Negotiating privatisation as public sector reform

Storylines and discourses of the Norwegian 'freeschool' reform between 2001 and 2005

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Acknowledgements

Preface

This research project was conducted in the period between the autumn of 2004 and the summer of 2012. Due to time and economic constraints work on the project was both full-time and part-time in combination with my work as a project leader for a place development project (a collaboration between municipality, county municipality and the Norwegian State Housing Bank) and, more recently, as a teacher in an lower secondary school (grades 8 to 10). Apart from attending conferences and seminars, a visiting fellowship at Lancaster University (March to July, 2006) and sporadic visits to nearby University of Agder, University of Oslo and Roskilde University, most of the work was done at home. While I do think that the work was intellectually rewarding, this lack of regular contact with other researchers and students was of course not ideal with respect to the project's progress. I was therefore fortunate to have two positive and encouraging supervisors, Allan Dreyer Hansen (Department of Society and Globalisation, Roskilde University) and Jan Svennevig (Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian studies, University of Oslo), that offered their help and support when needed.

I think it is useful for readers of this dissertation to already, at this stage, know something about the background for my choice of research approach and research theme. Firstly, my choice of discourse analysis as a research approach reflects a longstanding interest. This interest was spurred in 1999 at the University of Oslo as a student of the so-called 'regulation approach' that emphasises the role discourses play in the establishment of what is called 'modes of social regulation' (I shall return to the regulation approach in Chapter Five). This was my entry point into discourse analysis in general, and to the particular approaches that I examine, and also apply, in this dissertation: Glynos and Howarth's poststructuralist logics approach, Hajer's argumentative discourse analysis and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis.

All these scholars present their work as part of a tradition of critical social research. Fairclough is the most explicit about this critical commitment. He attaches his research to a widespread discontent with neo-liberal policies and forms of government that have been pervasive across the globe since the late 1970s and that have been influential in the policies of government's from not only the right but also the left. Having said that, it is important to emphasise that despite the current discontent with what is perceived as neo-liberal and despite the term neo-liberal for many has negative connotations, principles and forms of government that characterise neo-liberalism, are nevertheless still favoured by powerful social agencies such as

political parties across the world and international organisations such as the EU, OECD, IMF, World Bank and WTO. As Kristin Clemet, the Conservative's minister of education who passed the freeschool law in 2003, put it when confronted with often repeated accusations that she is a 'neo-liberalist': 'As long as the critics have a monopoly on the concept, I cannot [call myself a neo-liberalist]. But there are many of these core values [of neo-liberalism] that I see as important' (Aftenposten 2007).

Although the impact of neo-liberalism has been relatively limited in Norway compared to most other industrialised countries, I share the scepticism towards neo-liberal forms of government. This is also reflected in my choice of examining the freeschool reform, which, as I discuss further in the following, contains important neo-liberal elements *in addition to* other elements that cannot be labelled neo-liberal.

This dissertation therefore aims to contribute to a wider research theme by demonstrating how policies with neo-liberal elements, and more specifically, forms of privatisation as public sector reform, are sustained and challenged – or negotiated – by examining what and how *discourses* were used in the so-called freeschool controversy between 2001 and 2005. These discourses, and the *storylines* that they together contribute to create, can have performative power in the sense that they can bring into being the reality they claim to represent.

I will argue that the freeschool reform can be seen as a 'third way' project of a competition state that is characterised by its hybridisation of neo-liberal competition-oriented and welfarist forms of government. This is the reality that the discourses and the storylines I identify can sustain and challenge. My hope is that this dissertation can contribute to a better understanding of this reality, of what it is, and what it can be.

Per Christian Brodschöll

Abstract

In May 2003 the law on freeschools was passed by the Bondevik II coalition government (2001-2005, Conservative Party, Christian Democratic Party and Liberal Party). The law changed the criteria for being eligible to receive funding from the state to run private schools. Under the old regime it was only schools based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles that received public funding. With the new law all privately-owned schools that fulfilled the quality criteria that applied for public schools got the opportunity to get 85 percent of their expenses covered by the state. Financial support from the state was no longer dependent on whether or not the schools were based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles. Private actors would thereby play a greater role in the Norwegian school.

The reform was controversial. Whereas the government and the Progress Party saw the law as a step towards better quality in the school, more freedom of choice and also as easier to enforce than the old law, the red-green opposition (Labour Party, Socialist Left Party and Centre Party) saw it as an attack on the public school sector. After the parliamentary election in 2005, where the red-green alternative (Stoltenberg II government, 2005-) won a marginal victory, the law was reversed and replaced with a law similar to the old one.

Based on the examination of party manifestos, White Papers, bills, speeches, transcripts from parliamentary debates and newspaper texts that were part of the public debate about the law between 2001 and 2005, this dissertation offers a discourse analysis of the freeschool reform. The research aim is two-fold:

Firstly, it will describe and explain what and how discourses were used by the government and the Progress Party in order to sustain the freeschool reform, and by the red-greens in order to challenge it. Secondly, it will contribute to research on how privatisations as public sector reform are sustained and challenged by demonstrating the added-value of using a 'modified' poststructuralist logics approach.

The poststructuralist logics approach, which is developed by Jason Glynos and David Howarth, has a three-dimensional framework. In this framework *social logics* characterise the practices associated with the reform, whereas *political logics* and *fantasmatic logics* describe and explain how the reform was sustained and challenged.

In order to give claims about social logics theoretical substance the dissertation uses elements from the 'cultural political economy' approach developed by Bob Jessop to

contextualise the freeschool reform as part of an attempt by the Bondevik II government to make Norway competitive in the global knowledge-based economy. The dissertation also uses elements from the 'governmentality' approach as developed by Nikolas Rose to characterise the social logics of the reform as neo-liberal and as welfarist. By applying these approaches it is argued that *the reform is a 'third way' project of an emerging competition state*.

By modifying Glynos and Howarth's logics approach the dissertation demonstrates how different political and fantasmatic logics sustained and challenged the social logics of the reform. This is done by incorporating Maarten Hajer's concept of storylines and Norman Fairclough's concept of discourses into the logics approach. In this modified logics approach storylines, and the discourses they consist of, can sustain and challenge the social logics characterising the reform.

By applying this approach two competing storylines are identified. These are labelled *the necessary-supplement storyline* used by the parties in the government and the Progress Party, and *the destructive-release storyline* used by the red-green opposition.

The dissertation also identifies seven discourses that were central in the necessary-supplement storyline and that to different degrees and in different ways were challenged by the destructive-release storyline. These identifications demonstrate what and how discourses are used in order to sustain and challenge privatisation as public sector reform.

The seven discourses are as follows: (1) *an expert discourse* that legitimated claims about, among others, resources, social segregation and the law's ability to regulate unwanted practices of freeschools; (2) *a comparison discourse* about other countries, and then especially Sweden; (3) *a discourse of quality enhancement* that promised better quality in both private and public schools, better international competitiveness and that that tended to idealise the role of freeschools; (4) *a welfarist discourse* that emphasised that the reform would make the principle of equal right to education more real and that the reform would not cause more social segregation; (5) *a discourse of trust* in parents and in public schools; (6) *a discourse of agency* that gave parents and freeschools different roles in the social processes assumed to be facilitated as a result of the reform; and (7) *a discourse of the state's governability* that made it possible to respond to accusations about the reform being a destructive-release of market forces.

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1. Introduction

When Parliament today passes the law on freeschools, against the votes from the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party, and the Centre Party, this is only one step on the way to a freer and modern society, with greater freedom of choice, with alternative offers of schooling, not only built on different views on life or pedagogical methods, but schools where quality, engagement, and professional skills can be important elements.

> Søren Frederik Voie of the Conservative Party in the parliamentary debate when the law on freeschools was passed on the 27 of May 2003 (Ot. 2003)

The common public school and the idea behind it is actually a very fantastic vision. It started with a dream, a dream that all of the young in Norway, independent of parents, finances, background, and residence, should receive an equal right to school and equal opportunities to receive an education. It was a very long battle that led us there. The Leftist movement began, after that took over the workers' movement, and we were able to reach this vision, namely, that all children in Norway should have a common school, independent of birth, finances, parents, background, and residence.

The whole time there has been work to even out these differences. We shall never completely reach this goal. But the goal has the whole time been to give everyone equal opportunities, in the common public school. It is actually this the 100 years history in Norway has dealt with.

Today, this development and history ends. Today the parliament passes the most dramatic change in the welfare state's foundation in recent times. Today we change fundamentally the school system that we have had from decade to decade, under many political regimes. It will not be so that the school system is going to be completely different when we wake up tomorrow, or in a month, or in a year, but we have made the foundation for a fundamentally different system of school politics in Norway than what we have had for many decades.

> Trond Giske of the Labour Party in the same debate (Ot. 2003a)

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1.1. Research theme

The public school system is a – if not *the* – core sector of the Norwegian welfare state, and can be seen as the result of about 50-60 years of welfarist and social democratic politics. The ambition has been to ensure that the quality of schooling is equally good for everybody, irrespective of factors such as class, social status, gender, race and religion. Contemporary political debates feature different terms that refer to this ambition, including the 'unitary school system' (*enhetsskolen*) and the 'common school' (*fellesskolen*).

As with other core sectors of the welfare state, debates about the advantages and disadvantages of the introduction of more private alternatives in Norwegian education have traditionally been controversial. As the epigraphs from the parliamentary debates above suggest, this was also the case when the incoming-right-of-centre Bondevik II government (2001-2005, Conservative Party, Christian Democratic Party and Liberal Party) in October 2001 announced a new law on the public financing of privately-owned schools – or 'freeschools' as they were strategically called – at the primary and upper secondary levels in Norway.

With the new law privately-owned schools got the opportunity to get 85 percent of their expenses covered by the state if they fulfilled the same quality criteria that also applied to public schools. Financial support from the state was no longer dependent on whether or not the schools were based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles. Freeschools are therefore not to be confused with private schools that are self-financing and often commercially run. In 2002 the government-dependent private schools accounted for 4.2 percent in Norway. In comparison, the same number in the UK was 37.2 percent, Denmark 11.1 percent, Sweden 4.2 percent, Finland 5.1 percent, while the EU average was 17.4 percent (Eurydice 2005: 74).

On one side, the Bondevik II government and the Progress Party saw the law as a reform that would have a quality-enhancing effect on the whole school system, that would lead to more freedom for parents to choose, and that also was necessary for pragmatic reasons. On the other side, the red-green opposition (the Labour Party, Centre Party and Socialist Left Party) regarded the law as a move that would release the destructive forces of the market upon the Norwegian public school system. In this perspective the law was yet another instance of attempts to privatise a core sector of the Norwegian welfare state. For the red-greens, there were no good reasons for changing the existing regime.

The law was passed by the Bondevik II government and the Progress Party in May 2003. Then it applied only for primary and lower secondary schools. In October 2004 the law was

extended to apply also to upper secondary schools. About one year later, after the parliamentary election in September 2005, and as promised by the Labour Party and the Socialist Left Party during the election campaign, the incoming red-green Stoltenberg II government started to reverse the law, and in 2007 it was replaced with a law similar to the old one.

Based on the examination of party manifestos, White Papers, bills, speeches, transcripts from parliamentary debates and newspaper texts part of the public debate about the law between 2001 and 2005, this dissertation offers a discourse analysis of the freeschool reform. *One key aim is to describe and explain what and how discourses were used by the government and the Progress Party in order to sustain the reform, and by the red-greens in order to challenge it.*

Despite the fact that the reform was reversed and not fully implemented, this dissertation holds that a closer examination of how the freeschool reform was sustained and challenged – or *negotiated* to use the term used in the title of this dissertation – allows us to better understand contemporary Norwegian politics. Events since 2005 demonstrate that the issues debated during the freeschool controversy between 2001 and 2005 are still topical. There are three series of events that should be mentioned here.

Firstly, not long after the reform was fully reversed in 2007 it was exposed in the press that some private schools had broken the law by taking out profits. These were schools that were *not* based on alternative pedagogical or religious principles and that got permissions to establish schools, with 85 percent of their running costs covered by state funding, before the reversal of the reform. These private schools had been able to take out illegal profits by renting buildings and by buying services from companies owned by owners of the schools at excessive prices. After these revelations politicians from both camps were soon to repeat arguments familiar from the freeschool controversy between 2001 and 2005. On the one side, the red-greens took the revelations as an indication, if not evidence, for them being right about freeschools bent on breaking the confines of the law. The other camp, on the other hand, like the red-greens also denounced the actions of these private actors. They also repeated the claim that this was not the intention with the reform and that they, as expressed during the freeschool controversy between 2001 and 2005, concurred with the red-greens about the need for strict regulations concerning profits.[1]

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[1] See for example, Bergens Tidende (2008); NRK (2007a, 2007b).

Another issue that again made the law on private schools controversial concerned schools that were re-established as Montessori schools. Due to shut-downs of so-called neighbourhood schools in rural areas (*grendeskoler*), it has since the red-green's reversal of the freeschool reform been a tendency that they are re-established as Montessori schools. These are schools that offer education based on alternative pedagogical principles and that therefore are eligible to receive 85 percent of the running-cost covered by the state.[2] Concerns about this tendency for schools to re-establish as Montessori schools were expressed in April 2012 when it was revealed that Akademiet, one of biggest private school companies *not* based on alternative pedagogical or religious principles, had bought a Montessori curriculum in order to receive 85 percent in state funding. This meant that they could either 'transform' existing Akademiet schools into Montessori schools, or establish new schools in the larger cities in Norway. This time the red-green government was again given ammunition in their defence of the public school. They saw this is a 'loop-hole' in the law and signalled revisions of it if this tendency would continue. Ragnar Johansen, leader of the Norwegian Association of Vocational and Freeschools, where also Akademiet is a member, saw the incident quite differently: 'People adapt to this just as they adapt to tax and traffic regulations. You apply for what you have the opportunity to apply for and this is not illegal'.[3]

Discontent with the current private school regime was expressed again shortly after, this time by the parties that passed the freeschool law in 2003. At the Conservative Party's annual congress in May 2012 it was announced by the party, as well as by the other parties which passed the freeschool law in 2003, that if they got into government they would cooperate in order to once again change this controversial part of the Norwegian public education system. Prime Minister Stoltenberg of the Labour Party responded to this announcement by promising protest.[4] It is, in other words, an open question how long the present regime will prevail.

As I continue to discuss below, my usage of a discourse analytical perspective to examine how the freeschool reform was sustained and challenged by the usage of discourses inevitably entails that I not only make claims about *what* and *how* discourses were used, but also that I make claims about *what* characterises the reform and its associated practices and how these practices can be contextualised. With respect to this it is important to emphasise that my choice of research

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[2] See for example, Utdanningsnytt (2010); NRK (2011).
[3] See for example, VG (2012).
[4] See for example, Kommunal Rapport (2012); Høyre (2012); NRK (2012)

theme and case was by no means a random choice. Any analysis can be considered as a context-dependent social perspective that is influenced by, most importantly, the researcher's personal background and experiences within the academic field.

At the outset of this project the ambition was to examine, by using discourse analytical perspectives, how neo-liberal policies were sustained and challenged in debates about public-sector reforms in Norway. As has become all familiar, neo-liberal policies, which insist on the virtues of competition-oriented forms of governance, including privatisation and deregulation, have been circulating on the global scale since the late 1970s, and have been influential in many different areas of policy-making. Also after the financial crises starting in 2007-2008 this appears to be the case (see for instance, Jessop 2011; Pedersen 2011: 30-31). Although neo-liberal policies have had a modest impact in Norway compared to other Western industrialised countries, public sector reforms in Norway have also had distinct neo-liberal features (Mydske, Claes and Lie 2007).

Like many others, I see neo-liberal policies as problematic. However, this perspective means neither that this dissertation starts from the assumption that the law on freeschools was *purely* neo-liberal, nor that the law equalled a *full-blown* privatisation of lower education. Rather, as this dissertation demonstrates, the reform was characterised not only by neo-liberal forms of government, and the discourses used by the proponents of the law used cannot all be categorised as neo-liberal.

