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Gørill Warvik Vedeler

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Collaborative Autonomy–Support – A Pivotal Approach in the Legislation Regulating School–Home Collaboration in Norwegian Upper Secondary Schools

Gørill Warvik Vedeler

Department of Education, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway

ABSTRACT

This article explores how current legislation addresses adolescents' need for support in upper secondary school through school–home collaboration and introduces the framework of collaborative autonomy–support as the pivotal approach for analyses. Self-determination theory is used to describe adolescents' need for competence, relatedness and autonomy. The study involved a document analysis in which Norwegian legislation was deconstructed through the lens of pedagogy in order to consider how legislative enactment challenges professional educational practices. The study uncovered three tensions in the legislation: the adolescents' self-determination versus parental obligations, parents' lack of formal representation in upper secondary school, and different directions in language used about parents in school. The article illuminates how legislation promotes adolescents' autonomy, intrinsic motivation and volitional functioning.

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School–home collaboration; autonomy–support; upper secondary school; legislation

Introduction

In this article, I elaborate how current legislation underpins school–home collaboration in upper secondary school, I also introduce the concept of *collaborative autonomy–support* as a theoretical lens to study how educational legislation meets adolescents' need for support. Supportive practices from both parents and teachers contribute to students' intrinsic and autonomous motivation for school (Martinek et al., 2016). The need to partner with parents seems obvious, as parents' engagement in school affects students' academic achievements (Shute et al., 2011; Wilder, 2014), school motivation (Fan et al., 2012; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013), emotional functioning and mental health (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014), and absence and dropout (Blondal & Adalbjarnardottir, 2014). Yet, it is not uncommon for teachers to experience unpleasant emotions or interpersonal conflicts when approaching parents (Bæck, 2013; Prilleltensky et al., 2016).

Teachers' reflections on educational jurisdiction are important when developing a shared understanding across the teaching profession. Shared reflections leads to increased awareness of shared responsibilities and adequate practices, both contingent aspects of professionalism, that are aligned with legislation (Perryman et al., 2017). For teachers worldwide, the ongoing politicisation of schooling, whereby school reforms are being initiated in conjunction with the implementation of political programs, constitutes a challenge (Telhaug et al., 2006). For instance, legislative amendments are used as a strategy to put political policies into force (Befring, 2003). The absence of professionalism

CONTACT Gørill Warvik Vedeler  gorill.vedeler@uit.no  Department of Education, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, 9037 Tromsø, Norway

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in legislative matters may shadow teachers' awareness of their options, with the danger of maintaining "business-as-usual" or escalating a regulatory rush (Collin-Hansen, 2012). There is also the danger of teachers not fulfilling their obligations to students and their parents. In response, there has been growing awareness of parents' roles, obligations and rights in relation to their children's education, as demonstrated through an emerging interest in expanding and empowering parental choice and voice in children's education across countries (Björk & Browne-Ferrigno, 2016).

Different perceptions of parents' roles in school influence how school systems conduct school-home collaboration. According to Barge and Loges (2003), lack of attention towards the power relations between students, parents and teachers often places teachers in a superior position to parents, and parents in a superior position to students. In Norway, collaborating with parents is regulated through legislative amendments (Imsen & Volckmar, 2014; Official Norwegian Report, 2015:2, 2015). Teachers' knowledge of legislation is essential when developing and grounding collaborative practices that treasure students and parents legal rights. Such collaborative efforts are currently relatively absent in Norwegian upper secondary schools (Helgøy & Homme, 2012). Therefore, this study involved a *document analysis* to deconstruct legislation through the lens of a pedagogical perspective, not a law perspective, and to explore how legislative enactments create implications for professional educational practices. The following research question was posed: *How does current legislation affect school-home collaboration in relation to adolescents' need for autonomy-support?*

To interpret the legislation, I developed a theoretical lens to reflect how practising school-home collaboration in upper secondary school meets adolescents' need for support. By looking to self-determination theory, as developed by Ryan and Deci (2017), I highlight adolescents' need for parental and teacher autonomy-support at this level of schooling. I argue that the collaborative dimension of parents' and teachers' joint efforts has received relatively little attention in the extant literature. I introduce and describe the concept of *collaborative autonomy-support* before situating the particular legislation under study and outline the study's methods and materials. The analysis revealed tensions related to parents' and students' rights in school and illuminated how legislation accommodates adolescents' needs.

Theoretical Approach

Self-determination theory emphasises that adolescents' motivation for growth, integrity and well-being depends on their innate psychological need for competence, relatedness and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). *Competence* is necessary to develop self-efficacy, agency and mastery; *relatedness* is needed to become socially connected; and *autonomy* is required to function with volition, congruency and integrity. Self-determination theory explains how acting autonomously depends on volitional functioning, self-regulation and the desire to behave in accordance with personal values and interests. Parents and teachers play a crucial role in supporting adolescents' processes of becoming autonomous (Fousiani et al., 2014; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). Adolescents' who perceive the presence of parental autonomy-support become more autonomous and self-regulated in their academic endeavours and career decisions (Katz et al., 2018). They also show more motivation and engagement when teachers allow them to act more autonomously with their school work (Ruzek et al., 2016). Self-determination theory describes motivation on a continuum from controlled to autonomous (Ryan & Deci, 2017); and pertaining to the relationship between adolescents and their parents, a core dimension is adolescents' sense of volition and psychological freedom (Van Petegem et al., 2013). Parent autonomy-support and teacher autonomy-support affect adolescents' wellbeing and academic motivation (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001), but the self-determination literature does not cover how collaborative efforts between schools and homes contribute to promoting autonomous functioning. To arrive at a shared understanding of adolescents' need for support through school-home collaboration I argue to develop *collaborative autonomy-support*.

