting the findings of Rothì et al. (2008), this tension often remained implicit, resulting in a reframing of complex wellbeing issues into cases of learning difficulties.

However, the analysis illustrates that when underlying normative tensions were formulated in a more explicit way, complexity of student cases seemed more approachable, and the teachers defined the scope of their professional responsibility more confidently. Among other things, being more explicit gave the teachers more authority and agency in work at the boundaries. It helped to be more divergent in work, where there are no standard or ideal solutions but plenty of risks and uncertainties. As in the case of the student transferred from the refugee camp, it encouraged a new perspective on student wellbeing as empowerment and, thus, a broader scope of possible solutions rather than remedial tutoring. In case reports, the language of children's rights helped to support teachers' observations with value-based argumentation referencing to students' right for play and free time. That said, the role of case reports as a boundary spanner in this study is conflicting. Reflecting the conclusions of Dahl (2017) and Carlbaum (2016), the teachers argued that reporting routines push them to "lay low" and be more risk-averse, for example, by way of reframing wellbeing issues in terms of academic performance.

In the bigger picture, the article contributes to the discussion regarding teacher professionalism. It shows professional work, which is being increasingly regulated and simultaneously, requires a nuanced consideration of multiple perspectives on wellbeing and close attention to student individual needs. In particular, the analysis suggests that teacher professionalism has much to do with being able to see wellbeing work—and professional practice more generally—as filled with normative tensions and dilemmas that are continuously negotiated in context (Biesta, 2015; Green, 1983; Mausethagen et al., 2021). For that, the development of professional discourse that helps to unpack and discuss normative tensions and ambiguity stands central (Lefstein et al., 2019; Little & Horn, 2007).

For further research, it is important to examine how the way teacher collaborative work is structured helps to make those underlying tensions and ambiguity in wellbeing work more transparent. At the same time, there is a need to examine how teachers make use of local knowledge about student wellbeing, both gathered through experience and by way of informally observing and talking to students, as well as with help of externally developed tools and resources. A practical implication of the study is the significance of workplace collaboration that gives space and tools to make normative ambiguity and tensions arising from day-to-day wellbeing work more transparent and, thus, more approachable. It may help to develop teacher professionalism that goes beyond accumulating practical experience of individual problem-solving but does not reduce professionalism to implementation of the curriculum and guidelines. Moreover, the focus on handling normative ambiguity,

rather than on merely linking practice to the ideals of the national curriculum, can make more visible—to teachers themselves and other actors at the boundaries—the complexity of professional work conducted at vague but high-stakes boundaries of responsibility for student wellbeing. This may eventually matter for how teachers experience wellbeing work—as frustrating and stressful or as continuously confirming the significance of their social mandate and, thus, reinforcing a sense of professional commitment and self-fulfilment.

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Teacher agency in collaborative lesson planning: stabilising or transforming professional practice?

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ABSTRACT

The article explores how space for professional agency is structured and used by teachers in collaborative professional development. Taking an ecological perspective on teacher agency and using a case study of with multiple data sets, the analysis identifies two patterns of agentic orientations. The conclusions discuss limitations associated with a primary focus on accumulating past experiences and little engagement with aspirations for the future in contexts for collaborative professional development.

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This article explores how space for teacher agency is structured and used in school-based collaborative professional development (CPD). The concept of agency stands central to the discussion of teacher professionalism (Edwards, 2015; Priestley et al., 2015; Toom, 2019). It can be understood as a socioculturally mediated capacity to exert control over, give direction, and assign meaning to professional practices, work environments, own career, and professional identity. Routines for CPD are advocated as a means for supporting teacher agency as a collective capacity (Andy Hargreaves, 2015; Hermansen, 2017). However, forms and agenda of CPD are often developed not by teachers, but externally—by researchers, consultants, and policy-makers as part of large-scale development projects (Kirsten & Wermke, 2017; Servage, 2009).