In general terms privatisation refers to a process where ownership, functions, responsibility, control, services, offers, or all of these, are transferred from the public sector to the private sector. This transfer often entails that neo-liberal competition-oriented forms of government associated with the private sector are introduced into public sectors. In the freeschool case it was a matter of allowing private actors to establish schools – as long as they fulfilled certain criteria and followed the law – and also receive financial support from the state. Thus, while the ownership would be private, the state would fund and could still regulate the operation of private actors who under the new regime could take over more easily some of the state's responsibility and functions, in this case the responsibility and function of providing children education. In this dissertation the freeschool reform is therefore understood as *a form of privatisation* of the Norwegian public education sector. Other examples of privatisation as public sector reform include, as I continue to discuss in section 13.4, child care and care for the elderly. The result of such processes of privatisation can be seen as a re-definition of the boundaries

between the public and private sector, and hence, as I shall argue in the following, a new and changed form of the state.

This means that despite a seemingly narrow focus on a particular case where the public school system is being negotiated, and despite the fact that the reform was actually reversed and not fully implemented, this dissertation *aims to contribute to knowledge about a wider research theme* by shedding light on other related cases of negotiations of the public-private boundary that involve multiple actors, participants, texts, sites and fora. Not only in Norway and not only with respect to the field of educational policies, but also in other localities and other policy fields.

This does not, however, mean that the empirical findings from this analysis can be generalised in any straightforward manner. Instead, it is the approach of this dissertation that each case demands detailed accounts that can capture their particularity and contextual specificity. However, as different cases may have certain affinities with each other, both the empirical findings and the particular research approach used to generate them may contribute to knowledge useful for research on related cases.

The next section starts describing this research approach. After that the chapter continues with an overview of the structure of the dissertation, a presentation of the empirical material that is examined, and, finally, a discussion of the limitations of the selected research design.

1.2. Research approach

The approach applied in this dissertation is a discourse analytical approach. This is an approach that has many varieties and versions. There are many ways to distinguish between them.

For instance, Glynos, Howarth, Norval and Speed (2009) distinguish between political discourse theory, rhetorical political analysis, the discourse historical approach in critical discourse analysis, interpretive policy analysis, and, discursive psychology and Q methodology. Wetherell (2001) provides another set of distinctions. She distinguishes between conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of conversation, discursive psychology, critical discourse analyses and critical linguistics, Bakhtinian research and Foucauldian research. Fairclough (1992: 37 ff.; see also 2003: 2-3; 2005b: 916) distinguishes between approaches that are 'textually-oriented' and those that are not. On the one hand, discourse analyses within a textually-oriented tradition often present detailed and complex analyses of how discourses are realised in a variety of linguistic forms – for example, metaphors, particular vocabularies, forms of argumentation, and so on. On the other

hand, other approaches that are typically inspired by the work of Foucault are more concerned with identifying and analysing 'larger-scale' patterns in terms of discourses at a particular moment within a particular social domain.[5]

Although some attention is paid to how discourses are realised in linguistic forms, this dissertation belongs to this latter category of discourse analysis. The research approach that is applied is much inspired by the poststructuralist logics approach of Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2007; Howarth 2008), which is again heavily inspired by the work of Ernesto Laclau. I attempt to combine their approach with elements of Norman Fairclough's (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Fairclough 1992, 2003, 2006) critical discourse analysis, which is characterised by its interdisciplinary engagements between different strands of social theory and linguistics; and with elements of Maarten Hajer's (1995, 2005) argumentative discourse analysis, which is inspired by social psychologists such as Harré, Davies, Billig, Potter and Wetherell. It must also be mentioned here that the work of Foucault (see for instance, Foucault 1972) exerts a strong influence on all these approaches.

As a whole, therefore, the approach of this dissertation can be called a 'modified' poststructuralist logics approach. While I shall return to a discussion of what these modifications entail in Part II, it is important here to emphasise that *another key aim of this dissertation is to contribute to research on how privatisations as public sector reform are sustained and challenged by demonstrating the added-value of using a 'modified' logics approach.*

To my knowledge, this form of combination between the three approaches mentioned above has not been attempted before. Firstly, there seems to be a lack of engagement between Glynos and Howarth's logics approach and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. On the one hand, researchers working with Laclau and Mouffe's perspectives have often presented a criticism of critical realism, which is a distinct philosophy of science that underpins Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (for example, Glynos and Howarth 2007; Hansen 2004), but direct engagements with the work of Fairclough are sparse. On the other hand, Fairclough (together with Chouliaraki) has engaged with the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985). While he does not accept their rejection of the distinction between the 'discursive' and the 'non-discursive' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 125-126), he does, as I discuss in section 6.3 and 7.2, appreciate the fecundity of their concepts of 'articulation' and 'logics of difference and

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[5] As I continue to discuss in Chapter Six, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach pays attention to both of these dimensions.

equivalence' (see for instance, Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 93, 124; Fairclough 2000a: 182-186; 2003: 45-46, 88-89; 2004: 119). But to my knowledge Fairclough, or other scholars working with or inspired by his version of critical discourse analysis, have not engaged with the Laclau and Mouffe inspired approach of Glynos and Howarth. Secondly, there appears not to have been any serious theoretical engagements between Hajer's approach and the two other approaches.[6] On the one hand, Torfing, in a study based on the poststructuralist perspective inspired by Laclau and Mouffe, applies the key concepts of Hajer's approach as supplements in one of his analysis, but his discussion of these concepts is rather limited (Torfing 2004: 52-54). Hajer (1993: 71-72, ftn. 9), on the other hand, in a remark he dismisses Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory for being idealist as it focuses solely on 'quasi-autonomous language games disconnected from the social practices in which they emerge' but fails to provide any explanation of this, in my view unwarranted, claim.

These three approaches to discourse analysis can in different ways, as I shall continue to discuss in Chapter Six, be placed under the wide umbrella of social constructivism. One common denominator of social constructivist approaches is that they seek to problematise how social phenomena are discursively constructed by social actors. By doing that, discursive constructions which are 'taken-for-granted' and made 'common-sensical', and that thereby can limit what can be said and what can be thought of, can be challenged. Knowledge about such discursive practices can, therefore, stimulate reflection about how to think and act in the present. It is useful at this point to discern, in a preliminary manner, some key social constructivist assumptions about discourses that underpin this approach.

Firstly, discourses are socially constructed and not pre-given by any natural law-like force, such as 'the word of God' or 'the iron law of capitalism'. Although social forces like religious social movements or labour movements can certainly influence discourses in a given field or domain, there is nothing natural or inevitable about this. This means that social agents can be seen as both the 'producers' and 'products' of discourses. Secondly, discourses are changeable. As we all know, what was perceived to be true or common-sensical a hundred years ago, is not necessarily perceived the same way today. The same principle applies for discourses that are invoked in different geographical localities. Hence, like languages, also discourses are

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[6] See, however, Phillips and Jørgensen's (2002) chapter on discursive psychology, which present approaches that have affinities with Hajer's approach. This book discusses the poststructuralist discourse of Laclau and Mouffe, Fairclough's version of critical discourse analysis and various approaches to discursive psychology.

dynamic rather than static phenomena. Thirdly, discourses can sustain or challenge social practices. This means that discourses are intrinsically linked with relations of power. As Hall (1997: 44) explains, discourse:

> defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. Just as a discourse 'rules in' certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct oneself, so also, by definition, it 'rules out', limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it.

It is in this sense that discourses are constitutive of social reality and have performative effects, and it is in this sense that we can say that discourses are penetrated by power.

If we accept the social constructivist proposition that social reality is socially constructed and that discourses can sustain or challenge social practices, then we can consider changes in discourses as part of processes of social change. Such a focus on discourse and social change is also a key characteristic of the three approaches to discourse analysis that this dissertation draws its inspiration from. Although there are, as I discuss in the following chapters, important differences between these three approaches, there are also some important similarities that are worthwhile to mention at this point.

Firstly, they are interdisciplinary. In all three approaches the analysis of empirical material, or texts, understood in a wide sense, occurs with considerations about their wider socio-cultural contexts. This is done by invoking perspectives developed by other social researchers working within different disciplinary fields. As I emphasised above with respect to the research aim of this dissertation, this entails that a discourse analysis, regardless of what particular approach or version it is, inevitably makes a claim about the context(s) and characteristic(s) of the object of study. As any such contextualisation and characterisation inevitability involves judgement, it is necessary to discuss what these practices of contextualisation and characterisation involves. I do this in Chapter Seven.

Secondly, they all seek to furnish a middle way between approaches that they see as either too structurally determining and approaches that grant social actors too much power. Examples of

the first can be orthodox Marxist ideological analysis characterised by their insistence on the effects the 'economic base' has on the social process (or 'superstructures'). Examples of the latter can be extreme versions of poststructuralist work that has been accused of being unable to provide explanatory accounts to somehow exceed 'thick descriptions' of the particularity of a situation, including social actors' interpretations of their own interests, preferences and strategic action. As I discuss in the following, the three approaches, in their attempts to steer such a middle way, advance different concepts in order to describe and explain the relationship between social practices at the 'micro-level' and the socio-cultural 'macro-level' that these social practices are part of and work to constitute. These attempts to find a middle way are related to the debate about structure and agency that is one of the central – if the not *the* central – debate within the humanities and social sciences. To relate it to the above point about discourses being socially constructed and not pre-given by any natural law-like force, these attempts can also be seen as attempts to provide satisfactory explanations of how social agents are both 'products' and 'producers' of discourse.

Thirdly, they share a critical attitude. The aim of all three approaches is to produce knowledge that may contribute to sustain or challenge the institutions and structures in which these practices both are embedded and constitute. This is done by deconstructing or denaturalising 'taken-for-granted' discourses that are presented as true and certain, and not as changeable social constructions. Such 'taken-for-granted' discourses are in the approaches of Glynos and Howarth and Fairclough conceived of as 'ideological' (see for instance, Fairclough 2003: 9-10, 58-59, Glynos and Howarth 2007: 117-120). In a preliminary manner, we can say that by working ideologically, discourses work to simplify the social reality so that subjects may identify with these discourses in ways that can potentially, and in more or less reflexive ways, inform their practices. According to such a perspective on ideology, discourse analysis can therefore describe and explain how ideology works and how it sustains or challenge social practices.

One common denominator of the critical attitude of these scholars – not so much Hajer as the other ones, and Fairclough more than Glynos and Howarth – is, as already mentioned in the preface, their scepticism towards neo-liberal policies and forms of government. Fairclough (2003: 202-203) attaches his critical stance towards neo-liberalism as part of tradition of critical social research that aims at achieving a 'better understanding of how societies work and produce both beneficial and detrimental effects, and of how the detrimental effects can be mitigated if not

eliminated'. Although the impact of neo-liberalism in Norway have been modest compared to, for example, the UK where Fairclough and Glynos and Howarth live, I share this scepticism and critical attitude. This is also reflected in my choice of the freeschool reform as a case.

1.3. Research aims

On the basis of the above discussion of research theme and research approach, the two overarching research aims of this dissertation can be formulated the following way: *One, to describe and explain what and how discourses were used by the government and the Progress Party in order to sustain the freeschool reform, and by the red-greens in order to challenge it; and, two, to thereby contribute to research on how privatisations as public sector reform are sustained and challenged by demonstrating the added-value of using a 'modified' poststructuralist logics approach.*

Next follows an overview of how I proceed in order to achieve these aims.

1.4. Overview of dissertation

The dissertation has four main parts that I have called '*background*', '*theory*', '*analysis*' and '*discussion and conclusions*'.

In Part One, I start by presenting a description of the different political parties and their positions in Chapter Two. After that I continue with a detailed chronological account of the debate on freeschools in Chapter Three; a discussion of the freeschool reform as a critical and paradigmatic case in Chapter Four; and a discussion of related research in Chapter Five.

In Part Two, I present the analytical framework. I proceed by following a distinction between '*meta theory*', '*research strategy*' and '*analytical procedure*'. In Chapter Six, the term 'meta-theory' is used to refer to the practice of theory construction and how social reality is made intelligible through the use of theoretical categories. In this chapter I clarify my view on the ontological status of the theoretical category of 'discourse'. A key question with respect to this is whether it is better to think of the social reality as discursive or as both discursive and non-discursive. In particular, this difference pertains to the poststructuralist approach of Glynos and Howarth that rejects any distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive, and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis that integrates a critical realist ontology that distinguishes between the discursive and the non-discursive. Once I have clarified my approach to this difference, there is a need to explicate how I proceed in my analysis. In Chapter Seven I do this

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by elaborating this dissertation's research strategy, that is, my strategy for describing and explaining what and how discourses were used in order to sustain and challenge to freeschool reform.[7] It is with respect to this research strategy that Hajer's work is particularly important, and in this chapter I specify how I modify the poststructuralist logics approach of Glynos and Howarth by incorporating elements of the approaches of Hajer and Fairclough. In Chapter Eight on 'analytical procedure', I pose more specific research questions in light of the presentation of the research strategy and describe and discuss how I proceed during the analysis of the empirical material in order to answer them.

In Part Three, I present a case study of the reform. After a short introduction in Chapter Nine, I proceed by following a distinction between '*contextualisation and characterisation*' and '*sustainment and challenge*'. The case study starts in Chapter Ten by using elements of the 'cultural political economy approach' as developed by Bob Jessop (2004; 2008; Jessop and Sum 2006; Jessop and Oosterlynck 2008) to contextualise the freeschool reform in a broader context of the global competitive knowledge-based economy and by using elements of the governmentality approach as developed by Nikolas Rose (1999; Rose, O'Malley and Valverde 2006) to characterise the reform as a form of what is called 'advanced liberal government'. Next, in Chapter Eleven I present the analysis of how the freeschool reform was sustained and challenged by examining the discourses that were invoked in the debate.

In Part Four I conclude the dissertation. In Chapter Twelve I discuss how the dissertation has responded to the two research aims presented above, and in Chapter Thirteen I present the general conclusion that can be drawn from it. Finally, in this concluding chapter, I also sketch out what could be avenues for further research on how forms of privatisation as public-sector reform are attempted sustained and challenged.

1.5. Description of empirical material

I have read and analysed texts produced between the parliamentary elections of 2001 and 2005. More specifically, I sampled five bodies of texts: (1) party manifestos; (2) bills from the Department of Education and Research to the parliament about the new law on freeschools; (3) committee recommendations from the Parliament Committee on Education and Research; (4)

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[7] I prefer the term 'research strategy' to 'method' (or 'methodology') because of the latter term's connotations with approaches that tend to present themselves as independent of theory in the sense that the method is somehow 'neutral' and able to produce 'true' knowledge (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 201; Åkerstrøm Andersen 2003: ix ff., 93 ff.).

transcripts from three parliamentary debates; and (5) newspaper texts part of the public debate about freeschools. In addition, in an unsystematic manner I also examined relevant White Papers (abbreviated 'St.mld.'), speeches and relevant research reports.

These texts are available to the general public. They are produced and circulated by key discourse-bearing institutions: the government, political parties and the mass media. In producing and circulating information and knowledge and by acting as links between public and private spheres, these institutions are central to the governance of society. As public arenas, the parliamentary debates and newspaper texts, and then in particular newspaper commentaries, give politicians the opportunity not only to legitimate their positions publicly, but also to delegitimate the positions of competing parties. Below I describe the five bodies of texts in more detail and how they were sampled:

- I analysed the manifestos of the Conservative Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, the Progress Party, the Labour Party, the Socialist Party and the Centre Party for the period 2005-2009 (a total of seven manifestos). Although few actually read party manifestos, these texts serve as guidelines for politicians representing different political parties. Here it is expected that the goals, targets, visions and strategies for the nation are spelt out. As such, the party manifesto is one of the most significant documents a political party produces. The manifestoes are available on the parties' websites and at Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) (see http://www.nsd.uib.no).

- Three bills (*odelstingproposisjoner – 'Ot. prp.'*) from the Department of Education and Research to the Parliament (*Storting*) about the new law on freeschools. The first of these bills proposed the new law concerning the public financing of privately owned primary and lower secondary schools (Ot. prp. 33 (2002-2003)). The second concerned the specific technicalities of the financing system (Ot. prp. nr. 80 (2002-2003)), and the third concerned the extension of the law to also apply for upper secondary schools (Ot. prp. 64 (2003-2004)). The arguments put forward in these documents were later articulated in other (con)texts by politicians belonging to the parties in the Bondevik II government. The bills are available on the Parliament's website (www.stortinget.no).

- Three recommendations (*innstillinger – 'Innst. O.'*) from the Parliament Committee on Education and Research to the parliament (Innst. O. nr. 80 (2002-2003); Innst. O. nr. 127 (2002-2003); Innst. O. nr. 1 (2004-2005)). These three recommendations referred to the three bills described above. The recommendations are available on the Parliament's website (www.stortinget.no).