Noom et al. (2001) outlined that adolescents' autonomy comprises three sets of abilities: attitudinal, emotional and functional. *Attitudinal autonomy* refers to the cognitive ability to specify

alternative options, make decisions and define goals; *emotional autonomy* relates to the affective aspect of feeling confidence in one's own choices and goals; and *functional autonomy* encompasses the regulatory ability to develop and act on a strategy to achieve one's goals (Noom et al., 2001). Autonomy literally means *self-governance* but, to gain legitimacy as an autonomous person, it is not enough to act solely in one's own best interest; autonomy is also about willingly consenting to external obligations and legitimate demands, as well as taking moral responsibilities (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 54). In this respect, I was interested in understanding how these abilities and responsibilities are underpinned by legislation.

Two different approaches may apply to the process of supporting adolescents' autonomy. Becoming autonomous can be a *process of separation* from parents, one which involves gaining independence and self-reliance. However, this progress includes the risk of becoming detached from parents, as well as feeling disengaged, rejected and mistrusted (Van Petegem et al., 2013). Put simply, the process is risky because it may affect the adolescent–parent relationship either positively or negatively. Becoming autonomous can also be a *process of volitional functioning*, one which leads to greater growth, integrity and wellbeing in adolescents (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This is recommended because it involves parental empathy, encouragement and support, rather than detachment, and is consequently associated with better outcomes for adolescents (Soenens et al., 2007). These two different process-scenarios lead to different conceptualisations of parental autonomy–support: one promoting independence/separation, and the other promoting volitional functioning (Fousiani et al., 2014; Soenens et al., 2007). Soenens et al. (2007) found that parents who *promote independence* in their adolescent children tend to also promote adolescents' independent expression, thinking and decision-making by granting them greater freedom (detachment), while parents who *promote volitional functioning* support their adolescents' perspectives, provide optional choices, minimise the use of control and help them to understand and act upon their own values and interests. Accordingly, teacher autonomy–support promotes volitional functioning by facilitating students' self-regulation for learning, academic performance and wellbeing (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2005) concluded that both parental and teacher autonomy–support significantly help foster autonomy among adolescents.

In upper secondary school, adolescents are undergoing the transition into adulthood, and yet they still depend on support from both school and home; therefore school–home collaboration involves a tripartite, not bipartite, relationship between adolescents, parents and teachers, as illustrated in Figure 1. Later I will show that adolescents have the legal right to be involved when parents and teachers discuss their personal issues, as represented by the vertical arrow in Figure 1. Based on the

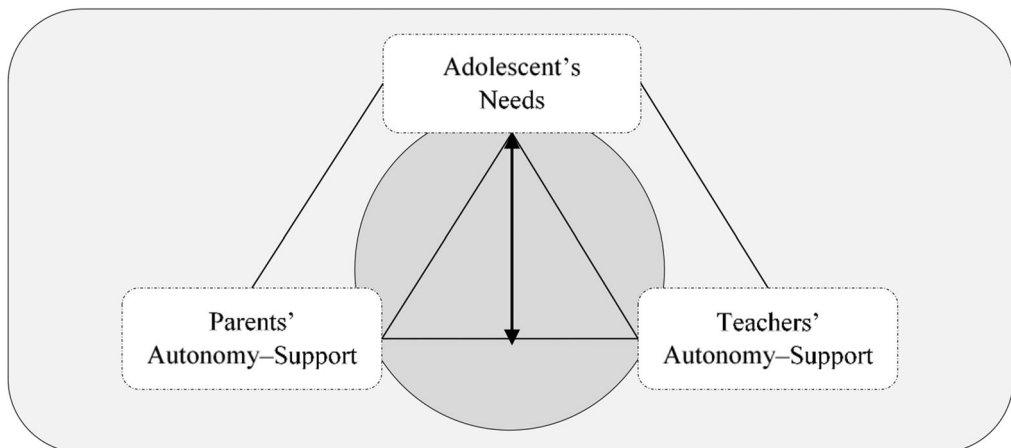


Figure 1. The tripartite efforts of collaborative autonomy–support.

theoretical approach outlined above, a crucial aspect of this partnership is the customisation of adolescents' needs towards gradually becoming more autonomous. The circle represents the joint efforts taken on by stakeholders to practise *collaborative autonomy-support*. The figure moreover separates parents' and teachers' autonomy-support in light of the non-collaborative dimensions involved as well.

Building on self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), I argue that it is necessary to conceptualise *collaborative autonomy-support* as a pivotal area of attention in collaborative efforts between schools and homes. This conceptualisation draws attention to what kinds of support students need to become autonomous by highlighting the importance of growing attitudinal, emotional and functional abilities as well as awareness of one's own responsibilities. One assumption made for this study was that parents' core interests is to collaborate with schools about their adolescents' competence, relatedness and autonomy. Based on this assumption, I argue that it is fruitful to discuss how legislation underpins the collaborative practices between schools and homes that promote adolescents' volitional functioning in educational matters.