On the one hand, externally developed CPD often bring along expectations to align local practices with predetermined objectives and current trends in educational policy, taking form of 'contrived' collaboration (Andrew Hargreaves, 1991; Lindvall & Ryve, 2019). On the other hand, unlike the top-down governance of performativity and accountability, large-scale CPD projects represent a 'softer' form of governance. As such, they may provide teachers broader autonomy by reducing school administrators' involvement and oversight (Kirsten & Wermke, 2017). Moreover, CPD can strengthen links to the global world of ideas and debates in education. Maintaining such links can be seen as characterising professionalism in public occupations (Noordegraaf, 2007). Thus, professional agency can be conceptualised as shaped—and not necessary restricted—by structures and cultures within which teachers work (Mausethagen & Smeby, 2016; Priestley et al.).

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Although research on teacher agency is extensive, studies addressing teacher agency in collaborative contexts, rather than in perceptions of individual teachers, are limited (Cong-Lem, 2021). Reflecting a broader stand of teacher collaboration literature (Horn & Little, 2010; Kelchtermans, 2006), Priestley et al. () note that CPD tend to reinforce cultural norms of conflict avoidance and consensus by placing little focus on interrupting habitual ways of thinking. They argue that teacher agency is limited in CPD contexts, which position teachers as agents of change in a sense of those who actively implement policy (also Lindvall & Ryve, 2019). Similarly, Philpott and Oates (2017) show that little evidence of teacher agency in CPD can be associated with a lack of alternative discourses. A growing literature emphasise the role of conceptually grounded professional discourse and representations of practice in strengthening teachers' collaborative capacity to extend autonomy (Lefstein et al., 2019). One example is a study, in which Babichenko et al. (2021) look at a CPD routine of 'peer consultations'. They find that teachers rarely framed the problems of practice, on which they wanted a consultation, in ways that would position them as those holding responsibility and capacity to act.

The role of structures, routines, and resources for teacher agency is another prominent theme (Cong-Lem, 2021; Lefstein et al., 2019). Insulander et al. (2019), for example, find that opportunities for supporting agency in PD materials were not decisive for the enactment of agency in teacher discussions. Instead, social relationships, including the facilitator role, were more important for how agency was enacted. They also note that teachers were much more eager to critically discuss issues concerning student difficulties than deliberate conceptual perspectives (also Shavard, 2021)

Previous research contributes significantly to refining our understanding of teacher agency as a situated and emergent process. However, few studies use multiple data sets to focus on enactment of teacher agency in collaborative settings. This article extends the existing literature by exploring teacher agency within the structural contexts of a CPD routine. It uses an empirical case of teacher team in a Norwegian elementary school and draws on extended observations, documentary data, and interviews. The focus is on collaborative lesson planning, which has become a widespread form of CPD in many countries (Vangrieken et al., 2017) and an emergent practice for socialising teachers into the profession in Norway (Larssen et al., 2018). At the micro level, it is an interesting setting because the agenda and procedures are supplied as part of large-scale projects and participation is mandated, while at the same time, local flexibility, collaborative enquiry, and teachers' ownership are emphasised as externally set objectives.

At the macro level, the Norwegian context offers insight into the structural conditions for teacher agency, influenced by Scandinavian, Finnish, and Anglo-American exemplars (Mausethagen, 2021). Although the national curriculum in Norway is relatively low-stakes and positions teachers as agentic actors, particularly in a sense of being curriculum co-developers, accountability pressure and external guidance in the form of policy advice, research recommendations, and CPD projects have increased in the last decades (Camphuijsen et al., 2020). Those developments reflect a broader trend of adopting and adapting a rather eclectic mix of ideas about teacher professionalism by educational systems (Wermke & Prøitz, 2021).

The study setting, thus, represents an interplay of developments emerging from above and from within professional contexts, which shape spaces for professional agency. This article examines this interplay with the following question: How is collaborative lesson planning structured as a space for professional agency and how do teachers use this space agentically?

The article proceeds by introducing an analytical perspective and study design. Thereafter, the findings are presented and discussed.

Analytical perspective

The articles combines an ecological view on professional agency as a collaborative capacity (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Priestley et al.,) and Pentland and Feldman's (2005) concept of organisational routines. The focus on routines allows to view CPD as the interplay of an abstract, generalised idea of routines and specific enactments. It helps to explore agency in situated but standard and often taken-for-granted instances of professional practice. It also reflects a perspective on agency as sociocultural mediated (Edwards, 2015; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Hopwood, 2017), rather than residing primarily in individuals (Goller & Harteis, 2017).