- Three transcripts of parliamentary debates (*Odelstingdebatter* – abbreviated to 'Ot.' – Ot. 2003a, 2003b, 2004) where the three bills were debated and voted on. It is important to note that most matters and issues are in reality already decided when the respective parliamentary committees have made their recommendations – even though the final vote still remains. Nevertheless, as discussed above, as important public arenas parliamentary debates do provide politicians the opportunity to publicly voice their views. The transcripts are available on the Parliament's website (www.stortinget.no). The three transcripts from the parliamentary debate that I have analysed have a total of 105 pages (font size 12, single spaced): Ot. 2003a: 56 pages; Ot. 2003b: 23 pages; Ot. 2004: 26 pages.

- 594 newspaper texts that were published in 20 national, regional and local newspapers in the period 19.10.2001 to 12.9.2005 – from the first day of the Bondevik II government (2001-2005) to the parliamentary election that resulted in their replacement by the Stoltenberg II government (2005-). The newspaper texts were sampled by the use of Atekst, which is an online commercial service enabling access to the archives of 40 (per 7.8.2008) Norwegian newspapers (see http://www.retriever-info.com/atekst.php).[8] The archives contain all the material published in the hard-copy editions of these publications. I searched these archives by entering the search code "friskoler" OR "frittstående skoler" OR "private skoler" OR "friskoleloven" in the field labelled "fritekst". This search resulted in 1928 hits in 20 different newspapers – 18 in 2001; 289 in 2002; 401 in 2003; 266 in 2004 and 954 in 2005. This gave a total of 2216 pages (font size 12, single-

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[8] These newspapers were (listed according to most hits): Aftenposten, Adresseavisen, Dagsavisen, Stavanger Aftenblad, Bergens Tidende, NTB, Dagbladet, Nordlys, Kommunal Rapport, VG, Klassekampen, Fædrelandsvennen, Dagens Næringingsliv, Troms Folkeblad, Bladet Tromsø, Brønnøysunds Avis, avis1, Harstad Tidende, Journalisten, and Teknisk Ukeblad.

spaced).[9] Of course, not all of these texts were of interest, and after reading them I sampled a total of 594 texts. The publications of these texts were dispersed throughout the whole period: 2001: 7 texts; 2002: 103 texts; 2003: 165 texts; 2004: 62 texts; and 2005: 257 texts.

Different actors, including politicians, editors and journalists, regular columnists, 'experts' of various sorts, and representatives for various interest groups wrote these texts. Further on, these texts belonged to different genres, such as news reports, feature stories, editorials, and commentaries. Although I have sampled and analysed these text types, I have restricted the following analysis to commentaries written by national politicians belonging to one of the seven parties referred to above, and to news articles where these politicians made statements either in the form of interviews or by being directly reported. I do, however, on some occasions make references to these other texts – as well as to other relevant texts that I came across during the course of this research in order to substantiate claims about certain elements of the debate.

In sum, well over 2000 pages make up the empirical material on which this dissertation is based. All texts that referred to in the dissertation are listed under '*Primary Sources*'.

1.6. Limitations of research design

The research design of any study has limitations, and the identification of such limitations can suggest fruitful directions and guidelines for future research into related themes. It is with this outlook that I would like to draw the attention to three limitations of the chosen research design.

First of all, it would have been beneficial to include semi-structured or unstructured interviews with some of the central actors in the debate, for instance, the different parties' members of the Parliament Committee on Education and Research. I could also have chosen to interview freeschool owners (or what I in section 8.3 call 'interests groups in favour of the law'). There are three reasons why such interviews would have been valuable. Firstly, in addition to the provision of more empirical support for the claims that I make in the following analysis, the inclusion of interviews could potentially also have enabled me to generate other findings as well. One reason why, is that compared to the texts that I have sampled, interviews could probably

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[9] It should be mentioned that on some occasions the same articles were reprinted more than one time in different newspapers, and that a limited number of the sampled items appear only to have been published online.

have provided more informal and spontaneous usages of discourses. Secondly, the conduction of interviews with some of the central actors could have generated more information about important issues, aspects and events in the debate. Supplemented with the analysis of the newspaper texts (in addition to other texts as well), such interviews may have allowed for a better understanding of the debate at an earlier stage in the research process. Thirdly, a second round of interviews with some of the central actors in the debate towards the end of project could have provided valuable indicators about the validity of my empirical findings. As Hajer explains, 'discourses are inferred from reality by the analyst. Yet when respondents are confronted with the findings, they should at least recognize some of the hidden structures in language'. Hence, as Hajer further elaborates, 'to revisit some key actors is a way of determining if the analysis of the discursive space made sense' (Hajer 2005: 307).

A second limitation of the research design of this dissertation concerns its aim to contribute to research on how privatisations as public sector reform are sustained and challenged. Instead of an analysis of a single debate, several debates could have been analysed, for instance, debates on the privatisation of public sectors such as health care, care for the elderly and childcare. This far more ambitious research design could potentially have generated findings that may indicate a stronger affinity between the presence, usage and forms of combination of discourses in different debates. Yet, the on the other hand, such a research design could potentially work against the aim of providing a detailed account that can capture both particularity and heterogeneity. Thus, there is a tension between, on the one hand, the inclusion of more empirical material in order to generate findings that may indicate stronger affinity across different policy fields, and, on the other hand, the provision of detailed and complex accounts.

A similar tension relates to the third limitation of the chosen research design, which I think should be made explicit. The time span in which I analyse the texts is relatively limited. Future research on how forms of privatisation as public sector reforms are sustained and challenged could be conducted by collecting texts produced over a longer time span. This could potentially enable clearer accounts of developmental trends with respect to discourses. Such longitudinal research could also be more limited in the number of actors and instead analyse internal struggles for hegemony within powerful social agencies, for instance, within the Norwegian Labour Party or the Conservative Party.

Part One: Background

2. The political parties

In this chapter I briefly describe the different political parties that were part of the debate about freeschools. This description directs the attention to strategic considerations that can explain why the composition of the parliament between 2001 and 2005 was like it was and can therefore also contribute to explain why the different political parties used particular discourses in the debate. It is, however, important to emphasise that it is the approach of this dissertation that the usage of discourses cannot be explained solely by references to strategic interest of actors such as, for example, political parties. Rather, discourses are also seen as constituting, or 'gripping', subjects – in this case political parties and politicians. Furthermore, through their capacity to 'grip' subjects, discourses are also seen as able to potentially change interests and practices – including, importantly, those of political parties. I return to these issues in Chapters Six and Seven.

In what follows I start by describing the parties in the Bondevik II coalition in section 2.1, and then in section 2.2 I describe the parties in the red-green opposition.

2.1. The Bondevik II coalition and the Progress Party

In 1981 the Conservative Party was elected into government with a record high of 31.7 percent of the votes. The party had in that year almost doubled its electoral support it had at the end of World War II. After the parliamentary election in 2005, however, the situation was different. Compared to 1981 the Conservatives had lost 17.1 percent of its votes, from 31.7 percent in 1981 to 14.1 percent in 2005. This record low support was unprecedented in the post-war period. Most of the voters were lost to the Progress Party (Bjørkelund 2005). The Progress Party had gone from 4.5 percent in 1981 to 22.1 percent in 2005. In sum, however, the number of voters supporting these two parties situated on the Right has remained stable since 1981 (36.3 percent in 1981 and 36.2 percent in 2005). This means that the balance of political forces on the Norwegian right has changed dramatically between 1981 and 2005.

Until the 2005 election the Conservative Party, as well as the other 'centrist' parties (the Liberal Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Centre Party), had rejected invitations from the Progress Party to form a government, despite the fact that the Bondevik II government often had been dependent on the parliamentary support of the Progress Party. Support from the Progress Party was also crucial when the law about freeschools was passed in May 2003. It was, and still is it seems, mainly because of what the other parties perceived as xenophobic attitudes

and irresponsible, populist (here understood in a negative sense of the term) position of the Progress Party that a *cordon sanitare* has been set up by the other political parties to exclude the Progress Party from participating in government.[10] This kind of moral condemnation has been a common response among other 'traditional' parties in other Western European states that have experienced a rise of what is seen as right-wing populism (Mouffe 2005: 72).

According to the Minister of Education of Research, Kristin Clemet of the Conservative Party, the most important priority in the government's educational policies was to improve the quality of public schools. As discussed further in Chapter Ten, the freeschool reform can be seen as part of the reform-package, which was introduced in order to achieve this aim. However, in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed in May 2003, Clemet also gave three additional reasons why the law was necessary: firstly, it would expand parental right which under the old regime was limited; secondly, it would expand freedom of choice which was valuable in itself; and thirdly, it would make the financing system of government-dependent private school more pragmatic (Ot. 2003).

For the Christian Democratic Party, public financial support to Christian private schools has been a key issue during the whole post-war period. At the same time the party has been a staunch defender of the public school system. Therefore, according to the red-green opposition, there was no good reason why the Christian Democratic Party should embrace the new law about freeschools. However, the Christian Democrats, of course, saw it differently. As Lyngstad of the Christian Democratic Party stated during the parliamentary debate when the law was passed: 'For the Christian Democratic Party there is no conflict between a strong public school and the possibilities for freeschools' (Ot. 2003a). By and large the Christian Democrat's discourse of the new law was similar, but not identical, to the Conservative Party's discourse.

The Liberal Party, which is the oldest political party in Norway (established in 1884), often prides itself that it was they who fought for the first school law in Norway – the so-called '*folkeskoleloven*' of 1889 (see for instance, Skei Grande 2002). In the post-war period it has been a centrist party, often with the capacity to tip the balance of political power in favour of the Left or the Right. Also their discourse of the law was similar, but not identical, to the Conservative Party's discourse.

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[10] Apart from *cordon sanitare* another metaphor that has been used to describe the relationship between the Progress Party and the other parties was that party had not become '*stueren*'. This is a Norwegian expression for when dogs have become house-trained.

The Progress Party can generally be characterised as being positioned to the right of the Conservative Party in the Norwegian political landscape. It was the first party to propose a removal of the condition that financial support from the state should be dependent on schools being based on alternative religious and pedagogical principles. This they did in 1999, but their proposal was rejected by the other parties, including the Conservative Party (Stortinget 1999; for a discussion of this debate, see Tuastad 2006: 398). When the law was passed in May 2003 Sortevik therefore saw the law as 'a small, but important step on the Progress Party's road to schooling' (Ot. 2003a).

2.2. The red-green opposition

The Labour Party has, broadly speaking, been the most powerful political party in Norway since 1945. Between 1945 and 1981 they were in government for circa 29 out of 36 years, and between 1981 and 2001 the Labour Party had been in government in 11 out of 20 years. As discussed above, their strong grip was challenged in the 1980s when the Conservative Party, in coalition with the Christian Democrats and Centre Party, was in government between 1981 and 1986 (the Willoch government) and between 1989 and 1990 (the Syse government). In 2001 the party had its worst parliamentary election ever in the post-war period. While their average electoral support in the preceding parliamentary elections in 1981, 1985, 1989, 1993 and 1997 had been 36.8 percent, in 2001 it slumped down to 24.3 percent. Most of the votes were lost to the Socialist Party, which in the preceding five elections had an average of 6.9 percent, but in 2001 it received 12.5 percent of the votes.

Just as political commentators in 2005 discussed how the Conservative Party was experiencing an identity crisis, many in 2001 considered the record-low support of the Labour Party in similar terms. An often repeated argument was that the party had made a step to the Right. By some estimates it could be argued that the Stoltenberg I Labour government between March 2000 and October 2001 actually privatised more than the following Bondevik II government did between 2001 and 2005. This included the partial privatisation of the state-owned oil and gas company, Statoil, and the telecommunications company, Telenor.

In the 2005 parliamentary election campaign, however, the Labour Party seemed to invoke a discourse that had a more distinctive welfarist profile. They had for the first time joined hands with the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party in an attempt to win the election. An

important part of Labour's 'new' profile was an explicit rejection of the idea that policies of privatisation and increased competition would lead to more welfare, and resistance against the law on freeschools was announced as a key issue, along with unemployment and the privatisation of care for the elderly (NTB 2003a). The leader of the Labour Party, Stoltenberg, explained this position on the law on freeschools in a newspaper article shortly before the 2005 annual party congress:

> Basically we think that the state should take responsibility for basic welfare services such as schooling and health care. We have always meant so, but the issue has become more pressing as a result of the increased privatisation of the school system. Before, private schools used to be a supplement. Now, it is a matter of release.   (Stoltenberg in Aftenposten 2005a)

In previous debates about the need for private alternatives in lower education, the Socialist Left Party has perhaps been the staunchest defender of the public schools system. To the abhorrence of the Progress Party (see for instance, Sortevik in Ot. 2004), the Socialist Left Party's manifesto of 2001-2005 also stated that they would aim to have the state take over private schools (Sosialistisk Venstreparti 2001). Thus, when the Bondevik II government proposed the new law about freeschools, opposition to it became a key issue for the Socialist Party. Accordingly, in March 2003 the Socialist Left Party signalled that they would reverse the law if they were to be a part of the government after the parliamentary election in September 2005. They also warned what they saw as 'investors' seeking to profit from freeschools against establishing them (Halvorsen in NTB 2003c). This party, moreover, saw the law as a step in the wrong direction, and, according to Reikvam, the debate over it clearly showed the cleavage of Left and Right in Norwegian politics. In his view, the law was a 'frontal-attack' on the public school system:

> The ideologies are not dead. If somebody, contrary to expectation, believed those who have said that the ideologies are dead, then this matter should refute this claim. This issue which we are dealing with makes visible the ideological differences. On the one hand we have the Progress Party, together with the parties in the government, launching a frontal-attack on the public common school. It is not only

the school that they attack; they also attack one of the basic pillars of the welfare

society.   (Reikvam in Ot. 2003a)

The Centre Party has always supported the law on private schools that grants schools, based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles, financial support from the state (Meltveit Kleppa in Ot. 2003a). Compared to the other parties, the Centre Party is best known for its concerns about maintaining Norway's dispersed settlement pattern. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the party voiced concerns about the law's effects on so-called 'neighbourhood schools' (*grendeskoler*) in rural areas. It was also with respect to neighbourhood schools – as I show below in section 11.2.3.2 – that the party strongly insisted that the parental right to choose would become more limited as a result of the new regime. Mostly because of this perceived threat to parental rights, the Centre Party expressed disappointment with the Christian Democratic Party, which – as discussed above – has traditionally defended parental rights (see Meltveit Kleppa in Ot. 2003a; Skjælaaen 2002b).

On the other hand, on at least one occasion, the Centre Party also disagreed with their coalition partner the Socialist Left Party in the issue of freeschools. In June 2005 Reikvam of the Socialist Left Party announced that, if they became part of the government, the party wanted to reduce financial support to private schools that did not represent an alternative to the public schools. According to Skjælaaen of the Centre Party, this move would be a step in the wrong direction because it would increase tuition fees in private schools, leaving only pupils from wealthier families able to enrol: 'If we do what the Socialist Left Party suggests, then we shall actually be left with the 'snob' schools. I should assume that this is the contrary to the Socialist Party's original aims (Skjælaaen in Dagsavisen 2005a).

3. The chronology of the debate

This chapter presents a chronological account of the major events of the debate over freeschools in order to provide a detailed historical perspective on this particular case. It starts with a description of the period between 1945 and 2001, and then follows a more detailed description of the period between 2001 and 2005.

3.1. Debates about private schools between 1945 and 2001

The public school has traditionally been a corner stone in the Norwegian educational system, and a core sector of the Norwegian welfare state.[11] As early as 1889, a law giving seven-year-olds-the right to seven years of public schooling was implemented, and, in contrast to other European countries, the percentage of private schools in Norway has always been very low. Nevertheless, debates about private schools have divided the political landscape in Norway since 1945 (Karlsen 2006: 152-153; Tuastad 2006).