Situating the Legislation

Norwegian upper secondary school is non-compulsory and extends from year 11 through year 13, i.e., when the students are between 16 and 19 years old. This branch of schooling follows the compulsory 10-year primary school. Even though upper secondary school is not compulsory all adolescents have the right to 13 years of public schooling. Ownership in this regard is divided, with local municipalities running primary schools and county administrations running upper secondary schools. The overarching goal is for all children to complete upper secondary, such that dropping out from school is considered a major problem area and accordingly receives significant political attention. That said, the overall trend is good, with an increasing number of students completing upper secondary school. Approximately 75% of students currently complete the three years of upper secondary school within a five-year period, yet these numbers admittedly show some variation across the country.

This study focused on the Norwegian educational jurisdiction and the object of the legislation: the Norwegian school system. Together with other Nordic countries, Norway developed a comprehensive public school system during the decades following World War II. The Nordic Education Model is grounded in a social democratic ideology and an egalitarian philosophy, and its core values are equity and equal opportunities, inclusion and social justice, self-regulatory individualisation and democratic participation, which when paired with the mantra, "a school for all", indicates that education should reduce social differences and increase social mobility in the population at large (Telhaug et al., 2006). Parents' rights, obligations and formal representation are recognised as a cornerstone in this model. Parents are responsible for their children and the education system has a social mission to help parents with their children's upbringing and education, which in turn underpins parents' rights to information, participation and representation (Vestre, 2012). At present, historical and contemporary values have become entwined, with the social democratic ideology merging with neoliberal tendencies, thereby naturally affecting relationships between parents and teachers even in a school system founded on the apparently unified ideology of "a school for all". The Nordic Model has since the turn of the millennium, been increasingly challenged by transnational neoliberal policies. There is thus increased concern that the social democratic values of democracy, equity and inclusion are being threatened, and that this could in turn result in an increase in student segregation, social differences and dropout rates (Imsen et al., 2017). National policies are moving schooling towards market-oriented strategies, focusing on efficiency and competition governed by detailed objectives and control, spurring fears among researchers about whether the relationship between schools and homes is recasting parents in the role of customers (Imsen & Volckmar, 2014).

The phenomenon of school–home collaboration should engage parents from all socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, to become involved with their adolescent children in discussions and decision-making related to schooling and planning for postsecondary education. Otherwise, “many adolescents are left with an incomplete support system on school matters” (Epstein, 2007, p. 18). Also, school–home collaboration should acknowledge that being a parent and being a teacher are very different. Parents are private and personal; they follow their children’s trajectories throughout school, are not well-organised as a group, and are not professionally prepared to collaborate with schools. For children, the parental relationship is lifelong, whereas their relations with teachers are merely temporary. The connectedness between parents and their children greatly influences schooling, which should clearly be considered of utmost relevance in educational settings (Hay et al., 2016). Contemporary parents are rearing the so-called Generation Y, which, according to Norwegian youth surveys, is relatively well-behaved and active, yet home-bodied, with a higher rate of satisfaction with school and better marks (Bakken, 2017, 2018). These surveys indicate that the relationship between adolescents and their parents is mostly positive, with most adolescents reporting their parents to be appreciative, close and involved in their lives. In Norway, the generational gap between parents and adolescents seems to be shrinking as the parental role is changing (Øia & Vestel, 2014).

Method

A document analysis “deconstructs” texts, such as legislative documents, to examine concealed hierarchies, domination, oppositions, inconsistencies, contradictions, and so forth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The documents selected for this analysis constituted Norwegian legislation regulating school–home collaboration in upper secondary schools. The sample includes international conventions, the Norwegian Constitution, national laws and regulations, parliament propositions, committee settings, official Norwegian reports and advisory circular letters. An overview of the sample is listed in Appendix.

The documents were selected through a “snow-ball” method. I started with international agreements, core laws and regulations. Then relevant preparatory works were included, followed by government circular letters. Documents not included were, for instance, official grant/funding documents, formal instructions and orders, previous legal interpretations, decisions made by public administration, customary rights, arguments considered fair, reasonable and appropriate, and ethical standards for professional practices. The documents included are accessible to all teachers and the teaching profession is expected to understand current legislation. The rationale for excluding some documents was that they were subject to some uncertainty regarding legal status, and therefore teachers could not be expected to be familiar with them.

The documents can be categorised in terms of four levels of importance. The highest level includes *international conventions* and *the Norwegian Constitution*. According to the Constitution’s § 92, international agreements, such as the Human Rights and the Child Convention, are considered Norwegian law and as such supersede national legislation (Falkanger, 2017). International agreements cover important notions related to family, children and the position of parents in society. The next level of importance includes the *laws* and *regulations* that comprise the current justice system. Some laws included in this regard are the Child Act, which anchors parents’ and children’s rights and responsibilities, and the Education Act, which regulates the school system through year 13. Such regulations specify a higher level of detail than present in the laws to which they are connected (Befring, 2003). The regulations included are extensions of the Education Act of 1998. On the next level were prepared documents, such as *official Norwegian reports* (by expert committees), *propositions to Parliament* (by the ministries), and *Parliament settings* (by Parliamentary committees). These documents provide background information as well as the rationale for amending laws and regulations or for managing new areas of justice (Befring, 2003). The last and thus lowest level comprised advisories – or *circular letters*, which include information from authorities to responsible and

Table 1. The analytical model.