At school, organisational routines may include meetings, parent conferences, and CPD. Those routines have ostensive aspects, which structure activities and interactions and remain consistent (Feldman & Pentland, 2003). This involves arrangements (allocated time and space, organisational roles, materials) as well as ideas and principles underpinning what the routine is meant to achieve. While ostensive aspects are necessary for coordinating people and processes and reducing tension in how to handle everyday problems, they are also a source of inflexibility (Spillane, 2012).

Likewise, organisational routines enable and constrain professional work in the performative aspect, in how the routine is performed by particular actors in particular contexts at particular times (Feldman & Pentland, 2003). This assumes some space for interpretation and improvisation to be able to address local needs and aspirations. These interpretations and improvisations can disrupt taken-for-granted ways of thinking and doing or be minor adjustments, but it is in these particular performances that teachers have space for agency in everyday professional practice (Spillane, 2012).

The concept of agency has multiple theoretical and methodological approaches (Damșa et al., 2017). For Priestley et al. (), professional agency is something people do or achieve *by means of* their contexts. Similar to how Feldman and Pentland (2003) view routines, they see agency as an emergent phenomenon, taking place in relation to its structural (relationships, roles, power, trust), cultural (ideas, values, beliefs, discourses), and material (resources, physical environment) contexts as they come together in particular situations. Hence, agency is seen as 'a quality of engagement'—or disengagement—with those contexts.

Specifically, building on the work of Emirbayer and Mische (1998), Priestley et al. () see agency as a configuration of influences from the past (iterative dimension), orientations towards the future (projective dimension) and engagement with the present (practical-evaluative dimension). The iterative dimension refers to '*selective* reactivation … of past patterns of thought and action … thereby giving stability and order to social universes and helping to sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time'

(Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). This locates agency even in seemingly reproductive forms of practice, such as when teachers insist on traditional methods and in doing so, act agentically in upholding stability of practice. The projective dimension denotes 'imaginative generation . . . of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). Finally, the practical-evaluative dimension entails 'practical and normative judgments among possible alternative trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas and ambiguities of presently evolving situations' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). This dimension brings together iterative and projective orientations to make sense of and act in the present.

Methods and empirical setting

The article draws on a case study involving one sixth-grade teacher team. The data was collected from June 2016 to June 2017 in a large urban municipality in Norway. The school was selected as an information-rich site through purposeful sampling. The aim was to find a 'good example' of teacher collaborative work, rather than necessarily an example of distinguished practice (Kelchtermans, 2015; Weddle, 2021).

The team consisted of three headteachers, one subject teacher and one teacher assistant. The teacher ranged in age (24–65), gender (one male teacher), and experience (3–30 years). In 2016–2017, the school participated in two large-scale CPD projects: one focusing on mathematical thinking and one focusing on complex literacy. Both projects were developed externally by researchers and participation was mandated by the municipality as part of local school development framework. These two projects constituted the main context for school-based CPD over the year (see Table 1). The projects offered framework, consultations, and materials, but schools were given significant leeway.

Specifically, the school in this study used an adapted Lesson Study methodology for both projects, involving phases of *planning*, *observing*, and *debriefing lessons*. It was the second year that the school employed collaborative lesson planning as the main form of CPD. In 2016–2017 the teachers conducted four cycles of lesson planning. The school internal documents referred to the national guidelines and stated the following objectives: 1) to extend teachers' knowledge about mathematical thinking and complex literacy and 2) develop a culture for explorative conversations in teacher teams.

Table 1. Data overview.

	Cycle 1 (August–October)	Cycle 2 (November–December)	Cycle 3 (February–March)	Cycle 4 (April–May)
Curricular focus	Mathematicalthinking	Complex literacy	Complex literacy	Mathematical thinking
Data	• Non-participant observations • Introductory seminars • Planning meetings (in teams) • debriefing meetings (in teams) • closing seminars • documents • go-along interviews • in-depth interviews			

The primary data set includes 24 hours of observations, covering four cycles of collaborative lesson planning. The documentary data set includes locally and externally developed documents (online materials, presentation slides, guidelines). Finally, the interview data set involves informal go-along interviews before and after the meetings, a two-hour group interview with the teachers, and an hour-long interview with the department head responsible for organising CPD.