Until 1970 these debates primarily revolved around the question *if* particular private schools should receive financial support from the state. A Conservative government passed the first law on private schools in 1970 that granted the opportunity for private schools to establish themselves with 85 percent support from the state if they were based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles. In addition, one could establish schools if there was a quantitative need for particular forms of schooling, for example, schools offering particular forms of vocational training. Then, as in 2003, the majority of private schools were Christian schools. During what can be called an intermezzo in a period dominated by the Labour Party, the law was passed in 1970 by the Conservative Party, the Christian Democrats, the Centre Party, and the Liberal Party, which tipped the parliamentary balance in favour of the law (Tuastad 2006: 329-330).

In 1985 a new law on private schools was introduced by the Conservative Willoch government (1981-1986). The main rationale behind the new law was pragmatic: instead of making several amendments to the law of 1970, a new law that was adapted to the new realities was passed (Tuastad 2006: 342).

Between 1945 and 2001 the Left, and then especially Labour (but also the Socialist People's Party, later called the Socialist Left Party) later on, feared an erosion of the public school system and saw private schools as a step towards a more segregated society. For them the

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[11] In this section I rely primarily on Tuastad (2006).

establishment of religious schools would threaten social cohesion by leading to 'minority group uniformation', more intolerance, and a potential threat to the autonomy of pupils whose parents enrolled them in 'extreme' religious schools (Tuastad 2006: 300, 304). In addition, they would threaten geographical equality because private schools would get financial support at the expense of neighbourhood schools in rural areas. Another reason was that neighbourhood schools in rural areas with a low number of pupils could 'lose' pupils to private schools, thus making it harder or impossible to uphold them (Tuastad 2006: 308, 331, 359).

The Right, on the other hand, and then in particular the Conservative Party and the Christian Democrats, feared the homogenisation (*ensretting*) of the Norwegian society. They often drew parallels between the public schools system, the Left's position in the debate about public funding of private schools, and countries behind the Iron Curtain (Tuastad 2006: 315, 348). For them it was intolerant to deny minority groups the possibility of establishing private schools with public support. The Right, and then especially the Christian Democratic Party, saw the Left's position as inconsistent with Norway's ratification of the UN Human rights convention and its emphasis on the rights of parents to choose schools for their children. The Right also saw the Left's position as inconsistent with their alleged egalitarian principles. The reason was that public financial support to private schools would lower costs for private schools, and this would in turn lower tuition fees and thereby enable parents with low incomes to enrol their children in private schools. The lack of public financial support for private schools, they argued, was not fair in the sense that it did not provide equal opportunities to choose alternative schools. In other words, such a school system would favour children with parents who could afford to pay schools fees (Tuastad 2006: 322-323). Another recurring argument was that private schools would lead to a pedagogical renewal. Yet, this was rejected by the Labour Party, which claimed that the private schools would be allocated resources that instead the public schools could have used to stimulate pedagogical development (Tuastad 2006: 344).

Although the political frontlines sketched out above were clearly demarcated in the period between 1945 and 2001, this does not mean that the arguments put forward by the opposing camps necessarily were consistent. The Right, on the one hand, seems to have put forward consistent arguments and the differences between these parties were by and large negligible. The Left, on the other hand, was inconsistent in their arguments during this period. Tuastad (2006: 364) has noted the changing argumentation of Labour in the period between the laws of 1970 and 1985: 'From warning, in stark terms, against private schools [in 1970], the representants of the

Left almost competed with each other to emphasise that private schools should get support [in 1985]'. Thus, in the debate about the law of 1985, the opposition against private schools had seemingly vanished. One main reason was that the Left's predictions in the 1960s did not materialise. After the implementation of the 1970 law there had been no dramatic changes in the number of private schools, and the percentage of private schools in Norway remained low.[12] The idea, then, that private schools posed a threat to public schools during the debate about the law of 1985 did not appear as convincing as it did during the debate in 1970 (Tuastad 2006: 365).

This means that in the period between 1970 and 1985 a change had occurred in the political climate. The opposing camps came closer to each other, and in 1985 there was a consensus about the principle of state funding to private schools which were considered as supplements to public schools. This change on the Left can also be seen in light of the neo-liberal wave that started to influence many Western European countries during the late 1970s and early 1980s. In Norway, this influence, among others, manifested itself in a distinct peak in the electoral support of the Right in 1981, when the Conservative Party obtained 31.7 percent of the votes and saw the Conservative-led Willoch government replaced the Brundtland-led Labour government.

However, this changed attitude of the Left towards private schools does not necessarily indicate that the Left had stepped towards the Right. As Tuastad (2006: 343, 364 ff.) explains, the Left did not abolish their egalitarian principles in these debates. Instead, because the new law no longer was perceived as a real threat to public schools and the egalitarian principles underpinning them, the Left moderated their position accordingly without abandoning their strong support of the public school system. While there was a consensus about the principle of state funding for private schools based on alternative religious and pedagogical principles, the Left, and then in particular Labour and the Socialist Party, were still reluctant to an increase in the number of private schools. Private schools were seen as legitimate supplements, but should not increase in number at the expense of the public school system.

3.2. The debate about freeschools 2001 and 2005

One can divide the debate about freeschools between 2001 and 2005 into two phases: the first starting from the incoming government's publication of the so-called Sem Declaration in early

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[12] For example, between 1970 and 1975 the number of pupils in private schools had increased from 10 000 to 14 000 (Tuastad 2006: 339).

October 2001 where the new law was signalled and up to November 2004, just before the law was implemented; the second period between the implementation of the law and the parliamentary election in September 2005, which among others, resulted in the reversal of the law.

3.2.1. From the Sem Declaration in 2001 to the implementation of the law in 2003

When the Bondevik II government signalled the new law in the Sem Declaration, the debate about private schools again made the frontlines between the Left and Right re-emerge. In the declaration it was stated that:

> The coalition government will secure and promote diversity in the school system and between school alternatives. The law on private schools must be improved by simplifying the criteria for approval and significantly shortening the period for processing applications. The coalition government will introduce financial support for capital costs and consider an increase in support to running costs. The purpose is to secure an economic foundation for the parents' and pupils' opportunities to choose.   (Sem-erklæringen 2001)

In April 2002 the government introduced a bill for the replacement of the law of 1985. The most significant change was that the premise for obtaining public support was different. Financial support from the state was no longer dependent on the criteria of schools being based on alternative religious and pedagogical principles. Given the fact that the Right was in government and had the majority of seats in the Parliament, it was expected that the law would be passed.

In the autumn of 2002 the national budget for 2003 was proposed. It contained an increase in funding to private schools of over 30 percent, while allocations to the public schools, according to the opposition, were reduced or remained more or less the same. This disagreement seemed to have escalated the debate about freeschools, and the frontlines started to emerge more clearly (see for example Reikvam in Dagsavisen 2002c).

The publication of the report '*The school knows best*' (UFD 2002) at the end of November 2002 also seemed to further entrench the two opposing camps. The report was part of the government's so-called 'modernisation programme' for the public sector, whereby lower education was one of three key sectors (the two others were the municipal sector and the merging

of employment, national insurance, and social-security services into one single organisation, known as the NAV reform (see AAD 2002: 18).

'*The school knows best*' report was based on national and international tests, as well as 'central research', as Clemet puts it in the introduction of the report, available at that time. The key elements of this report addressed the fact that Norway's performance was mediocre on international tests, despite spending a record high amount of resources on education. This report, then, can be seen to have paved the ground for the presentation of the bill before the Parliament's Committee on Education and Research in mid-December 2002 (Ot. prp. nr. 33 (2002-2003)).

In contrast to debates surrounding the law of 1985, the frontlines in the debate seemed to have changed. Questions concerning equality were brought to the fore to a greater extent. The Left argued that the new law constituted a serious attack on the welfare state and its egalitarian foundation. The law would accelerate an erosion of the public schools system and eventually cause more social segregation, as the field of education would be privatised. For the opposition, and then in particular the Socialist Left Party and the Labour Party, the law on freeschools seemed to stand as a key example of all the misguided policies that the government pursued under the banner of freedom.[13]

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[13] This appropriation of the polyvalent, and highly contested, term of 'freedom' was opposed. One illustrative example of how the meaning of the term was contested was the attempt by the Socialist Left Party to 'de-colonise' and reclaim the concept of freedom shortly after the law was passed in May 2003 by publishing a pamphlet entitled '*Freeschools for everybody*'. Central in this pamphlet was the idea that schools should be free to decide what subjects and courses should have priority and how the time should be spent. The party's leader, Kristin Halvorsen, described the agenda behind this attempt to reclaim the concept of freedom the following way:

> A public school must not be understood as the awful 'straitjacket-school' [tvangsskolen], while the private school is taken to be something much better. I use the concept of freeschool totally deliberately in order to explain that the schools must tear themselves away from the unitary school and adapt themselves more to the pupils' needs. It is the only way we can avoid getting more private schools and greater differences between the offers of teaching for our children.
>
> (Halvorsen in Dagbladet 2003a)

However, the Labour Party (as well as the Union of Education) did not appreciate this attempt by their allies to de-colonise the concept of freedom (Bergens Tidende 2003). Their disbelief seemed to be further stimulated when Halvorsen's response to a direct question from a journalist affirmed that freeschools in the Socialist Left Party's view would allow pupils, if they wanted to, to choose to have Latin instead of physical exercise. Although Halvorsen shortly after acknowledged that she had gone too far in her promise (Halvorsen in Dagbladet 2003a and in Dagsavisen 2003a), this attempt to reclaim the concept of freedom from the Conservatives seemed to have failed and may also have contributed to the erosion of the credibility of the Socialist Left Party as a 'responsible' party. (Halvorsen used the expression '*Jeg tok visst for mye Møllers tran*' in her 'retreat' in the question concerning freedom of schools to choose subjects and number of hours. This expression alluded to an expression in a television commercial for the brand Møller's cod-liver oil (*tran*) where the person playing in it exceeds his own powers and abilities (for example by kicking a ball too hard and hitting a window so that it breaks) and explains it by saying that he/she had taken too much of the product).

The Right rejected the claims that the new law would increase social segregation; such fears were, as in the 1960s, unwarranted. They had heard it all before. In the words of Inge Lønning of the Conservative Party, 'there is nothing new under the sun' (Ot. 2003a). As in previous debates, instead of increasing segregation, the Right argued that the law would reduce segregation by lowering running costs for private schools, thus reducing tuition fees so that 'everybody' could afford to enrol their children there. In addition it constituted an 'ideological shift', as Ine Marie Eriksen of the Conservative Party expressed it in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed in May 2003, as it 'secures freedom of choice also for those who want other possibilities than a religious or pedagogical alternative' (Ot. 2003).

In June 2003 an amendment to the law concerning the technicalities of the funding system of freeschools was passed. The government's proposition was that funding to freeschools should be based on the average expenses for running public schools in the respective municipality. The Socialist Left Party supported the proposition, but the Labour Party and the Centre Party did not. As the Progress Party was against this proposition, the Socialist Left Party had thereby helped to secure the government a majority decision on this issue. Because of their support, the Socialist Left Party managed to introduce a formulation in the law that stated, 'The hosting municipality or county shall give a statement before the department makes a decision' (UFD 2003: § 2-1). Voie, of the Conservative Party, in a newspaper article considered the Socialist Party's support as an indication of their having become 'modern': 'with respect to local freedom of action and diversity in the school, they have moved away from the old socialism'. He also represented the Socialist Left Party as an important 'supporter': 'With respect to educational policies, the Socialist Left Party is an important supporter for us. Although it is an opposition party, it has a lot of modernism in it. They are concerned about finding good solutions that will take the school a step forward' (Voie in Dagsavisen 2003b). Nielsen of the Labour Party, on the other hand, saw the Socialist Party's support of the government's policies as a 'betrayal', as she forcefully claimed in a newspaper comment entitled *'The Socialist Left Party rescued private schools'*:

> The Socialist Party's somersault in Parliament on 12 June will be remembered as one of their worst betrayals. It is really sad to see how the Socialist Left Party during the questions about the financing of private schools (the schools for the rich) abandoned their original intention to reject all financial solutions proposed by the

government and Kristin Clemet, and in the eleventh hour embrace the Conservative minister. (Nielsen 2003)

Yet, Reikvam rejected such criticism of being co-opted by the Conservatives by arguing that the concessions the Conservative had made with respect to the municipalities' statements actually ensured a more acceptable solution than the one originally proposed (Reikvam in Dagsavisen 2003b).

The period leading up to the municipal election in September 2003 saw representatives from different political parties using the law on freeschools as a key issue and in early September the Labour Party, as did the Socialist Left Party in March the same year, signalled that they would reverse the law if they got into government (Adresseavisen 2003a).

In October 2003 the new law was formally implemented, but it applied only to primary schools. In December 2003 a bill concerning the extension of the law to also apply for upper secondary schools was introduced. This extension had been requested by the parties of the Bondevik II coalition and the Progress Party. The government's hope was that the extension would be implemented in time so that everything would be ready before the start of the next school year, starting in August 2005. In December 2004 the law applied also for upper secondary schools.

3.2.2. Freeschools in Norway between 2004 and 2005

In the school year 2003/2004 there was a total of 115 primary freeschools with about 12.000 pupils. This amounted for 1.9 percent of pupils in primary education. These schools were Steiner schools (33), Christian schools (57), and Montessori schools (25). By April 2005 there were a total of 430 applications from both primary and upper secondary schools, and 135 of them wanted to begin in the autumn of 2005 (NTB 2005f). The fact that the Socialist Left Party and the Labour Party had announced that they would reverse the law if they got into government may explain the sudden rush.

With respect to primary schools most applications came from actors wanting to establish schools based on alternative religious principles. With respect to upper secondary schools, however, a large number of applications came from actors wanting to establish so-called freeschools in the larger cities, such as Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Tromsø, and Stavanger.

Among them were actors that already ran schools commercially in Norway, such as Sonans, Noroff, and Akademiet. For these actors, the transition from being private to become government-dependent private schools – or freeschools – posed fewer challenges compared to those actors who wanted to establish themselves from 'scratch'. One significant actor included in this latter category was the newly established Norwegian branch of John Bauer, which is part of Scandinavia's largest franchise of education, Ultra Education (Dagsavisen 2005c; Kommunal Rapport 2005c).

As the county municipalities are responsible for upper secondary education, the county assemblies were, as discussed above, obliged by the law to make a statement about the desirability of the establishment of freeschools in their juridiction. These statements were then sent to the Directorate of Education and Research, which processed the applications.

The rush of applications from actors such as Sonans and John Bauer spurred heated debates in Norwegian municipalities about the desirability of such schools, and also forced a clarification of how much emphasis the Directorate should put on the statements made by the county assemblies.

Oslo municipality was the only one in Norway, where the political majority was positive to the establishment of freeschools by actors such as Sonans and John Bauer. In the other counties, often the Christian Democrats and in some cases also the Liberals and Conservatives supported recommendations by the county assemblies to reject the establishment of private upper secondary schools as they feared that it could damage the municipal public school system. Also, the tendency of these actors offering only popular and relatively cheap programmes of study, such as 'media and communication', 'economics and management', and 'general studies' (*allmennfag*) seemed to have reinforced scepticism among municipal politicians. Thus, the coalition began to crack, and freeschools were no longer represented only as supplements, but also as potentially competitors to the public school.

Clemet, who was the Minister of Education of Research, associated the Christian Democrats' resistance against the law with an issue of tolerance and appeared to suggest that it indicated a lack of respect for the principle of parental right: 'The members of the Christian Democratic Party have demanded respect and tolerance for those parents who want to choose religious schools. They should show, then, the same respect and tolerance for those who want to choose other freeschools' (Clemet in NTB 2005g). Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik responded to the county municipalities' resistance at the annual congress of the Christian

Democratic Party, by announcing that the government would ease the reductions, which were the result of the new financing system of private schools, in the state's regular funding to the municipalities from 77 to 62 million NOK. He also announced additional economic relief to municipalities if it turned out that the growth in number of freeschools was primarily among upper secondary schools offering cheaper programs of study (NTB 2005a; see also Bondevik 2005).