Coding	
1. Cycle	Tensions in jurisdiction
2. Cycle	Collaborative autonomy–support <i>Adolescents' needs</i> Competence Relatedness Autonomy
	<i>Sets of abilities</i> Attitudinal autonomy Emotional autonomy Functional autonomy

interested parties on interpretations of laws and regulations. In total, 2,666 pages across 25 documents were included, but not all are specifically referenced in the presentation of results reported here. Several documents overlap and/or relate to the same amendment. Please note that when documents are referenced in the results section, the document number listed in Appendix will appear. The coding procedure was performed through cycles and the analytical process of interpretation used the theoretical lens as described in the previous section and as summarised in Table 1. This cyclic process involved coding and recoding (Saldaña, 2015, p. 9), which were conducted using the qualitative data analysis software NVIVO (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

The analytical model illustrates how, in the initial search cycle, potential tensions related to parents' and students' legal rights and roles were sought. The theoretical lens of collaborative autonomy–support, as described previously contributed to the second search cycle, which was related to how legislation underpin collaborative autonomy–support. The NVIVO nodes from the first cycle were recoded in the second cycle. To ensure transparency in the analysis, I provide precise references to specific documents.

Results

The legislation regulates a wide range of topics. My approach was to search for potential tensions in the way school–home collaboration is expected to accommodate adolescents' need for support. The analysis revealed that the current jurisdiction contains certain tensions, such as roles, formal representation and language, but also demonstrated how legislation underpins the students' competence, relatedness and autonomy. In this section, I elaborate on this matter further.

Tensions in Jurisdiction

International agreements are grounded in the Norwegian Constitution (1814, § 92, Doc 1), meaning that national authorities are committed to promoting, protecting and realising the full range of human rights. Related to school–home collaboration, the notions of family, parents, children and education in the agreements are essential. First, *family* is the fundamental group unit in society, and family units can claim to be protected (Human Rights, Article 16, Doc 2; Child Convention, Introduction, Doc 4). Second, *parents* are lawfully responsible for protecting and caring for their children, and the state/society is expected to respect and support parents' responsibilities, rights and duties in this regard (Child Convention, Article 3 & 5, Doc 4). Third, *children* should be prepared to live individual lives and “in the best interests of the child” is accordingly foregrounded as a major principle in all actions involving children (Child Convention, Article 3, Doc 4). Finally, all children have the right to *education*, while parents have the pre-existing right to choose what kind of education this entails (Human Rights, Article 26, Doc 2; Child Convention, Article 28, Doc 4). Although there is no novel information in this disclosure, such well-known notions are important reminders because they supersede national legislation.

Nationally, the Education Act of 1998 (Doc 8) merged legislation and covers basic education, years 1 through 13. For non-compulsory upper secondary school (years 11–13), which previously

was governed by its own law, a new purpose clause states that schooling is to be “conducted in collaboration and understanding with the students’ home”. This means that this level of schooling had to reconsider its relationship with parents. Further, an amendment put into force in 2010 mandated systematic collaboration with parents concerning adolescents’ academic and social development, learning environment, and school completion (Regulation Education Act, 2006, § 20-1, Doc 11). The responsibility to ensure collaboration was by legislation given the school owner, the county administration (Education Act, § 13-3d, Doc 8). The cross document–analysis revealed three tensions (for a document overview, see the Appendix): (1) adolescents’ self-determination versus parental obligations, (2) parents’ lack of formal representation in upper secondary school, and (3) the language used about parents in the documents point in different directions.

(1) *Adolescents’ self-determination versus parental obligations.* The legislation provides children with gradually increasing self-determination, and parents are required to ensure that this occurs (Child Act, 1982, § 33, Doc 3). For instance, from age 15, children have the right to choose in which type of education to enrol (Child Act, 1992, § 32, Doc 3; Education Act, 1998, § 3-1, Doc 8) and also have the right to complete schooling until age 24 (Education Act, 1998, § 3-1, Doc 8). A coherent rationale for children’s rights and legal ages was not easily discernible across the legislative documents (examples presented in Table 2). Specific to Norway, one-half of the youth cohort turns 19 before completing school, but schools’ have no obligations towards parents once their children turn 18 unless they give their consent for continuation (Regulation, 2006, § 20-4, Doc 11; Circular Letter, Doc 19). However, parents cannot decide to detach from their children when they turn 18, meaning a financial commitment remains throughout upper secondary school (Child Act, 1982, § 68, Doc 3). Unaligned interpretations of students’ rights alongside parents’ obligations may lead to tensions among all three parties in school–home collaboration: students, parents and teachers.

(2) *Parents’ formal representation.* There are three levels of steering in the Norwegian school system: the local school level, the school owner level (the municipal administration responsible for primary school, and the county administration responsible for upper secondary), and the national policy level (government). The Education Act (Doc 8, Chapter 11) regulates “bodies for user complicity in school”. For years 1 through 10, parents and students have formal representation in such bodies (the School’s Collaboration Committee, the School-Environment Committee, and the Parents Council/Committee). Parents of children in years 11–13 have no formal representation in equivalent bodies, but the students still do. Both primary and upper secondary education lack formal complicity on the school owner level. That said, many municipalities have established advisory Municipality Parents Committees. To my knowledge, county administrations have not developed any equivalent for years 11–13. On the national policy level, The National Parents Committee is the advisory body for the government and represents parents until year 11 (Education Act, 1998, § 11-9, Doc 8). In

Table 2. Children’s rights to self-determination.