Fieldwork is always selective and underpinned by the researcher's analytical perspective and positioning (Jerolmack & Khan, 2017). Thus, although observations constitute the primary data, such data cannot simply speak for itself. The strategy was, therefore, to nuance the findings and increase transparency by actively using teachers' go-along comments, verified quotes jotted down during observations, and interview data. Such data triangulation can be seen as strengthening trustworthiness of findings and conclusions. It also helps to better adopt the ecological perspective on agency, which presupposes a dual focus on individuals and contexts.

The analysis followed a process of identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning guided by the research question and analytical perspectives (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The raw data included detailed fieldnotes with quotes, excerpts from go-along and in-depth interviews, and documents. Initially, the four cycles were compared with one another; however, it proved more fruitful to rather compare the different phases of a CPD cycle.

At first, ostensive and performative aspects were considered separately. Documents and introductory seminars were examined in term of how 'the abstract idea of the routine' was communicated (Feldman & Pentland, 2003). The focus was particularly on how the space for interpretation and improvisation was laid out, involving what questions, priorities, and tasks were formulated for teacher collaborative work. The interview data were helpful to trace if, how, and why PD materials were adapted at the school level.

Then, the observational data were examined regarding how the space for interpretation and improvisation was used. It involved coding for what subject of interpreting and improvising during the meetings was (e.g. concepts, teaching methods, objectives) and then, to which extent and in which ways planning and debriefing meetings were oriented towards the past, the present, and the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Those codes involved references to teachers' past experiences, emergent circumstances, or aspirations. The data were also analysed in terms of ways in which the teachers related to the ostensive aspects, for example, by carefully following or modifying and bringing new meaning. The findings revealed two patterns of how the interplay of ostensive and performative aspects of collaborative lesson planning mattered for teachers' agentic orientation.

The study follows the national ethical guidelines. Moreover, because case studies are often reported by authors combining the researcher's and facilitator's roles, it is worth noting that this study was conducted by a researcher with no prior connection to the school or CPD projects. To ensure validity, preliminary interpretations were discussed with other researchers and at an early stage, with the teachers as a way of respondent validation. Furthermore, validity implied ensuring that analytical procedures are consistent and made transparent (Jerolmack & Khan, 2017). However, the analysis of small-scale data can only offer analytical, not statistical generalisations (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). The aim is to move from concrete (a case) to abstract (interpretations) and, ultimately, contribute to nuancing the discussion about teacher agency.

Findings

This section presents empirical data illustrating how space for professional agency was structured and used by teachers in collaborative lesson planning. Two patterns emerge in how the ostensive and performative aspects of the routine interplayed. Both the planning and the debriefing phases indicated a strong orientation towards the practical-evaluative dimension of agency. It is notable, however, how differently planning and debriefing unfolded depending on the extent to which iterative and projective dimension of agency played in.

Iterative orientation in the planning phase

Although the two observed CPD projects had different curricular perspectives, the ostensive were rather similar, particularly in the planning phase. There were two ways of communicating what the routine is meant to achieve in terms of curricular objectives and teacher collaborative work: externally designed introductory and closing seminars and documents, such as guidelines for collaborative work and online materials, including video clips and activity packs. Those ostensive scrips were adapted at the school level.

The school organised introductory seminars similarly. Curricular perspectives and principals for teacher collaborative work were read out by the school principal or department head from the project slides. They sometimes went off the slides to add some emphasis on policy objectives and performativity demands. For instance, when introducing mathematical thinking as a curricular perspective in Cycle 1, the school head framed it first as a response to the challenges of the 21st century, as in the slides, also adding a reference to lower than desired performance in international ratings.

In Cycles 2, 3 and 4, the emphasis in the projects materials was also made on 'explorative conversations' as underpinning teacher collaborative work. The materials encouraged to use evidence of student learning and, to quote a video clip used in Cycle 2, 'dare to challenge each other in a safe but productive way'. Another video clip involved a teacher team critically discussing student test results in terms of which tasks seemed challenging for students and why.