At the end of May 2005, the Department, headed by Clemet, provided the Directorate of Education and Research with guidelines of how to deal with both the applications and the statements made by the county assemblies. The Directorate's response to the applicants was more in accordance with the comments produced by the county assemblies than was perhaps expected by the critics of the freeschool reform. While applicants that fulfilled the quality criteria set by the state were allowed to establish schools, the Directorate severely limited the number of pupils allowed to be enrolled compared to what was originally applied for. The result was that freeschools such as Sonans, Akademiet, and John Bauer would have classes with very few pupils, thus making the running costs higher. The rationale behind this decision was to prevent a negative effect on the county-municipalities' upper-secondary-schools structures. If the total number of places applied for were more than what the Directorate considered the county-municipality needed; then the applicant would have to share a limited number of places among themselves (Bergens Tidende 2005c). This decision made it very hard, if not impossible, for the would-be freeschools to offer prospective students schooling in August that same year. For example, John Bauer, Sonans, and Akademiet had together applied for about 12.000 school places, but only received approval for about 650 for the 2005/2006 school year (Kommunal Rapport 2005a). Consequently, only 17 out of 28 schools started in the autumn of 2005 (Dagsavisen 2005b; NTB 2005c) Thus, for these freeschools, the decision by the Directorate was negative. It was also seen as breaching the intention of the law, which was supposed to make it easier for private actors to establish schools as long as they fulfilled the criteria of quality set by the state. The Progress Party, which earlier had seen the freeschool reform as a step in the right direction, expressed such criticism. This is how Sortevik voiced his discontent in a newspaper commentary shortly after the decision was made public:

> The Directorate for Education and Research are actually breaking the intention of
> the law. That intention is that it should be easier to establish free-standing schools

in order to secure and facilitate diversity in schooling. In my view, it is in breach with the intention when applicants get an approval based on quality and content, but at the same time an indirect rejection through a limited allowance of pupils per class that permits neither a good learning environment nor a reasonable school budget.   (Sortevik 2005)

In many ways, then, this decision by the Directorate was the beginning of the end of the attempt to reform the financing system of government-dependent private schools. After a marginal victory by the red-greens in the 2005 Parliamentary election, the incoming government, as promised, soon began re-designing the law with the intention of limiting the establishment of private schools not based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles. However, it is an open question of how long this regime will remain unchallenged. As discussed in Chapter One a new majority constellation on the Right may very well once again try to change the system.

4. The freeschool debate as a critical and paradigmatic case

In the introduction I argued that the examination of freeschool case allows for the demonstration of the added-value of using a 'modified' logics approach to describe and explain what and how discourses are used to sustain or challenge privatisation as public sector reform. As this claim and particular choice of case is part of the background for the analysis presented in this dissertation, below I will describe and discuss how Flyvbjerg's *Making Social Science Matter* (2001) is helpful when problematising both the choice of case study as a *method,* and the particular choice of a, or several, *case(s).*

4.1. Case study as a method

Case study research is not a straightforward exercise. In order to explain what case studies ought to be, Flyvbjerg (2001: 66-87) identifies what he sees as five common misunderstandings, or oversimplifications, about case study as a research method.

First of all, case study research is not about *predicting* what will happen, and it is not about *proving* a necessary relationship between social events or practices. Rather, it is about *learning*. With respect to research and researchers, this process of learning can be thought of in two ways. Firstly, the attention to detail characteristic of case studies is important for the cumulative and collective development of a nuanced view of the segment of the social reality that is being examined in the case study. Secondly, cases are important for the researchers own learning process in developing the skills needed to do good research. As Flyvbjerg argues (2001: 72), too much distance, either in the form of a lack of empirical research *per se*, or the use of empirical material only for illustrative purposes, creates a risk for researchers to enter into a 'ritual academic blind alley' where the form of the research becomes more important than the content of the research.

The second correction presented by Flyvbjerg concerns claims about case studies being biased towards verification of the researcher's preconceived notions and assumptions. Although it can be said that it is a general human attribute to search for, and use information that confirm preconceived notions and assumptions, case studies are still viewed by many as less rigorous and less 'scientific' than other quantitative studies and hypothetico-deductive methods as they 'ostensibly allow for more room for the researcher's subjective and arbitrary judgements' (2001: 82). Even if such criticism is useful because it, in the words of Flyvbjerg, 'sensitizes us to an

important issue', it misunderstands what is involved in good case study research. As Flyvbjerg points out, it is often reported by researchers conducting case studies that they have obtained a new understanding of the object of study and that they consequently changed their preconceived notions and assumptions. Such activity, writes Flyvbjerg, 'is quite simply a central element in learning and in the achievement of new insight' (2001: 84). This is not to suggest that researchers conducting case studies are better learners or more open to new insights than researchers using other methods. Rather, the point is that the case study method's attention to detail and 'real-life' situations open up these possibilities.

A third correction by Flyvbjerg concerns the misunderstanding that one cannot generalise on the basis of an individual case and that therefore case studies cannot contribute to scientific development. By reference to Galileo's classic study on gravitation, Flyvbjerg (2001: 74) repudiates this claim. When conducting his now famous experiment of dropping an object from the leaning tower of Pisa, Galileo reasoned as follows:

> If the objects with the same weight are released from the same height at the same time, they will hit the ground simultaneously, having fallen at the same speed. If the two objects are then struck together into one, this object will have double the weight and will according to the Aristotelian view therefore fall faster than the two individual objects.

For Galileo this, and at that time predominant, Aristotelian view appeared as counter-intuitive. Thus, in order to exclude weight as a factor in the explanation of how gravitation occurs, he conducted the experiment from the leaning tower in Pisa. This means that Galileo did not conduct a series of experiments; rather, it was a single case study that paved the way for a new understanding of how gravitation works. This same insight about singular case studies and generalisability applies also in the social sciences and the humanities.

Related to this correction concerning the generalisability of case studies, is Flyvbjerg's rejection of a fourth common misunderstanding. This misunderstanding rests on a view that case studies are only useful for generating hypotheses as a first step in an overall research process. According to such a view, the hypotheses generated through case studies can subsequently be tested in a later stage in the research process by using other methods. This misunderstanding

stems from the previous misunderstanding that one cannot generalise on the basis of singular case studies.

Finally, Flyvbjerg deals with the misunderstanding that it is difficult to summarise and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of case study research. Flyvbjerg responds to such criticism by emphasising that case studies are about learning and about developing a nuanced view of the selected object of study. In such a perspective, the lack of neat summaries and clearly developed theoretical propositions has more to do with the richness and complexity of the segment of the social reality that is being examined, than it has to do with the case study method. Good case study research, should, Flyvbjerg maintains, not necessarily attempt to achieve conceptual unity and closure on the expanse of attention to detail and ambiguities of the segment of social reality that is being studied. Ideally, case studies should be read in their entirety, and their presentation should allow the reader to occupy the space of a reader who can make up his own mind about what the case is a case of. This means that details, ambiguities, contradictions and peculiarities that the researcher intuitively finds interesting and relevant, should not necessarily be left out of the account of the case study as these may allow for different understandings of the case.

With respect to generalisability, Flyvbjerg (2001: 77-81; see also Glynos and Howarth 2007: 202-204) outlines four types of cases that can be chosen depending on the research question and the object of research. The first type encompasses *extreme* or *deviant* cases that can serve to illuminate particular phenomena in a dramatic manner. Glynos and Howarth (2007: 202-203) give the example of the ways in which Foucault in the *Birth of the Clinic* (1973) juxtaposes the practices described in a medical report from the middle of the Eighteen century (on the treatment of a hysteric involving, among others, twelve hour baths over a period of ten months that resulted in the literal disintegration of bodily parts) with the point of view of 'modern' medicine in order to highlight our sense of discontinuity and to underline the contingency of different modes of medical practices. The second type includes *maximum variation* (or 'anomalous' or 'peripheral') cases. These are cases that are chosen because of their differences with respect to dimensions such as size, form of organisation, location and so on. By choosing cases in this manner it is then possible to assess the extent of these dimensions affect particular outcomes. The third case type is the *critical* cases that allow for the weakening or strengthening of hypotheses and accepted explanations. It is helpful here to distinguish between 'least likely' and 'most likely' cases. A typical 'least likely' case is South Africa's transition from the

apartheid system to democracy (Howarth and Glynos 2007: 203). Because of its racial and ethnic divisions, and because of it unequal distribution of resources, it was often believed that the transition to democracy would not be as peaceful as it was. Other examples concern the occurrence and the absence of working-class revolutions. On the one hand, the fact that the Russian revolution occurred in the least developed capitalist country – or one of the 'least likely' candidates – problematised the linear Marxist account of historical development. On the other hand, the absence of working-class revolutions in more developed and more class-based capitalist societies such as in Britain – or 'most likely' candidates – problematised Marxist theories of social change and revolution (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 203). In short, we can therefore say that critical cases allow researchers to obtain information that permits logical deductions of this type, 'if this is (not) valid for this case, then it applies to all (no) cases' (Flyvbjerg 2001: 79). Finally, there is the fourth case type, which Flyvbjerg refers to as *paradigmatic* cases. These are cases that can come to demonstrate the dynamics of a wider group of related cases, and that can highlight the more general characteristics of the societies, or segment of social reality, in question. Flyvbjerg gives the example of Foucault's study of European prisons and the 'Panopticum' as a study that allowed for description and explanation of the workings of the 'disciplinary society'. Glynos and Howarth, on the other hand, give the example of the apartheid discourse in South Africa as 'an exemplary form of racist discourse' (2007: 203).

4.2. Critical and paradigmatic aspects of the freeschool case

The above typology of cases is not exhaustive and some cases may fit into more than one of these categories. It is my contention that the freeschool debate can be seen as both a critical and paradigmatic case. Before I argue why this is so, it is necessary to briefly discuss how paradigmatic and critical cases are identified.

With respect to critical cases, Flyvbjerg (2001: 78) emphasises the importance of the researcher's experience and suggests that only general advice is to look for 'least likely' and 'most likely' cases. With respect to paradigmatic cases, Flyvbjerg (2001: 79-81) emphasises that there are no valid guidelines for identifying such cases. Further, he stresses that both the researcher's experience and intuition is crucial, and that 'it is not possible consistently, or even frequently, to determine in advance whether or not a given case is paradigmatic' (2001: 81). Hence, researchers 'make up reasons' to justify their intuitive choice of particular cases after, or during, the research process. This is not necessarily a problem since these justifications can be the

ex-post tests if these intuitive reasons are generally valid and acceptable both by the relevant community of scholars and relevant community of practioners. In the end, concludes Flyvbjerg 'Like other good craftsmen, all that researchers can do is use their experience and intuition to assess whether they believe a given case is interesting in a paradigmatic sense, and whether they can provide collectively acceptable reasons for the choice of case' (2001: 81).

In what ways then, is the debate over freeschools critical and paradigmatic? In order to answer this question it is necessary to a return to the argument discussed in the introductory chapter, that attempts to reform parts of the public sector by privatisation are characterised by the use of neo-liberal discourses. My choice of the freeschool reform as a case can therefore be seen as being guided by a 'most likely' strategy to identify a critical case. After having followed the debate on the reform as it unfolded *in situe,* and after having analysed unsystematically sampled texts part of the debate, I found it was likely that the freeschool case allowed me to examine both the use of neo-liberal discourses in attempts to sustain privatisation as a reform of the Norwegian public sector, and opposition to such attempts. Hence, following Flyvbjerg's reasoning we can therefore propose that if particular use of neo-liberal discourses, and opposition to these discourses, occurred in particular ways in this specific critical case, we can assume that there are significant similarities in related cases.

This latter point leads us to the question of the paradigmatic status of the freeschool case. As stated in the introduction, I hope that the findings, and the theoretical framework used to generate them, can be used in related research on privatisation as public sector reform. In other words, this suggests that the freeschool case can be seen as a case that enables the examination and demonstration of *what* and *how* discourses are used to sustain or challenge privatisation as public sector reform. As I show in the case study in Part Three, in the red-green's perspective the freeschool reform was a key example of the alleged misguided policies of privatisation pursued by the Bondevik II coalition. Yet, on the other hand, the Bondevik II coalition rejected such claims about privatisation by using other terms to describe it and by invoking different discourses. They also emphasised that the freeschool reform was only one among several policies that they would implement, and had implemented, in the field of education. In this study I will, therefore, restrict myself to arguing that the freeschool debate has *paradigmatic traits* that exist independently of the magnitude and assumed social impact of the freeschool reform. In the next chapter research on privatisation as reform of the education sector will be reviewed and discussed.

5. Related research

5.1. Introduction

While research on public sector reform in Norway appears to be extensive, discourse analytical research is limited. This was also confirmed in an evaluation of Norwegian political science commissioned by the Norwegian research council where calls were made for more discourse analytical research on Norwegian public policy and administration (NFR 2002: 80). Further on, and although political debates on educational policies are important sites for the generation of legitimacy, research on educational politics and policies has had a marginal position in Norwegian political research (Karlsen 2006: 58). As such the analysis offered in this dissertation, responds both to calls for the application of a type of approach previously neglected and to research on a marginalised object of political research in Norway. However, there are accounts that are of interests with respect to the focus and discourse analytical approach of this dissertation. These are mainly those of Karlsen (2006) and Tuastad (2006), and to a lesser extent those of Telhaug (2005) and Neumann and Sending (2003).

On the one hand, Karlsen's (2006) book *Education, Governance and Marked: Norwegian Educational Polices in an International Perspective* sets out to examine the marketisation of Norwegian education since the early 1990s.[14] The aim is to provide key concepts and categories needed to understand this trend (Karlsen 2006: 23). Central assumptions in the book are that the restructuring of education in Norway can be understood as a part of a wider, and neo-liberal inspired new public management reform and that this restructuring has to be understood and explained by examining changes in the global economy. On the other hand, Tuastad's (2006) doctoral dissertation, *The school and the question of state power: Parliamentary debates 1945-2005 about religion in school and private schools in light of normative theory*, uses political theory, and then normative theory in particular, descriptively in contrast to normatively, to characterise the different 'normative argumentation constellations', that forms the basis for political parties positions in party manifestos and parliamentary debates about religion and private schools in the period between 1945 and 2004 (2006: 2-5).[15] This research aim is based on the assumption that such an examination can capture the dynamics and demarcations and

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[14] In Norwegian: '*Utdanning, styring og marked: Norsk utdanningspolitikk i et internasjonalt perspektiv*'
[15] In Norwegian: '*Skulen og statsmaktspørsmålet: Stortingsdebattar 1945-2005 om religion i skulen og om private skular i lys av normative teori*'

possibly inconsistencies of 'normative argumentation constellations' in Norwegian politics in this period of time (Tuastad 2006: 3, 423, 448-449).

In the following section I will discuss the work of these Norwegian scholars in relation to an analysis of recent educational reforms in England provided by Ball in his book titled *Education plc: Understanding private sector participation in public sector education* (2007). There are three good reasons for choosing to approach related research in this way:

Firstly, the analysis put forward by Ball is more comprehensive and both methodologically and thematically more relevant to this dissertation than the analysis put forward by these Norwegian scholars. Secondly, Ball adopts a similar critical position as Fairclough, Hajer, Glynos and Howarth, and has published extensively on issues concerning education policy, education reform and social class, and is an internationally recognised researcher on these issues (see for example Ball 1990, 1994, 2008). Thirdly, although the analysis Ball put forward concerns England, he contends that the generality of his analysis also holds relevance to many other national settings as 'England holds a particular position as a political laboratory of political transformations, first under Thatcher then under Blair, which exports policy solutions across the globe' (Ball 2007: 5). This role of England as an exporter of policy solutions is also emphasised by Karlsen (2007: 117) who highlights that the Norwegian political debate on education since the early 1990s has been inspired by Blair's policies.

In addition to a discussion of the findings of the above-mentioned Norwegian scholars, I will also compare Ball's, and to a lesser extent Karlsen's, research approach with the approach of this dissertation. I discuss Ball's findings and their relationships to the findings of this dissertation in more detail in the discussion in Chapter Twelve.

5.2. Ball's understanding of private sector participation in public sector education

Based on the analysis of different policy documents, media texts, websites, brochures and 21 interviews of a range of what he refers to as 'education industry services actors' (for example executives and consultants working for private companies) (2007: 11), Ball sets out to examine the privatisation*s* – in plural and not singular – of education in England since the late 1990s. The aim is 'to understand, interpret and begin to explain the phenomena' (2007: 1).