Age	Children’s rights	References
7	Right to information and to share opinions before decisions	Child Act § 31
12	Emphasis on children’s opinions (e.g., where to live when parents’ divorce)	Child Act § 31
12–16	Respect children’s reasons for not informing parents (e.g., contraception)	Patient and User Rights Act § 3–4
13	“Small” paid jobs if parents approve	Work Environment Act § 11
15	The age of criminal responsibility	Penal Code § 20
	Decide education	Child Act § 32
	Membership in associations and church communities	Child Act § 32
	Regular paid work (restrictions)	Work Environment Act § 11
	Decide over own money	Guardianship Act § 12
16	The sexual age	Penal Code § 302 & 304
	Age of consent (health issues)	Patient and user rights law § 4–3
18	Legal age (not children anymore)	Child Convention, Child Act
	Access to alcohol (2.5–22 ‰)	Alcohol Act § 1–5
20	Access to alcohol (22–60 ‰)	Alcohol Act § 1–5
24	The youth claim (schooling until age 24)	Education Act § 3–1

sum, parents in upper secondary schools lack formal representation on all three steering levels. The reasoning given for this is that students' self-determination in educational decisions from age 15 makes parents superfluous. The students' newfound capacity for democratic participation subsumes the role formerly held by parents until their children reached year 10 (Circular Letter, 2011, Doc 19). This reasoning contradicts the value of democratic user participation and representation, in which parents are considered core partners in education (Education Act, 1998, § 1-1, Doc 8). Second, this also deviates from the claim for active collaborating with parents through upper secondary school (Education Act, 1998, § 1-1, Doc 8). Third, it excludes parents' knowledge, experiences and feedback in upper secondary school (Education Act, Chapter 11, Doc 8). Finally, it ignores parental interests in deciding on upper secondary schooling (Child Act, § 30, 33 & 68, Doc 3). Doubts about parents' formal representation may hamper the relationship between parents and teachers/schools by, for instance, undermining the parents' role, and the actual lack of formal representation relegates parents to the role of mere complainants or customers rather than formal partners. It is important to distinguish between parental formal representation in the school's user bodies and collaboration with parents about individual students (Circular Letter, 2011, Doc 19).

(3) *The language about parents.* Language affects how we understand everything, and our understandings in turn affect our practices – this is an underlying assumption for the following argument. The Principal Part of the National Curriculum (2017, Doc 24) regulates and expresses values expected to permeate educational practices. When looking at the language used in this document, it is tempting for analytical purposes to invert the language. To illustrate how language affects how schools approach parents, I present two quotes in Table 3.

The first quote concerns how *the home's attitude* toward school is important for students' achievements (Table 3, 1a). The inverted language demonstrates that *the school's attitude* towards the home is important for the students' outcome. However, the latter is not mentioned in this value document. The second quote explains how it is *difficult for the school* to handle the parents' different needs, expectations and opinions (Table 3, 2a). Again, when inverting the language, it becomes clear that it is also *difficult for parents* to handle the teachers' expectations and attitudes. When legislative documents do not pronounce the responsibility schools have to respect and support parents, while at the same time highlighting how important it is for parents to respect and support schools, the power relations between school and home and how teachers approach parents may be adversely impacted. Another example, the legal terminology that schools are responsible to “ensure collaboration” (Education Act, § 13-3d, Doc 8) is reduced to schools being responsible to “initiate collaboration” (Principal Part, p. 18, Doc 24). The document stating the strongest obligation holds the highest order of importance. Yet another example, the Parliament Committee when promoting the new Education Act in 1998 stated that “parents are responsible for their children, and the school shall help them in their work on upbringing and education. This is the fundamental idea of the parental custody” (Committee Setting, 1998, Doc 7). However, a Circular Letter written a few years later said: “It is the parents that have the main responsibility for the upbringing of their children, while schools are responsible for education” (2011, p. 3, Doc 19). Divergent messages such as these may

Table 3. Language about parents.

Quotes Principal Part (2017, p. 18)	Inverted language
1a “The home's attitude to school is of great importance for the student's engagement and school effort”.	1b The schools' attitude to the students' home is of great importance for the students' engagement and school effort.
2a “Parents approach school with different needs, expectations and opinions about the schools' goals and practices. This may cause tensions that [are] difficult for the school to handle.”	2b Schools (and teachers) approach parents with different needs, expectations and opinions about the parents' goals and practices. This may cause tensions that are difficult for the parents to handle.

cause tensions between schools and homes and further explain why expectations point in different directions.

Adolescents' Need for Support

The Norwegian school system educates for autonomy, self-efficacy and democratic participation by promoting intrinsic motivation, attitudes and learning strategies (Principal Part, 2017, Doc 24). Also, that school-home collaboration should focus on students' betterment (Regulation, 2006, § 20-1, Doc 11). These are reasons why a theoretical lens focusing on adolescents' autonomy and agency, such as self-determination theory and the concept of *collaborative autonomy-support*, is analytically useful. The following illuminates how the legislation in particular accommodates the students' needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy through collaborative strategies.

(a) *Competence*. The school and home collaborate to "open doors toward the world and the future and to give students historic and cultural insights and grounding" (Education Act, 1998, § 1-1, Doc 8). This is specified in the National Curriculum¹, which contains a Principal Part (Doc 24), curricula for each subject, and a cross subject framework of basic skills. Schools are expected to adjust this curriculum to local conditions and to inform parents about such adjustments (Regulation, 2006, § 20-4, Doc 11). The parents' role is important when implementing the curriculum, as competencies are developed and practised both at school and at home (Official Report 2015:8, Doc 22). When searching for *what* the school system invites parents to have opinions about, the schools' professional profile and the content of the curriculum seems to be off-limit. The only body that invites comments about the content is the School Collaboration Committee, where parents of adolescents in upper secondary school have no formal representation (Education Act, 1998, § 11-1, Doc 8). In other words, parents have not the opportunity to discuss the local curriculum or school quality, even if doing so is within their interests as significant partners.