An important document communicating the ostensive aspects of the routine were guidelines for collaborative work. While introductory and closing seminars relied almost entirely on externally developed materials, the guidelines for planning and debriefing were produced locally, by the school administration. As the department head explained in the interview, '*the guidelines were made light and short to provide more freedom for teachers to do what they do best*'. The guidelines asked to: '*select a learning objective and develop a lesson plan, observe the lesson, and do debriefing*'. The guidelines left it up to the teachers to decide on a specific learning objective, content theme, and methods. The teachers also facilitated all planning and debriefing meetings themselves.

Going along the guidelines, the teachers typically started planning with formulating a learning objective. This was performed as a process of transforming a suggested curricular perspective to a concrete teaching objective. It involved first agreeing on subject content (negative numbers in Cycle 1, fractions in Cycle 4, religious diversity in Cycles 2) or an output (an e-book in Cycles 3). In a go-along interview in Cycle 2, the teachers explained the rationales as practical: '*We choose objectives according to the teaching plan*'. In Cycle 4,

they also indicated *'a search for something new'* as a rationale for choosing e-books as an output. Then, the teachers formulated the objective. For example, 'to understand and be able to use negative numbers' in Cycle 1 and 'to produce an e-book about common roots in the Abrahamic religions' in Cycle 4. In the interview, they explained that formulating objectives in CPD reflected '*how they usually do the planning but in slow-motion*'. They also emphasised '*the wealth of combined experience*' as important for collaborative planning.

The interplay of ostensive and performative aspects is interesting here. On the one hand, the ostensive aspects are broad and offer space for interpreting and improvising with curricular perspectives. At the same time, the guidelines for collaborative work provide logistical steps rather than interrupt taken-for-granted ways of thinking about mathematics or literacy. This makes it possible to perform the routine by slow-motioning familiar ways of planning and building on collective experiences. These data, therefore, are suggestive of a more iterative dimension of agency (e.g. 'how it is usually done', 'with a wealth of combined experience').

From selecting lesson objectives, the teachers proceeded to planning activities. For instance, in Cycle 1 the teachers chose a station design, where student groups rotate with tasks. In a go-along interview, one of the teachers pointed out that '*this method was typical for CPD*'. She emphasised *'it was a practical design for trying out new activities.'* Another teacher added that '*it creates dynamics, stimulates different types of engagement, builds on cooperative and competitive motivation.'* The third teacher noted *that 'it is also good to observe students in different contexts.'* In Cycle 3, where the design was also station-based, one of the teachers explained that *'rotating activities allows differentiating for learning styles and interaction patterns'*.

Teachers' rationales suggest how the interplay of ostensive and performative aspects brings about orientation to the practical-evaluative and iterative dimensions of agency. Specifically, the here-and-now of managing social dynamics and student engagement comes as the primary subject for interpretation and improvisation and draws primarily on teachers' experience. This keeps teachers close to how they usually plan lessons. Another example is from Cycle 3. Here, the teachers focused on planning activities that *'are as close to students' real life as possible'*, as they emphasised during the meeting. They used carton pizzas to make activities, as they put it, '*more physical and visual*' to '*meet the needs of different learning styles.*' Cycles 2 and 4 focused on producing e-books. Similar, subject for interpretation and improvisation was finding a good text which, as the teacher phrased it while planning, is *'relatable and manageable for different ability groups.'* These data offer examples of instructional methods promoting social dynamics and student engagement being the main subjects for interpretating and improvising, while curricular perspectives on learning remain assumed. Notable also is that in all four cycles the teachers did not explicitly discuss what they want to focus on in observations.

So far, the findings suggest that the focus on the here-and-now of delivering an engaging lesson played to a greater extent towards stabilising existing practices. However, the debriefing phase offers a change in the pattern. It shows how teachers modified some ostensive aspects of the routine in ways that emphasised a more projective dimension of professional agency.