In Ball's view most of the existing research literature on the educational privatisation in England 'rests on rather lazy binaries which contrast a particular version of 'the private' with a particular, often rosy, version of 'the public'. Instead Ball wants to

move beyond a simply juxtaposition of public/private to explore the blurrings and elisions between them and to analytically audit in a critically constructive fashion the different privatisations currently under way, as well as to re-insert and re-assess the role of the state in relation to privatisation.   (Ball 2007: 15)

In Ball's analysis, privatisation of education is therefore treated as a manifold and heterogeneous phenomena, and he puts forward an extensive analysis of the different types of privatisations ranging from the use of private actors to provide educational 'hardware' such as buildings and food catering, and educational 'software' such as interactive whiteboards with associated staff training and consultancy programs designed to run and improve 'failing' schools. The result of the different privatisations he examines is a redefinition of the boundaries between the public and private sectors. He situates this redefinition of boundaries in the broader context of public sector reform in England, and by presenting his analysis he hopes to contribute to knowledge about current public sector reforms in general (Ball 2007: 16-17).

Ball is eager to describe his own position on the matter of privatisation of education. Although he concludes that most privatisations entail that moral obligations are subordinated to economic ones, and what is at stake is the very concept of education itself (2007: 185), he also emphasises that he takes 'very seriously the failures of the public sector and the contributions of the private sector to social justice' and that there is a 'need to avoid ethical simplicities' (2007: 85). For Ball, there is no going back: 'a blanket defence of the public sector, as it is or as it was, over and against the destructive inroads privatisation is untenable. There is no going back to a past in which the public sector as a whole worked well and worked fairly in the interest of all learners'. The reason why, Ball continues, is that 'there was no such past' (2007: 187). At the same time Ball points out that this is not a defence of the private sector as a whole, but that his position 'may involve an acceptance that some kinds of private sector participation are more defensible than others and that some public sector 'work' is not as defensible as all that' (2007: 187).

In his analysis, Ball draws upon the method he has termed 'policy sociology', which is both 'ontologically flexible and methodologically pluralist' and which allows the analysis to be 'pragmatic and eclectic' with respect to the usage of theory and concepts. More specifically, he employs three sorts of analytic tools – 'discursive, structural and interpretive' – which enable him

'to explore the complex interactions of social relations, economics and discourses without assuming the necessary dominance of any of these' (2007: 1).

I will discuss these three 'tools' and how Ball uses them in turn. I shall start with what he refers to as 'interpretive' tools. The reason why I start with these is that it is Ball's *interpretations* of the accounts of private actors that enable him to map-out the 'flesh and bones of new discourses and structures, its subjects and disseminators and relays' (2007: 12). Thereafter I will further discuss in more length and detail the 'structural' and 'discursive' tools he uses, and what these sort of tools offer the understanding and explanation of privatisation(s) of education.

First of all, and based on 21 interviews with education industry services actors, Ball interprets and analyses the discourses of 'private actors'. In addition to providing 'the flesh and bones' of discourses and structures, Ball states that 'their insights were also of great strategic importance to my understanding of privatisation(s) and its complexities and conundrums' (2007: 12). Yet, Ball is reluctant to categorise the discourses that these actors use. Although 'there are strong common elements across the interviews in terms of motives, purposes and values', their discourses 'are blurred and elude simple categorisation' (2007: 12). I shall return to this in section 5.3 below and in Chapter Twelve. Next section discusses the 'structural tools' Ball uses.

5.2.1. An emerging competition state

With respect to structures, Ball contextualises and characterises the privatisations of education by drawing on Jessop's state theory (most notably Jessop 2002) and in particular his notion of a shift from a Keynesian national welfare state (after the economist John Maynard Keynes) to a Schumpeterian workfare post-national regime (after the economist Joseph Schumpeter who has inspired much theorisation on how the state should stimulate technological innovation and diffusion) (2007: 3-11; see also below and section 10.2).

Also Karlsen emphasises that the new public management reforms, and their associated marketisation of Norwegian education, must be understood in an international context (Karlsen 2006: 24). He presents a range of different perspectives on the emergence of these reforms, and their relationships with globalisation and the idea that education is instrumental in the search and maintenance of the state's economic growth and international competitiveness (2006: Ch. 3, 246, 91). Yet, in contrast to Ball, Karlsen in my view does not put forward analytical tools needed for a more comprehensive understanding and explanation of the relationship between changes in the global economy and reforms of national education. As stated above, Ball does this by drawing on

the work of Jessop and by applying a discourse analytical approach. Jessop's state theory is heavily influenced by the regulation approach and in order to understand his notion of a shift in the role of the state, it is worthwhile to briefly review the emergence and some of the key concepts of this approach.

The regulation approach originated in France as a response to the perceived failure of prevalent neo-classical economics and orthodox-structural Marxism to provide a satisfactory account of the economic crises that started to hit Western industrialised countries in the mid 1970s. In contrast to positivist neo-classical economics, on the one hand, the regulation approach emphasised that economic relations were always socially embedded and that there were discursive, or 'extra-economic', factors that influenced economic development. On the other hand, the regulation approach also rejected the structuralist Marxist notion of capitalist reproduction on grounds that it closed the room for agency to either reproduce or challenge capitalist modes of production. The regulation approach thus attempted to bring back the subject in economic theory: They were not to be considered as passive supporters of capital relations of production but as active bearers of structures (Jessop 1997).

The key question the regulation approach seeks to answer is how capitalism, despite what is seen as its inherent contradictions and unsustainability, manages to reproduce itself. One key concept within the approach is 'regime of capital accumulation'. It refers to a particular social order characterised by a relatively stable economic growth, like for instance during industrial Fordism. Another key concept is 'mode of social regulation'. This concept refers to the variety of regulatory mechanisms, including the role played by discourse in political contestations (see for instance, Barnes 1997; Peet 1997), which work to sustain the growth and stability of regimes of capitalist accumulation. When there is an institutional 'fix', or 'match', between regimes of accumulation and mode of regulation, then stable economic growth can occur. One key assumption within the regulation approach is that Western economies has experienced a shift in both regimes of accumulation and modes of regulation from more 'closed' national economies characterised by protected domestic industries and welfarist modes of regulation, to more open and globally-oriented economies characterised by competition-oriented and market-friendly modes of regulation (see for instance, Dunford 1990; Jessop and Sum 2006; Peck and Tickell 1995).

Jessop (1994; Jessop and Sum 2006: 111-115) has theorised this transformation as a shift from a Keynesian welfare national state (KWNS), to a Schumpeterian workfare post-national

regime (SWPR).[16] In this new regime, one of the key roles of the state is to stimulate technological innovation and diffusion, and thereby enhance the competitiveness of the national economy in the global economy. In contemporary Western industrialised economies, knowledge is assumed to be the most important resource, and learning is considered to be the most important process. Consequently, debates over which strategies states should pursue in order to become competitive in the so-called global knowledge-based economy have become key sites for the generation of both legitimacy and illegitimacy of how to govern.

As Ball emphasises, the new SWPR competition state did not, and is not coming into existence in a stable, comprehensive or systematic manner. Rather, its form is still emerging. It is crystallising out of the response to, and management of, the crises and the conditions deemed as appropriate by the emerging post-Fordist accumulation regime (Ball 2007: 5, see also pp. 28-29, 38). Moreover, the particular form and institutional architecture of the SWPR is seen as still 'emerging from "fumblings" and "muddling through", as changing by trial and error' and as mediated by discursive struggles over the nature and significance of the inadequacies of the 'old' regime and a realisation of the inadequacies of neo-liberal responses as an initial response (Ball 2007: 5).

Three interesting claims about the emerging competition state can be read from Ball's analysis. These regard, firstly, the shift in the role of the state; secondly, the distinction between phases, or stages of development, in this shift; and, thirdly, key aspects accompanying this shift. I shall examine these claims in more detail.

Firstly, of particular importance in Ball's analysis, is the claim that one aspect of this shift is that the role of the state has changed from being a *deliverer* to becoming a *controller*, *monitor* and *commissioner* of public services, and a *broker* of social and economic innovation, instead of deliverer or even owner and funder (Ball 2007: 5). Karlsen, in his analysis of the reforms of Norwegian education since the early 1990s, makes a similar argument. According to Karlsen the Norwegian welfare state is under pressure. While welfare is still a responsibility, it is not necessarily a task for the government. The ambition is now to use, and to control, the market better (2006: 117; see also p. 238).

Secondly, Ball also suggests that it may be useful to view the privatisation of education as a process involving two phases. The first phase involves building social relationships between

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[16] These are the terms preferred by Jessop (Jessop and Sum 2006: 109). Ball (2007) uses the terms Keynesian national welfare state and Schumpeterian workfare state.

private actors and the public sector that can serve as a basis for further developing 'a social framework for market relations' (Ball 2007: 96). The creation of trust is essential in these relationships and entails that doubts and fears related to the practices of private actors are removed or minimised. The second more 'mature' phase, offers two alternative interpretations. Firstly, a cynical interpretation would see the first phase as a step towards a marketisation of public education involving more work and better profitability for private actors. A less cynical view would be to see these private actors as a new kind of 'third way' social actors, which Ball (2007: 99) suggests we can view as 'hybrid or composite social subjects who represent a mix of entrepreneurism and public service values'.

Thirdly, Ball distinguishes between three sorts of processes accompanying recent public sector reforms and the associated shift in the role of the state: *destabilisation*, *disinvestment* and *commodification* (2007: 20 ff.)[17]

Destabilisation refers to those processes whereby established roles and functions of the state's delivery and provision of public services were challenged, and hence destabilised, by a romantic and hegemonic neo-liberal discourse that typically excluded 'market failure and negative externalities' (2007: 21). It was out of the simplistic binarisation of 'the public' and 'the private' sectors; by the invocation of a 'discourse of derision' (2007: 20) that presented the public services and public sector by generalising from simple cases; and by stereotypification that neo-liberal approaches emerged. Although neo-liberal solutions failed to deliver as promised, and thereby 'ensured the inevitability of its failure' (Ball 2007: 21), these approaches are still present in a new 'third way' mix of policies which can be understood as attempts by left-of-centre governments across the world over the last two decades to find a new direction that goes beyond the socialism of the old Left and the neo-liberalism of the New Right.

Ball's analysis therefore suggests a distinction between two phases, or stages, in the shift from KWNS to SWPR state in England. He distinguishes between an earlier neo-liberal phase under the Thatcher government (1979-1990) and a later, but arguably still current, third way phase usually associated with the Blair government (1997-2007) (Ball 2007: 9-10, 21). Therefore, 'an account that relies solely on an analysis of privatisation in terms of neo-liberalism is bound to be flawed' (Ball 2007: 10). In contrast to neo-liberalism, with its discourses of 'magical solutions' to the 'problems' of the public sector, and an accompanying 'fairly

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[17] Here Ball draws on Whitfield (2001).

unreflexive belief in the markets and the private sector as the engine of national competitiveness' and 'which regards state intervention as almost always counter-productive, the Third Way rests on a more flexible adoption of a "flexible repertoire" of states roles and responses' (2007: 21). Ball writes that 'my point is that neo-liberalism and the Third Way are the same and different. They are different kinds of policy mixes' (2007: 21).

In addition to Blair's, the most known examples of 'third-ways' are Clinton's New Democrats in the US (1993-2001) and Schröder's Social Democratic Party and their *Neue Mitte* in Germany (1998-2005). Although the term 'third way' today is seldom used to refer to political phenomena, it does, in my view, nevertheless provide a way of grasping the phenomenon of centrist politics. As such, Giddens, who is recognised as one of the 'architects' of Blair's third way, may be right when he claims that 'third way politics will be the point of view with which others have to engage (Giddens 2000: vii).[18]

Norwegian researchers have also identified a third way policy-mix in Norway. First, Ball's suggestion is consistent with the conclusion of a wider study of power and globalisation in Norway headed by Neumann and Sending between 1998 and 2003. In the conclusion of this study they write that 'what characterises governance in Norway, in all its different concrete forms and expressions, is the tension and link between a welfarist and a neo-liberal political rationality' (Neumann and Sending 2003: 250). Secondly, it is compatible with Telhaug's suggestion that the so-called 'Clemet school' (after the Conservatives minister of education Kristin Clemet, 2001-2005) can be characterised as 'a social democratic neo-liberal school' (Telhaug 2006: 291). Thirdly, the identification of a third way policy-mix also seems consistent with the conclusion of Tuastad's dissertation on the 'normative regime' in Norwegian politics between 1945 and 2005, which he analyses by examining parliamentary debates about religion in schools and private schools. With correct reservations about the generalisability of his study, which is restricted to two policy issues in one policy field (Tuastad 2006: 444, 449), Tuastad seems to attempt to rescue the social democratic governments in Norway (mainly the Labour Party) since 1945 from accusations by a range of other Norwegian scholars of having abandoned welfarist principles in favour of neo-liberal thinking characterised by market-oriented forms of governance, more

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[18] For further analysis of New Labour's third-way, see Bastow and Martin (2005); de Reyes (2005); Fairclough (2000b); Giddens (1998); Gilbert (2000); Leggett (2005).

freedom of choice and increased individualism (2006: 442-449).[19] In contrast to these scholars Tuastad stresses that also the Conservative Party invoked welfarist concerns in the debate on private schools as well as in the law itself (2006: 443-444). Finally, also Karlsen's study seems to be consistent with Ball's identification of a prevalent third way policy-mix in England. In his study Karlsen chooses to conclude his analysis by relating his discussion of the current, and prevalent, ways of how to govern education in Norway to a discussion of the UK Labour Party's third way (Karlsen 2006: 236-239). The main reason why, is that while the Stoltenberg I Labour government (2000-2001), like the UK's Labour government headed by Blair (1997-2007), was perceived to have taken a step to the right in the political landscape and pursued a third way by, most importantly, actively using market-oriented forms of governance in the fields of higher education and health care, the incoming Stoltenberg II red-green coalition government (2005-2009) explicitly signalled their reluctance and opposition towards marketisation (2006: 239). Karlsen puts it this way: 'Somewhat simplified we can say that the electorates mandate after the election in 2005 is to reform the market-state', and within the educational sector he gives the example of the Stoltenberg II government's reversal of the freeschool reform (2006: 242).

This review of related research on Norwegian educational policies suggests that the freeschool reform can be characterised as a form of third way government. I discuss this further in Chapter Ten.

Disinvestment, or re-investment as Ball prefers, refers to new forms of financial control and allocation accompanying recent public sector reforms. Ball highlights two different forms: Firstly, within the public sector there has been a reorientation towards output-oriented funding based on performance or competitive success. Secondly, there has been a tendency to reduce direct funding of public sector organisations to redistribution to 'private, voluntary and quasi-public sector organisations' for the delivery of public services and an accompanying process of making state agencies into freestanding and self-financing organisations (2007: 23). This means that the shift in the role of the state from responsibility of delivery, to responsibility for commissioning, contacting and measurement and audit, according to Ball (2007: 28), opens up for two policy moves: Firstly, it makes it possible for the state to consider a variety of offers from public, private and voluntary public services deliverers. The accompanying effects are increased

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[19] These scholars include Bull (1982); Furre (1992); Rokkan (1987/66, 1987/1975); Seip (2001/1963); Sejersted (1984, 2000a/1994, 2000b/1997, 2001/1988, 2004, 2005); Slagstad (1998); and Steen (1977); for an overview, see Tuastad 2006: 429).

contestability and competition between potential deliverers. Secondly, the shift makes it possible to reconsider models of funding and the participation of private funders in the provisions both the 'hardware' (infrastructure and buildings) and 'software' (teaching, research, health care) of education. The result of these two forms of re-investment, Ball (2007: 23) argues, is that the boundaries between the public and private sector are breached and re-worked.

While the freeschool reform can be seen as a form of re-investment of the state's resources, freeschools (or government-dependent schools as I called them in the Introduction) can be viewed as what Ball refers to as 'quasi-public organisations' whose introduction into the field of education is accompanied by increased competition. With respect to this, Karlsen's (2006: 162-163) distinction between ideological and economic privatisation of Norwegian schools is relevant. Ideological privatisation refers to the establishment – with financial support from the state – of schools based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles. These are, for example, Steiner schools, Christian schools and Montessori schools. Such schools have been funded by the state since 1970 (I discuss this further in Chapter Three). What these schools have in common is that they do not seek to maximise profits. Economic privatisation, in contrast, refers to privately owned schools established with the purpose of making money.