A legislative strategy, particularly relevant for supporting students' competence, is parents' access to information about school events and content. Dialogue with the school is crucial for parents (Official Report 2015:8, Doc 22) and two-way communication is a legislative goal that acknowledges that "parents need information from the school" (Quality Framework, 2006, Doc 12). Lack of access to information may consequently cause tensions: First, tension between the democratic ambitions of openness/transparency versus a tendency for providing minimum required information. The minimum requirement is that schools must "inform parents about the content of education, involvement of parents, routines and other relevant information, orally at one parent meeting at the beginning of years 11 and 12" (Regulation, 2006, § 20-4, Doc 11). Several challenges occur in this respect: transparency obviously requires more than one oral meeting per year; it can be challenging to locate parents who are not attending oral parent meetings; and it may be difficult to "keep in touch with parents throughout the whole school year" since doing so would demand a wider range of strategies (Regulation, 2006, § 20-4, Doc 11). A second tension is related to sharing information when schools no longer have legal obligations to parents' when their children turn 18 (Circular Letter, 2011, p 12, Doc 19). It is unclear whether schools screen information about students' personal matters from less sensitive and more general information about daily life in school. Also, it is unknown whether schools proactively ask for students' consent or take a more passive stance. Such lack of clarity may prevent parents from having or being given access to information. Transparency, continuous contact and leeway, when communicating with parents in support of students' competence, must be operationalised as crucial dimensions in collaborative practices.

(b) *Relatedness*. According to the UN Human Rights Declaration, the family is the natural, social arena in which adolescents become socially connected (Article 16, Doc 2). The parents' capacity to support their children's home environment and education varies. How to support and empower

¹About the National Curriculum, see <https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/>.

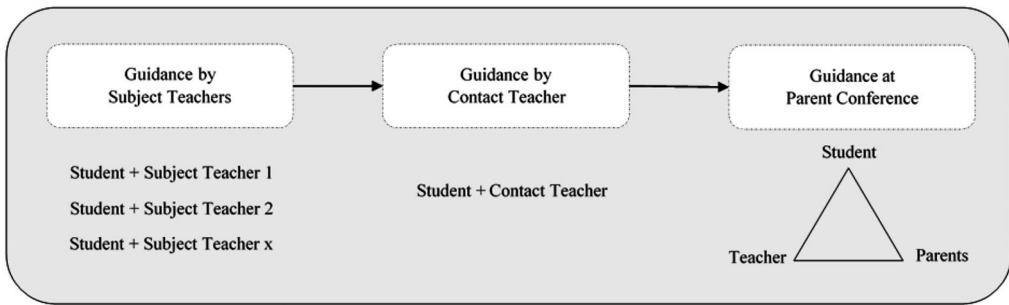


Figure 2. Framework of guidance for personal development.

parents in their contributions is barely mentioned in national legislative documents. In contrast, international agreements underpin the importance of respecting and supporting parents' obligations as significant for their children's education (Child Convention, 1991, Article 3 & 5, Doc 4).

A revision of the Education Act § 9A, put into force in 2017, gives all students the individual right to a school environment characterised by social belonging without harassment (Amendment, 2017, Doc 21, 23 and 24). Adults in school (including parents) are responsible for developing and safeguarding a secure psychosocial school environment, one that promotes health, wellbeing and learning. This *New § 9A* is exceptional in Norwegian educational legislation for several reasons. First, the student's own experiences have become decisive. Second, the schools are required to construct and implement specified action plans to ensure proper monitoring, intervention, alerts, investigation and actions. Third, students and parents both have the right to complain directly to the County Governor if needed. Finally, the County Governor is given the option to use financial sanctions (day fines) against schools if they do not fulfil the § 9A-requirements.

These legislative aspects acknowledge the students' need for social connections at home and in school, and they moreover account for the parents' right to protect their children's interests in such matters (Child Convention, 1991, Article 3 & 5, Doc 4).

(c) *Autonomy*. The premise that a well-functioning democracy cannot be an exclusionary elite project – means that participation schemes for youths should balance differences, not reinforce them, and that adolescents' power over their own lives reflects participation, self-determination and the perception of control over important aspects of life (Official Report 2011:20, Doc 20). Education value freedom, independence, accountability and human compassion (Principal Part, 2017, Doc 24) and the students' desire to learn is a prerequisite for becoming autonomous (Principal Part, 2017, Doc 24). Premises and values such as these are expected to be treasured through school-home collaboration. To exemplify, one legislative strategy is to ensure students' rights to *guidance for personal development*. This is illustrated by the three actions in Figure 2 (Regulation, 2006, Doc 11), meaning the students have the right to (1) oral/written half-year assessments in each subject (§ 3-13) and to meetings about academic achievement once every half-year (§ 3-11), as well as (2) regular meetings with their contact teacher about general development (§ 3-8), while (3) both parents and students have the right to attend one planned and structured parent conference during the first half-year of each school year (until the student turns 18). The student has the right to attend when parents and teachers meet (§ 20-4). The parent conferences “clarify how the student, school and parents work together to facilitate learning and development for the student” (Regulation, 2006, § 20-4, Doc 11). Connections between the three actions are represented by arrows in Figure 2 and are expected by law (§ 3-11 & § 20-4).