Projective orientation in the debriefing phase

As planning guidelines, debriefing guidelines were developed by the school administration for both CPD projects and placed instructional methods as the subject for interpretation and improvisation. The guidelines were formulated as follows: *'what worked?', 'what did not work and why?'*, and *'what could have been done differently?'*. On the one hand, the 'what' and 'how' questions emphasised the space for the iterative dimension of agency, capitalising on teachers' past experiences. However, when debriefing lessons, the teachers not merely followed the guidelines, but also extended them. Specifically, in Cycle 1 they added the following questions: *'how engaged were the students throughout the lesson', 'did everyone get a chance to participate', 'were the groups well-balanced', 'where there students consistently "falling off" the process'*. Slightly modified, those question were also used in Cycles 2, 3 and 4.

These questions can be seen as accounting for such unpredictabilities as student behaviour and social-emotional climate in the classroom. They also suggest a more active, agentic kind of engagement with the ostensive aspects of the routine. However, although the teachers extended the guidelines and often asked the 'why' question (such as *'why didn't this student engage in the activity?'*), the focus on methods remained central and the reasons were typically found in timing, student grouping, or teacher's instructions. However, one of the debriefing meetings stands out, illustrating how teachers' way of extending the guidelines added a more projective dimension.

Near the end of debriefing in Cycle 2, the teachers watched video clips of student interactions made by students themselves. At the planning phase, the teachers intended those videos as an activity meant to engage students. The clips had been initially watched by one of the teachers and debriefing relied on her notes regarding what worked and what did not. However, there was time left and they replayed the clips. The was a pause and one of the teachers remarked that *'something clearly did not work here'. 'The students did not converse but simply recalled correct answers'* added another teacher. As the teachers later explained, '*putting students in groups with a list of questions and a camera did not stimulate the desired dynamics and engagement*' and that '*the recording was making this evident'*. In trying to explain what did not happen, they went back to the curricular perspectives. One of the teachers asked: *'so . . . what a mathematical conversation would look like with our six-graders?'* Actively using the project materials on mathematical thinking, they re-designed the activity by imagining what such a conversation, as they put it, *'could realistically involve in our specific context, what questions could stimulate mathematical conversation'*. Interestingly, this process did not end up in searching for a new activity. Instead, it they teachers reframed and adjusted the previous design.

This debriefing example is interesting in several respects. It shows how the subject for interpretation and improvisation shifted from instructional methods to a curricular perspective. Specifically, it was used to formulate more problematising, explorative questions and interrupt a habitual search for activities. This moment of interruption, which shifted agentic orientations from more iterative to a more projective shows ways in which CPD routines may work for transforming existing practices.

Discussion and conclusion

The analysis has explored how the ostensive and performative aspects of collaborative lesson planning interplayed, and in which ways this interplay mattered for how the space for professional agency was used. A central theme in the findings is a strong orientation towards the practical-evaluative dimension of agency, which worked both towards stabilising and problematising existing practices. In particular, the iterative orientation emphasising accumulation of experience and the projective orientation emphasising aspirations for the future played out differently in how the teachers planned and debriefed lessons. In what follows, the findings are first summarised and then discussed in terms of how and why different agentic orientations may matter for CPD and teacher professionalism more broadly.

At first sight, the findings suggest that the space for professional agency within the organisational routine of collaborative lesson planning was minimally restricted. There were no detailed protocols or external facilitation. Collaborative work did not appear micromanaged or standardised. Rather, curricular perspectives and guidelines were communicated in a broad way allowing teachers to shape the specifics of the routine (Pentland & Feldman, 2005; Spillane, 2012). At a closer look, however, it appears that shaping the specifics involved primarily interpreting and improvising with instructional methods. It largely positioned teachers as those implementing new curricular perspectives (Lindvall & Ryve, 2019; Servage, 2009). Such narrowing of the space for interpreting and improvising can be associated both with how the routine was structured and how it was performed. One example is how new curricular ideas were introduced—as policy ideas to be inspired with and adopt, rather than critically relate to and experiment with. At the school level, this was done, for example, by emphasising such debriefing question as 'what worked', rather than why or for what purposes.