Commodification refers to those processes that make services, social relations and public processes into commodities that are measurable, and hence also contractable or marketable. Privatisation, in this perspective, can therefore be both an effect and a cause of commodification. What Ball refers to as 'performativity' (2007: 27-28) and Karlsen (2006: 97-101; see also 29-30) refers to as 'management by objectives' contributes to the commodification of education. Performativity and management by objectives – here broadly understood as facilitating the monitoring role of the state by 'steering-at-a-distance, 'governing without government' and as 'the politics of clarity' (Ball 2007: 27) – work to objectify and to commodify public service work by rendering it into 'outputs', 'levels of performance' and 'forms of quality'. The result of this kind of objectification is, firstly, that education can be thought of as 'just like' services of other kinds and other kinds of production, and secondly, that human interaction (for example between teacher and pupil) can be thought of as 'just like' the 'hard' services such as book supply, transport and catering (Ball 2007: 28).

5.2.2. The discourse of privatisation as public education reform

In order to analyse the 'discursive' dimension of the privatisation of education in England, Ball draws on a variety of sources, who, just like Ball himself (see Ball 1990, 1994) are heavily inspired by the work of Foucault (among them Fairclough (2000b) and Mills (1997)) (see Ball 2007: 1-3). In sum, Ball's use of these sources reminds us about the importance of discourses (I return to this below and in Chapter Twelve) in processes of social change, and also illuminates key features of the prevailing discourse of privatisation as public education reform in England.

As suggested above the emergence of this discourse can be traced back to the destabilising effects brought forward by a romantic and hegemonic neo-liberal discourse of public service delivery. A key argument for Ball is that although this discourse failed to deliver as promised, elements of it are still present in contemporary discourses of private participation in public sector education. Ball's analysis highlights key features of this hybrid third way discourse.

To begin with, it promises quality enhancement and improvement, and emanates from a discourse on the global knowledge-based economy. As Ball writes, 'the meaning, force and effect of this discourse are framed by an over-bearing, economic and political context of international competitiveness' (2007: 2). Furthermore, this globally circulating discourse of a global knowledge-based economy is seen to create 'a set of imperatives about the urgency and necessity of change' within the educational sector (2007: 146). As such, the third way discourse of privatisation of education 'is a saviour discourse that promises to save schools, leaders and teachers and students from failure, from the terrors of uncertainty, from the confusion of policy and from themselves – their weaknesses' (2007: 146).

In similar ways as 'orthodox' neo-liberal discourses, the third way discourse tends to idealise the private sector and its players. A great deal of 'rhetorical effort and discursive work expended on ensuring that the public sector is portrayed as ineffective, sloppy, risk-averse and innovation-resistant (except when it is not)' (Ball 2007: 3). Further on, the third way discourse writes 'a history of the public sector that is epideictic' as it involves the 'allocation of praise and blame' in a 'dialogue that places the 'old' public sector in contrast to a 'modern' public sector and the 'new' economy and as a threat to competitiveness; it is cast as an anachronism, an irrelevance' (Ball 2007: 34). The third way discourse also asserts that the introduction of new players in the field of education is essential for the process of improvement. Ball suggests that in this discourse 'the participation of new players in the field of public service delivery – the private and the voluntary' is 'central to the process of education reform and to the insertion of dynamism

and the achievement or release of innovation' (2007: 35). Related to this Ball suggests that within this discourse the firm is 'idealised' as

> a generic model of social and economic behaviour – creativity, innovation, risk-taking, flexibility and adaptation (joined and animated by charismatic, resolute, committed and visionary leadership, for which Blair himself is the model) in a changing and dynamic and competitive economic context are the model for the nation, public sector, local state, institutions and rational, self-interested but responsible individual actors. The expectations, assumptions and standards within policy discourse require the public sector to imitate the outlook and practices of the private sector and a transfer (or release) of the characteristics of the firm into the public sector.   (Ball 2007: 37)

As part of these idealisations and re-imaginations of the public sector are 'opportunities and possibilities for and legitimacy lent to various forms of privatisation and re-working of the relationship between the state and the private sector' (Ball 2007: 37).

This does not mean that Ball understands this discourse and its promise of improvement and transformation as a rhetorical ploy. Ball's analysis suggests that the prevailing discourse of education and public sector reform is morally complex and cannot simply be written off as neo-liberalism in disguise. In his perspective, 'undoubtedly some things change for the better in all of this. Some schools do become better places to learn, more inclusive, thoughtfully innovative, relevantly and authentically creative and healthily reflexive' (Ball 2007: 146). Thus, instead of making any simple judgements about this discourse, Ball seeks to 'disturb the political logics' within which this discourse and its associated forms of governance are set 'and begin to understand some of the work it does on schools' (2007: 146). In a similar vein, in his discussion of the private actors in education, Ball explains that 'the language of the public sector is appropriated but also recontextualised and merged with the register of the private sector. There are dual commitments in play, to improving education and social justice and to the interest of their business' (2007: 100). Such kinds of nuances lead Ball to assert that 'the moral and ethical complexities here have to be taken seriously. The public sector does not have an automatic monopoly of positive value commitments' (2007: 100). Yet, it should be re-called here, that Ball,

as discussed above, concludes his analysis by arguing that moral obligations are subordinated to economic ones (2007: 185).

As I show in the case study presented in Part Three, similar, but not identical, features as those presented above were present in discourses invoked in the debate on freeschools. The next section compares the research approach of this dissertation to the approach of Ball, and also, to a lesser extent Karlsen.

5.3. My approach

Both the focus and the approach of Ball are similar to those applied in this dissertation. I also apply a discourse analytical approach that I develop in Part Two of this dissertation, and in Chapter Ten I also use Jessop's work to contextualise the reform. There are, however, three significant differences. While the first two concern research design and choice of empirical material, the last one relates to research approach. I will discuss this in more detail.

Firstly, Ball applies a far more extensive research design. I focus on one case, whereas Ball examines a wide range of reforms and privatisations. He also conducted interviews and analysed a wider range of different types of empirical material. In addition to the contextualisation and characterisation of the privatisation of education, Ball's analysis also include an examination of the discourses of what he calls 'cross-over' actors previously working in the public sector and who now works in the private sector and contribute to lend an aura of 'public sector values' and 'credibility' to private actors negotiating over contracts with public sector employers (Ball 2007: 86-102, Ch. 4). Ball's analysis also includes the identification, and discussion of, the role of partnerships, social networks and what he calls 'policy communities' surrounding current educational policies in England (2007: 114-134, Ch. 5), and the role of education in wider attempts of different 'sites' to become 'entrepreneurial localities' (2007: 135; see Ch. 6). Finally, Ball also includes three case studies of specific privatisations involving the running and management of local education authorities by private actors that were openly disputed and controversial as they arguably, and for different reasons, failed to act responsible when profits were low and decreasing, and that thereby exemplified how economic obligations were subordinated moral ones (Ball 2007: 188, 159-184, Ch. 7).

Secondly, in contrast to Ball, and also to Karlsen, in this dissertation I also analyse opposition towards a reform perceived as market-oriented. As such the dissertation can contribute to knowledge about how such reforms are opposed and resisted. As Ball states in his conclusion:

'in the heat and noise of reform it would be a mistake to neglect the remaining (and new) spaces of dissent and resistance as well as the resilience of 'discredited' discourses and alternative educational narratives' (2007: 191). In my view this kind of focus appears to be a neglected area of discourse analytical concern as most analyses on public sector reforms tend to focus on the discourses operational in *sustaining*, rather than *challenging*, such reforms (for example Bastow and Martin 2005; de Reyes 2005; Fairclough 2000b; Gilbert 2000; Leggett 2005).

Thirdly, and most importantly, in contrast to this dissertation, Ball's analysis does not present what Phillips and Jørgensen (2002: 3-4, 174) refer to as a complete discourse analytical 'package'. Such 'packages' include, firstly, philosophical (ontological and epistemological) premises regarding the role of discourse in social constructions of the world; secondly, theoretical models containing concepts that allow for the understanding and explanation of the relationship between discourse and social change; and thirdly, methodological guidelines for how to approach a given object of research and the provision of specific techniques for analysis of empirical material.

Ball could have presented such a 'package' if he had adopted Jessop's cultural political economy approach, which I discuss in Chapter Ten. This cultural political economy approach is developed in more recent works of Jessop than those Ball refers to. In this work Jessop seeks to provide conceptual tools for the analysis of the co-evolution of economic and extra-economic (or, broadly speaking discursive, or cultural, processes), by integrating Fairclough's version of critical discourse analysis into his approach. As I discuss further in Chapter Six, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, and hence also Jessop's cultural political economy approach, can be seen to present a complete discourse analytical 'package', as Phillips and Jørgensen call it (2002: 3-4, 174).

Of these three features of such 'packages' I consider the first one less important than the latter two. This means that one could say that I, like Ball, have a rather pragmatic approach to research. In my view, what is important is that one demonstrates an awareness of the potential implications of using elements of approaches with different ontologies and epistemologies in the selected research strategy of a study. As discussed above, Ball also has a pragmatic, and also eclectic, approach to research. However, the lack of discussions in Ball's study of the two latter elements of 'a complete package' (theoretical models and description of methodological guidelines and techniques), can be seen to reduce its explanatory power. Other than reminding us that discourse is important, he does not present any theoretical models or concepts allowing for

the understanding and explanation of the relationship between discourse and social change. And with respect to methodological guidelines and techniques, Ball does not say much about how discourses are identified, and he is not explicit about the patterns he identifies in terms of discourses. That is, although Ball, as discussed above, provides descriptions of discourses, these descriptions appear as fragmented and unsystematic.

The first of these two criticisms also apply to Karlsen's analysis. Although Karlsen states that research on educational policies in Norway has not been sufficiently appreciated in the Norwegian context because it has not been recognised that social constructions are to be understood as practices, he does not provide any elaborate explanation of the relationships between social constructions, practices and the social changes in the field of Norwegian education (Karlsen 2006: 70-72; see also 90-91).

In this dissertation, however, I do provide a 'complete package'. I discuss the different philosophical premises that underpin the critical realist version of critical discourse analysis developed by Fairclough and the poststructuralist logics approach developed by Glynos and Howarth (Chapter Six on meta theory); I present a theoretical model allowing for the understanding of the relationship between discourse and social change (Chapter Seven on research strategy); and I describe and discuss how I proceeded during the analysis to identify and explain how discourses can sustain and challenge a particular regime of practices, namely, the practices associated with the freeschool reform (Chapter Eight on analytical procedure).

I return to the critique of the approach in Ball's study in Chapter Twelve, where I provide some reflections on the selected research approach of this dissertation.

Part Two: Theory

6. Meta theory: Poststructuralist discourse theory versus critical discourse analysis

6.1. Introduction

This chapter examines in more detail, firstly, the poststructuralist discourse theory usually associated with Laclau and Mouffe, and later developed by Glynos and Howarth, and then, secondly, Fairclough's version of critical discourse analysis. The purpose is to provide a theoretical foundation for this dissertation.

The reason I have chosen to provide this foundation by discussing these two approaches, and not other discourse analytical approaches, is that these are two influential approaches that have informed a substantial amount of research both within the social sciences and humanities all over the world. In my view much of their success can be explained by the fact that they, in the words of Phillips and Jørgensen (2002: 3-4, 174; see also section 5.3) provide a complete discourse analytical 'package'. A discussion of differences and similarities between these two approaches can therefore help illuminate what discourse analysis is about.

Hajer's (1995, 2005) approach to what is called 'argumentative discourse analysis', and which also informs this dissertation, is not as developed as the approaches of Glynos and Howarth and Fairclough with respect to the discussion of the philosophical premises underpinning discourse analysis. Unlike the two other approaches Hajer does not discuss the distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive, but seems to – despite his own rejection (Hajer 1993: 71-72, ftn. 9) – come close to endorsing a poststructuralist ontology that shares the basic ideas propounded by Laclau and Mouffe (see Hajer 1995: 42-46, 264). This lack of discussion may be seen to reduce its explanatory power vis-à-vis the two other approaches. However, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Seven, this underdeveloped area of Hajer's work does not mean that his approach is not useful for the understanding and explanation of the relationship between discourse and social change.

This chapter starts by discussing some of the key concepts in Laclau and Mouffe's approach and Glynos and Howarth's developments to this approach through the introduction of the concept of 'logics' as a key unit in social scientific explanation. Then follows a presentation of Fairclough's version of critical discourse analysis. Finally, I discuss the different views on the status of discourse that these two approaches have. It is because of this final discussion that I

have called this chapter 'meta theory'. I will conclude by preferring Glynos and Howarth's poststructuralist logics approach to Fairclough's critical discourse analysis.

6.2. Poststructuralist discourse theory

The development of Laclau and Mouffe's approach (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 1987; Laclau 1990, 1993, 1996) can be seen as part of a neo-Gramscian wave that occurred in the wake of the emergence and consolidation of Thatcher's neo-liberal and neo-conservative regime in England during the 1980s.[20] Gramsci (1971) is most known for his notion of power as exercised as hegemony, that is, not by coercion but by a constant re-winning of consent that work to sustain moral and intellectual leadership through the production of 'taken-for granted-knowledge' that is presented as true, certain and 'common-sensical'. While others, such as Fairclough and Jessop, have been attempting to develop a theory of hegemony in the terms of critical realism, Laclau and Mouffe and other scholars associated with the so-called Essex school, including Glynos and Howarth (2007), Torfing (1999, 2005) and Hansen (2004, 2005), set out to do the same in poststructuralist terms.

Laclau and Mouffe's major theoretical contribution to Gramsci's notion of hegemony was to develop an argument that rejects the essentialist assumption that only social classes based on economic position can exercise hegemony. While acknowledging Gramsci's reversal of an orthodox Marxist view on causality – from discourse to practice, not from practice (or economic base) to discourse – Laclau and Mouffe's seminal book, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, rejects any Marxist notion of 'determination in the last instance by the economy' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 98 ff.). In doing so, their theory provides concepts helpful for analyses of the construction of all social – and not only class – identities. This also, as I discuss further below, include the identities of political parties in particular cases, such as the freeschool case. Below I present some of the key concepts in their approach.

6.2.1. Discourse and articulation

In Laclau and Mouffe's approach the social reality is conceived of as discursive, and discourse is in general terms understood as a temporarily fixation of meaning. The concept of articulation is

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[20] Since their co-authored publication of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* in 1985, Laclau and Mouffe have taken their authorship in different directions. While Laclau has been mainly preoccupied with developing a systematic framework useful for the understanding and explanation of the emergence of collective political identities, Mouffe has developed a political theory of radical democracy (2000, 2002, 2005).

central in their approach, whereby it views discourse as the result of articulation. They provide the following definitions of the concepts of articulation and discourse: '(we) will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice we will call *discourse*' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105, italics in original).

Whereas this definition of discourse is inspired by Foucault's (1972) concept of 'discursive formations', Laclau and Mouffe also draw inspiration from Derrida. More specifically, Derrida's deconstructivism seems to underpin their ontology that sees the social as 'dislocated' (Laclau 1990: 39 ff.).[21] Though the word suggests a situation where something is dislocated from its normal position, this approach takes the term to refer to what is seen as the basic ontological status of the social. More specifically, 'dislocated' refers to the idea that discourse can never be fixed, and is thus always dislocated. Derrida's (1982; see also Derrida 1978) concept of '*différance*' can illustrate this notion. The meaning of the term 'différance' is polyvalent. It refers to both 'to differ' from something and 'to defer' something, in the sense of postponement. While the former verb (to differ) points to the relational aspect of discourse, the latter verb (to defer) points to the referential aspect of discourse and meaning-making. For Derrida, as well as for Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 111-113; Laclau 1993), this referentiality is endless; that is, while discourse is considered as a 'structured totality' it is not contained in a closed structure but is an open-ended relational process.

Thus, Laclau and Mouffe insist on a relational view on identification and meaning-making. Moreover, they emphasise that not only is identification relational, it is also contingent; that is, particular fixations of meanings are possible, but not made necessary by any 'law-like' causal forces, for instance, 'the iron law of capitalism'. As I discuss further below, their elaboration of this radical contingency, and the rejection of the notion of economic determination 'in the last instance', have provoked criticism from other scholars working with discourse analytical approaches based on a critical realist ontology.

With respect to this notion of the radical contingency of the social, the concept of 'articulation' is crucial. What the 'elements' of articulation can be, varies according to the different accounts given by Laclau (Howarth 2000: 117-118). The key point here, however, is that, in this perspective, an infinite number of articulations of 'floating' signifying elements is

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[21] Another important influence for Mouffe (see 2000, 2002, 2005) is Staten's (1984) notion of a 'constitutive outside'.

possible, but not necessary. What they call 'the field of discursivity' is characterised by a surplus of meaning that results from the endless referentiality of discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 111-113).