Students' participation “is a key to customised teaching” (Principal Part, 2017, Doc 24), and self-assessment is part of continuous assessment (§ 3-12). Building autonomy is a personal process that all students must access and engage in. Legislation contributes with a framework for customised guidance. It invites schools and homes to work together to concretise collaborative autonomy-support,

which potentially promotes students' abilities associated with autonomous functioning. This will, however, depend on how collaborative autonomy–support is implemented and integrated in educational and collaborative practices. In sum, students at this level of schooling are expected to gradually become volitional in relation to their competence, relatedness and autonomy, a process that occurs both at home and in school. This recognition demands collaborative efforts between teachers and parents in a way that increases the students' agency in their own educational matters.

Discussion

The document analysis revealed tensions in the jurisdiction regulating school–home collaboration in upper secondary school. It showed unclear alignments between students' self-determination and parental obligations, lack of formal representation for parents, and how language used about parents in school point in different directions. How these potential tensions affect school–home collaboration depend, among other things on how the collaborative practices acknowledge and accommodate the adolescents need for collaborative autonomy–support.

Schools supporting parents can be traced back to the Common People's School Law of 1848, which stated that “the school should be the parents' servant and not master” (Vestre, 2012, p. 164). This was before the Nordic Education Model took shape. Today, schools approach parents as both “customers to steer”, in association with neoliberal market strategies, and, based on Nordic traditions, “citizens to serve” (Helgøy & Homme, 2017). Nordahl (2003, p. 107) found that parents expected two-way communication and shared understanding in their approach to school, while teachers expected parents to accomplish given tasks. The legislative purpose clause supports parents in this matter by pronouncing that collaboration is grounded on a shared understanding between home and school. Different expectations may challenge practices at all levels of steering, including when targeting parents individually or as an interest group partnering with schools.

The document analysis demonstrated that one purpose of school–home collaboration is to promote students' volitional functioning through autonomy–support and that this goal undergirds the obligatory collaborative efforts between school and home at this level of schooling. By affirming the adolescents' need for competence, relatedness and autonomy, the purpose for collaboration also coincides with the overall functions of education (Biesta, 2009). Biesta (2009) argued that qualification, socialisation and subjectification are functions that constitute education. Legislative obligations and required actions contribute with a framework for supporting the students' attitudinal, emotional and functional abilities related to such educational matters. According to autonomy–support, the roles of teachers and parents are to show empathy and encouragement in ways that will stimulate the students' growing agency in education. Collaborative autonomy–support is suggested as a pivotal approach for school–home collaboration. It is also appropriate because it meets the legislative ambition to gradually increase students' self-determination and, at the same time, confirms and facilitates parental contributions. Based on this reasoning, the distinction between school and teaching on the one side and parenting and upbringing on the other side is problematic. The overall intention, as described by analysing current legislation, is for school and home to jointly promote adolescents' volitional functioning and intrinsic motivation for school and in the future (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Refining collaborative efforts requires interpretation across legislative documents (Sandberg, 2012). Doubts about parental intentions, obligations and expectations – related to parents' significant role in caring for and making decisions on behalf of their children – disturb practices like sharing information, notification procedures, and systems for involvement and participation. In the worst case-scenario, lack of professional confidence among teachers may cause schools to detach parents from their adolescents' education or even to harm the relationship between parents and children. Upper secondary schools need their own rationale for why and how to conduct school–home collaboration, one which is aligned with current legislation and adapted to the needs of adolescents at this level of schooling.

Limitations

This study was limited to Norwegian legislation, but it nonetheless provides valuable insights of interest to both theory and methodology in this and other contexts. The analytical approach is novel, as is the study of legislation in relation to self-determination theory and autonomy growth within school–home collaboration. It would be of interest to take this research further via a comparative design, one that could both compare and contrast legislation and support for adolescents' needs.

Conclusion

Practice theories – for instance, the theory of practice architectures – draw attention to how certain arrangements keep practices in place (Kemmis et al., 2014; Nicolini, 2012). Participants encounter each other and are consequently either enabled or constrained by the semantic, physical and social spaces in which practices emerge (Kemmis et al., 2014). Current legislation contributes to practising school–home collaboration in several ways. For example, it affects the language in use, *the semantic space*, by regulating how participants' needs, roles and relations are understood. Norwegian legislation describes the purpose of education for young people in our society as well as the rationale for students' right to gradually become autonomous individuals, and it also explains the role of parents in both society and school affairs. Legislation affects *the physical space* in school–home collaboration by demanding specific actions, like how to support the students through guidance for personal development and by requiring that schools provide and implement action plans to ensure students' right to a safe and productive school environment. And finally, legislation affects *the social space* by distributing power and ensuring students' agency in relation to their educational matters. Legislation regulates the power balance between the home and school, and between the people and state. In this way, legislation is an important arrangement when developing educational practices. This study has demonstrated that within and across legislative documents, tensions challenge collaborative efforts. When developing professional practices, teachers and school leaders are obliged to ensure that both students' and their parents' rights are ensured.

I have argued that the concept of *collaborative autonomy–support* contributes to safeguarding students' needs by also valuing their relations with their parents. According to Norwegian legislation, schools and homes must arrive at a shared understanding of how to collaborate in a way that fosters adolescents' needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy. School–home collaboration that promotes adolescents volitional and autonomous functioning also accommodates legislative obligations.