In addition, the planning phase, which could have potentially created space for the projective dimension of agency, for example, in formulating learning objectives and specifying focus for observations, remained mostly taken-for-granted and not negotiated by teachers. This focus on the here-and-now of delivering a lesson in the ostensive aspects of the routine aligned well with how the routine was performed, specifically with the teachers' close attention to the social dynamics and engagement in the classroom. Previous studies similarly note that the focus on the here-and-now of delivering an engaging lesson come more naturally as a subject for teachers' interpreting and improvising than curricular perspectives (e.g. Insulander et al., 2019).

Examples from the debriefing phase of CPD, however, illustrated a different sort of engagement with the ostensive aspects, particularly when the teachers extended the guidelines to better analyse the social dynamics and student engagement. This is evident in how the teachers elaborated on and added new questions. In some ways, it further reinforced the focus on the here-and-now by maintaining the attention on what previously worked, rather than examining why and for what purpose. At the same time, it was also this focus on the here-and-now that shifted collaborative work towards a more projective orientation of agency. This involved posing more disruptive, problematising questions, which reoriented the debriefing guidelines towards longer-term aspirations for student engagement with mathematics. In particular, the 'what worked' question was given a new meaning. It moved from the question of what activities worked for making

a lesson engaging to what can work for engaging students in mathematical thinking and how it might look like in their specific context. This way of problem reframing can be seen as reorienting teachers towards a more agentic position (Babichenko et al., 2021). Reflecting the earlier research, it appears to be a combination of quality materials, representations of practice (in this study, rather incidental), and social relations (Lefstein et al., 2019), in which the lesson was treated as teachers' collaborative responsibility minimising risks associated with disrupting norms of privacy and conflict avoidance (Horn & Little, 2010; Kelchtermans, 2006). Notably, the teachers acted not simply within the given space for interpretation and improvisation but by means of it, specifically by re-constructing debriefing questions and using a curricular perspective on mathematical thinking to reframe questions.

The findings largely concur with previous research in pointing out how strongly teacher agency is grounded in the immediate contexts of teaching (Edwards, 2015; Priestley et al., ; Toom, 2019). The article extends this argument by showing how differently the focus on the here-and-now of teaching play out depending on to which extent the iterative and projective dimensions are emphasised. This study empirically shows how the teachers' close attention to the here-and-now of student social dynamics and engagement worked primarily for narrowing the subject for interpreting and improvising to instructional methods and, thus, stabilising existing practices. However, when underpinned by representations of student learning and conceptually informed questions, collaborative lesson planning also worked towards reframing and transforming existing practices.

Speaking more broadly, Priestley et al. () note the risk for teacher professionalism associated with the emphasis on teachers' iterative agency, such as in claims that teaching is all about accumulating experience. Namely, the risk involves difficulties in locating routine professional practice within the deeper considerations of values and purposes in education. In CPD, it may imply narrowing teachers' collective autonomy and sense of ownership by way of positioning teachers as receivers of new curricular ideas, rather than connected to the outside world of ideas and debates as participants (Lindvall & Ryve, 2019; Toom, 2019).

The conclusions in this article aimed to engage with the question raised by Priestley et al. (201), namely, 'agency for what' is emphasised in CPD and more generally, in the discussion regarding teacher professionalism in settings, characterised by a mix of competing policy ideas (Mausethagen & Smeby, 2016; Wermke & Prøitz, 2021). Rather than adding to a general claim regarding a need for teacher autonomy, the article makes contribution in the following ways. Empirically, it uses multiple data sets to trace teacher agency in a CPD context. Conceptually, it concentrates the attention on different dimensions of agency and highlights the need to focus on the projective orientation of agency in CDP routines as central to transforming existing practices (Pentland & Feldman, 2005).

A practical implication of this study is a need to promote CPD which aim not merely to inspire teachers with new curricular perspectives and capitalise on their accumulated experience, but explicitly emphasises the projective orientation of agency. This can involve engaging teachers in a more critical discussion of competing curricular ideas and in the development of longer-term educational aspirations. Moreover, it is fruitful to further examine the rationales underpinning how externally PD

materials are recontextualised in school settings (Hermansen, 2017; Kirsten & Wermke, 2017). More broadly, there is a need to explore how teacher education and initial years of teaching shape teachers' agentic orientations, particularly the projective orientation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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