Disclosure Statement

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Appendix. Chronological overview of documents included in the document analysis

	Year*	Norwegian naming	English translation	Category	Link	Pages
1	1814	Kongeriket Norges Grunnlov	Kingdom of Norway's Constitution	Constitution	https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1814-05-17	25
2	1948	FNs verdenserklæring om menneskerettigheter	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights	International Agreement	https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/	5
3	1981	Barnelova	Child Act	Law	https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1981-04-08-7	41
4	1991	FNs konvensjon om barnets rettigheter	UN Convention on the Right of the Child	International Agreement	https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention	59
5	1995	NOU 1995:18 Ny lovgivning om opplæring «... og for øvrig kan man gjøre som man vil»	New legislation on education. "... and otherwise one can do as one pleases"	Official Report	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-1995-18/id140365/	599
6	1998	Ot.prp. nr. 46 (1997–1998) Om lov om grunnskolen og den vidaregående opplæringa (opplæringslova)	About the law on primary and upper secondary education (Education Act)	Proposition	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/otprp-nr-46-1997-98/id158981/	285
7	1998	Om lov om grunnskole og videregående opplæring. (Innst.O.nr.70 (1997-1998)).	About the law on primary and upper secondary education	Committee Setting	https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Innstillinger/Odelstinget/1997-1998/Inno-199798-070/?lvi=0	54
8	1998	Opplæringslova	Education Act	Law	https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1998-07-17-61?q=opplæringslova	51
9	1999 (end 2020)	Lærerplan for grunnskole, videregående opplæring og vaksenopplæring, Generell del	National Curricula for Norwegian Schools Grade 1-13, General Part	Regulation	https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/	22
10	2003	NOU 2003:16 I første rekke. Forsterket kvalitet i grunnopplæringen for alle	First in line. Improved quality of basic education for all	Official Report	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2003-16/id147077/	304
11	2006	Forskrift til opplæringslova	Regulations Education Act	Regulation	https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2006-06-23-724?q=forskrift	90
12	2006 (end 2020)	Prinsipper for opplæringen	The Quality Framework (National Curriculum)	Regulation	https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/	7
13	2007	NOU 2007:6 Formål for framtida. Formål for barnehagen og opplæringen	Purpose for the future. Purpose for the kindergarten and education.	Official Report	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/NOU-2007-6/id471461/	105
14	2008	Ot.prp. nr. 40 (2007–2008) Om lov om endringer i opplæringslova og privatskolelova (Utvida mandat til FUG)	On the law on amendments to the Education Act	Proposition	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/otprp-nr-40-2007-2008/id503515/	48
15	2008	Ot.prp. nr. 46 (2007–2008) Om lov om endringer i opplæringslova (Om formålet med opplæringen)	On the law on amendments in the Education Act (About the purpose of education)	Proposition	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/otprp-nr-46-2007-2008/id505975/	35
16	2009	Ot.prp. nr. 55 (2008–2009) Om lov om endringer i opplæringslova	On the law on amendments in the Education Act	Proposition	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/otprp-nr-55-2008-2009/id552999/	68

(Continued)

Continued.

Year*	Norwegian naming	English translation	Category	Link	Pages
17 2010	Udir-2-2010 Retten til et godt psykososialt miljø etter opplæringsloven kapittel 9a	The right to a good psychosocial environment according to the Education Act chapter 9a	Circular Letter	https://www.udir.no/regelverkstolkninger/opplaring/Laringsmiljo/Udir-2-2010-psykososialt-miljo?depth=0&print=1	35
18 2010	Forskrift om endring i forskrift til opplæringslova og forskrift til privatskolelova	Regulations amending the regulations to the Education Act	Regulation	https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/forskrift/2010-07-07-1081	9
19 2011	Udir-7-2010 Foreldresamarbeid i grunnskolen og videregående opplæring	Parental collaboration in primary and secondary education	Circular Letter	https://www.udir.no/regelverkstolkninger/opplaring/Laringsmiljo/Udir-7-2010-Foreldresamarbeid-i-grunnskolen-og-videregaende-opplaring/	15
20 2011	NOU 2011:20 Ungdom, makt og medvirkning	Youth, power and participation	Official Report	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2011-20/id666389/	119
21 2015	NOU 2015:2 Å høre til. Virkemidler for et trygt psykososialt skolemiljø	To belong. Means for a safe psychosocial school environment	Official Report	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2015-2/id2400765/	446
22 2015	NOU 2015:8 Fremtidens skole. Fornyelse av fag og kompetanser	The future school. Renewal of subjects and competencies	Official Report	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2015-8/id2417001/sec1?q=fremtidens%20skole#match_0	108
23 2017	Prop. 57 L (2016–2017) Endringer i opplæringslova og friskolelova (skolemiljø)	Amendments in the Education Act (school environment)	Proposition	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-57-l-20162017/id2539013/	89
24 2017 (in force 2020)	Overordnet del – verdier og prinsipper for grunnopplæringen	Principal Part – values and principles for basic education (National Curriculum)	Regulation	https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/	19
25 2017	Udir-3-2017 Skolemiljø	School environment	Circular Letter	https://www.udir.no/regelverkstolkninger/opplaring/Laringsmiljo/skolemiljo-udir-3-2017/	28

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*Laws and regulations may be updated; the years in this table are first-time resolutions.