According to Laclau's later work, however, this notion does not mean that anything can be articulated (or that an attitude of 'anything goes' should be adopted). By invoking the concept of 'sedimentation', he has acknowledged that the articulation of elements is constrained (Laclau 1990: 35 ff.). In this perspective sedimented discourses are discourses that are naturalised, routinised and institutionalised, but whose meanings are constantly challenged in contestations between different social forces attempting to acquire a hegemonic status. As discussed in the introduction, such discursive constructions are in the approaches of both Fairclough and Glynos and Howarth conceived of as discourses that work ideologically and that are operational in the maintenance of hegemony (Fairclough 2003: 9-10, 58-59, Glynos and Howarth 2007: 117-120). I shall continue to discuss the ideological effects of discourses in the next section where I present Glynos and Howarth's development of Laclau and Mouffe's approach.

6.2.2. Glynos and Howarth's logics of critical explanation

Several scholars have criticised Laclau and Mouffe's poststructuralist discourse theory for its lack of guidelines for how it could be operationalised in empirical analysis (Hansen 2005; Howarth 2000, 2005; Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 49; Torfing 2005). Glynos and Howarth (2007; see also Howarth 2000; 2005) have offered one of the most comprehensive, and innovative, attempts to provide such guidelines.

Their approach seeks to find a 'middle way' between two forms of approaches. On the one hand, they distance their approach from overly structuralist, and thus deterministic, approaches, which they call 'the causal mechanism paradigm'. Glynos and Howarth include in this category the work of Elster and also, to a lesser extent, Bhaskar's (1975, 1989, 1998) version of critical realism, which together with other work on critical realism underpins Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis. On the other hand, they distance their approach from hermeneutical and interpretivist approaches which they see as producing overly voluntaristic approaches that grant subjects too much power, and whose research they refer to as 'contextualised self-interpretations'. Glynos and Howarth place the works of Winch, Taylor, Bevir and Rhodes in this category. This is how Glynos and Howarth describe these two types of approaches:

Advocates of causal mechanism err on the side of abstracting mechanisms from the historical contexts in which they function, thus reifying them in a way that constrains their contingency and militate against their full contextualisation; the universalism of the causal law ideal still exerts too powerful an attraction. By contrast, proponents of contextualized self-interpretations run the risk of over-valorizing the virtues of historical context and concrete particularity, thus precluding the development of critical explanations that somehow transcend the particularity of a given situation both explanatorily and critically without, however, risking a kind of imposed normativism.   (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 213)

In order to furnish a 'middle way' between these two kinds of approaches, Glynos and Howarth introduce the concept of 'logics' as the key unit for explanation in political and social analysis. The concept of logic, they suggest, can help to capture those aspects of either a practice, or a regime of practices, that make it 'tick' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 135). In addition, the concept of logic, insist Glynos and Howarth, can answer questions such as: What were the conditions under which the institution of a practice, or a regime of practices, was possible? What political struggles preceded its institution? What processes ensure its maintenance or questions its hegemonic status? (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 136-137).

It is in order to answer such questions that Glynos and Howarth introduce a conceptual typology of three interrelated logics: firstly, social logics that enable the synchronic characterisation of the rules, or order, of a social practice or regime; secondly, political logics that enable the diachronic analysis of political struggle geared at creating, sustaining or challenging a social practice or regime; and thirdly, fantasmatic logics that enable the explanation of why subjects identify with particular discourses and why these discourses 'grip' subjects. In short, these logics together answer a 'what' question (what is the practice or regime that is being studied?), a 'how' question (how does contestation over the meaning and value of these practices and regimes occur and what are the political lines of demarcation?), and a 'why' question (why do particular practices and regimes change or resist change?) (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 108). I shall discuss these logics in turn.

When Glynos and Howarth talk about *social logics* they 'are primarily interested in *characterising* a particular social practice or regime', and they write that the concept refers to the

grammar, or rules, of a social practice or regime (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 137, italics in original). They define social practices as 'the ongoing, routinized forms of human and societal reproduction', and regard regimes as having a structuring, or ordering, function upon social practices (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 104). The concept of social logics, then, 'enable us to distil the purpose, form and content' of social practices and regimes (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 106). They give the example of the logic of the Thatcher regime in England, which they say can be characterised in the terms of a 'network of social logics, including the logics of marketisation and centralisation, both of which were rooted in the philosophy of the New Right' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 137). Social logics, then, are to be understood as conditioned and historically specified regimes of practices. Again, and as stressed above, social logics are not synonymous with causal law-like tendencies, such as 'the iron law of capitalism' or Marx's 'tendency for the rate of profit to fall', 'which are more akin to empirical generalisations that may or may not occur, and which generally presuppose more determining laws at higher levels of abstraction' (Howarth 2005: 322).

Glynos and Howarth derive the concept of *political logics* from the concept of discourse provided by Laclau and Mouffe. The concept of political logics helps explain how contestation over the meaning of social practices and regimes occurs. Howarth (2005: 323, italics in original) explains the emergence and operation of political practices the following way: 'the practices governed by the logic of politics erupt when there is a *failure* or *impossibility* of an existing structure, and when subjects are literally 'forced' to act and identify anew'. Hence, political contestation geared at sustaining or challenging particular practices and regimes is intensified during times of crises caused by dislocatory events, and political logics can be understood as an analytical tool that enables the understanding and explanation of such contestations.

Whereas the concept of social logics enables the characterisation of practices and regimes on a mainly synchronic axis, political logics focus more on the diachronic aspect of regimes and practices, 'whether in terms of how they have emerged, or in terms of how they are being contested and/or transformed' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 141). Political logics are thus special kinds of articulatory political practices that work to sustain or challenge social logics. By using the concept of political logics, suggest Glynos and Howarth (2007: 144), one can understand and explain how political frontiers in political practices are constructed and stabilised, and also how such processes are interrupted with result that frontiers are weakened. Drawing on the work of

Laclau and Mouffe they provide two key concepts that help us understand such political practices.

Firstly, and in order to explain how discourse – the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice – despite its endless referantiality, can be relatively stabilised in hegemonic formations, Laclau and Mouffe draw upon the idea of nodality and what Lacan called '*points de capiton*'. In their approach, nodal points are what temporarily and partially organises 'the field of discursivity', so that a discourse can be identified (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 111-112). Laclau's later work theorises nodal points as 'empty signifiers' (Laclau 1996). These are signifiers, or linguistic expressions, that that often embody universal values, for instance, 'freedom', 'justice', 'the people' and 'sustainable development', and whose temporarily and partially stabilisation of meaning can promise the involved (and mobilised) subjects some kind of psychological fulfilment. Hence, a key characteristic of empty signifiers is that can be interpreted in a multitude of different ways – they are polysemic. Political contestation can thus be seen as attempts to hegemonise the meaning of such empty signifiers. In times of crises caused by dislocatory events, which can be of smaller or larger magnitudes, the relative stabilisation of the meaning of empty signifiers are, to various degrees, challenged, and the meanings of so-called 'floating signifiers' that articulated around empty signifiers that have a nodal function acquire new meanings. One example from debates on environmental policies could be how floating signifiers such as 'precaution' and 'critical loads' acquired new meanings by their being articulated around the empty signifier of 'sustainable development'. This means that both empty signifiers and floating signifiers are 'empty'. It also means that while a nodal point, or an empty signifier, refers to 'a point of crystallisation within a specific discourse', floating signifiers refer to the contestation 'between different discourses to fix the meaning of important signs' (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 28).[22]

Secondly, they provide the concept of *equivalence and difference*, which Laclau and Mouffe derive from their reading of Saussure (1974), in order to explain how particular discourses attempt to hegemonise the meaning of empty signifiers (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 127 ff.; Laclau 1993). According to Laclau and Mouffe, political contestation can be understood in terms of two simultaneously operating logics: a logic of equivalence and a logic of difference. On

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[22] Note that for Howarth (2000: 119), the precise relationship between nodal points and empty signifiers in Laclau's work 'has not been fully articulated and requires greater specification'. Apart from noting this apparently underdeveloped area of Laclau's work, this dissertation will not explore this matter further, for it is outside its scope.

the one hand, a logic of equivalence refers to how particular elements can be articulated together in so-called 'chains of equivalences' that are held together by a perception of something that they are not, by something different. For instance, if the elements are social demands by different social groups, how pro-homosexual, anti-racist, and feminist groups might create an alliance against what are perceived as policies that prioritise heterosexual white men. On the other hand, a logic of difference can be said to be operational if, to stick with the above example, attempts are made to proliferate the differences between these social groups.

It is important to note that although equivalental and differential logics are co-present, one of them will tend to be dominant. As an illustrative example of a practice where the political logic of equivalence prevails, Glynos and Howarth (2007: 144) refer to how a struggle of national liberation against an occupying colonial power may attempt to cancel out the differences of class, ethnicity, region or religion in order to create an alliance in the name of 'a more universal nationalism that can serve as a common reference point for all the oppressed'. A political logic of difference, in contrast, prevails when attempts that echo the 'age-old practice of 'divide and rule' are made to break the chains of equivalence made between the demands of diverse social groups.

In the examples given above, it is different social demands that are the elements – or 'floating signifiers' – that are chained together. However, the elements that are chained together may also be other 'entities', and the concept of equivalence and difference can be operationalised for analyses of social phenomena smaller than the emergence of social movements. This means that in actual empirical analysis it is not necessarily social demands that has to be the key unit for analysis, or the 'element' that is being articulated. As mentioned above, Howarth (2000: 117-118) have pointed out that what such 'elements' can be have changed throughout Laclau's writings from what is called 'ideological elements' (militarism, nationalism, elitism, racism etc.), 'significants' (justice, democracy, freedom etc.) and central components of social formations (the economic, the political, the ideological). Howarth therefore emphasises that in empirical analysis there is a need to create explicit analytical categories and descriptions (I return to the implication of this argument in section 12.3.2).

The concept of *fantasmatic logics* helps us to understand 'why specific practices and regimes 'grip', or, in the words of Althusser (1971), interpellate, subjects' and adds 'a further explanatory and critical layer to the process of accounting for change and continuity' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 145). In order to understand this concept, it is necessary to re-call that in the poststructuralist ontology of Laclau and Mouffe, the social is essentially dislocated in the sense

that meaning can only be temporarily fixed. This insight and understanding of dislocation can be seen as operating on the *ontological* level. But the concept of dislocation can also be seen as operating on the *ontical* level; that is, in 'real' life. In this perspective, 'social practices are punctuated by the mishaps, tragedies and contingencies of everyday life' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 145). This is not to suggest that the role of fantasy is to provide a false picture, or some sort of 'false consciousness' as typically claimed in orthodox Marxist thinking; rather, it is to ensure that subjects do not fully experience the disrupting effects of dislocations. In short, the role of fantasy is to conceal, or 'iron-out', 'various ontical manifestations of radical contingency' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 145).

With respect to this, the notion of the 'spilt subject' becomes relevant. Primarily drawing upon Zizek's (1989, 1990) interpretation of Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis, Laclau suggests that the subject is essentially split with respect to identity; that is to say, the subject does not have a fixed identity, but is constantly identifying itself in a relational process with its surroundings and the discourses that somehow 'explain' the existence of these surroundings. As Glynos and Howarth put it, 'logics of fantasy have a key role to play in "filling up" or "completing" the void in the subject and the structure of social relations by bringing about closure' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 146). In this pursuit to achieve wholeness (or closure), subjects attempt to cover up, or to keep at bay, this fundamental split by using fantasy to suture ruptures caused by dislocations (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 146). One example of such a dislocation is how the Sputnik 'shock' in 1957 worked to dislocate American 'cold war' politics. Another example is how the publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in 1962 contributed to the dislocation of the field of environmental politics in Western industrialised democracies. In times of such crises, caused by dislocatory events, the split identity of the subjects becomes manifest in a search for closure that can be obtained by inculcating, or psychologically investing, in the discourses that promise some kind of resolution of the problems that caused the dislocation. It is with respect to this function of closure that fantasies have ideological effects. That is, the contingency caused by dislocations 'can either be acknowledged and tarried with, or it can be denied and concealed' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 111), and this latter response, to deny and conceal, has ideological effects in the sense that it can work to sediment certain discourses as natural, common-sensical and certain.

This does not necessarily mean that ideological practices in the form of discourses with fantasmatic aspects necessarily are to be understood as conscious and intentional acts. Rather, it

is the 'subject's *generalized sensitivity* or *attentiveness* to the always-already dislocated nature of existing social relations' that determines to what degree a subject is complicit in concealing radical contingency when he or she identifies with a particular discourse (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 110, italics in original; see also 113, 117). Thus, Glynos and Howarth seem to treat the question of intentionality as secondary to the question of complicity.

This distinction between complicity and intentionality corresponds to a distinction between what we can call *ideological* and *rhetorical* properties of discourses. Although it is acknowledged that we may view discourses by using this distinction (see Glynos and Howarth 2007: 75), this perspective appears to be underdeveloped in Glynos and Howarth's approach. It is therefore worthwhile to discuss how this distinction may be approached.

Fairclough (2000b) uses another similar distinction between the 'intellectual' and 'rhetorical' work that discourses can do. The intellectual work a discourse can do concerns the ways in which it contributes to construct a political discourse; that is, a discourse of how to govern. The rhetorical work a discourse can do, concerns its capacity 'to enthuse and mobilise people, to capture their imaginations' (2000b: 85). However, writes Fairclough, 'rhetorical work cannot ultimately be separated from intellectual work because any public elaboration of a political discourse is also working to persuade people'. Therefore the distinction between rhetorical and intellectual work 'is fine as an analytical distinction as long as we do not lose sight of their intimate relationship in practice' (2000b: 86-87).[23]

Phillips (1996: 213) reaches a similar conclusion as Fairclough. In her discussion, the distinction is, on the one hand, between subjects as 'masters' of language in the sense that they use it creatively and instrumentally, and, on the other hand, subjects as 'slaves' of language in the

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[23] We may note here that in order to distinguish between discourses 'which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination' and those discourses that do not, Fairclough introduces the concept of 'ideological investment':

> Is all discourse ideological? I have suggested that discursive practices are ideologically invested if they incorporate significations which contribute to sustaining or restructuring power relations. […] But all discourse is not thereby irredeemably ideological. […] the fact that all types of discourse are open in principle, and no doubt to some extent in fact, in our society to ideological investment does not mean that all types of discourse are ideologically invested to the same degree.
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> (Fairclough 1992: 91)

Here Fairclough suggests that ideology is more a matter of *degree of closure* than *a dichotomous distinction* between closure and openness. He gives the example of discourses associated with advertisement as discourses that 'are more heavily invested' than discourses associated with the physical sciences.

sense that they utter words and discourses that have been used previously and that influence the pattern in which they are used in the present. Inspired by the work of Billig (1991: 9) she approaches what is referred to as the 'master-slave paradox of language' by acknowledging that this paradox is unresolvable and that it is more convincing to express it than to attempt to resolve it.

In my view this seems to by a fertile strategy. Therefore, in this dissertation I acknowledge that the distinction between ideological and rhetorical properties of discourse is an analytical distinction, at the same time as I choose to focus on the ideological, rather than the rhetorical, properties of discourses.

I will return to how I use the logics approach in my research strategy in Chapter Seven. The next section presents Fairclough's version of critical discourse analysis.

6.3. Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an established paradigm within linguistics and is increasingly informing research within the political and social sciences. This section focuses on the version developed by Fairclough, who is perhaps the best-known exponent of critical discourse analysis (see for instance, Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Fairclough 1992, 1995, 2003, 2006). Other key figures who have developed their own versions of critical discourse analysis include Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk, Günther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (for a review of different critical discourse analysis approaches, see Wodak 2001).

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis provides a systematic attempt to bridge the gap between linguistic analysis, on the one hand, and different strands of social theory, on the other. His version of critical discourse analysis is particularly oriented towards the analysis of the role that discourse plays in processes of social change.

It is important to note here that Fairclough uses the concept of 'discourse' in two different ways. Firstly, and as I discuss further in the next section, 'discourse' as an abstract noun (without the articles 'the' or 'a') refers to the discourse 'moment' or 'element' of the social. The term 'discourse' in the label 'critical discourse analysis should be understood in this sense. The term 'semiosis' can also be used in a similar manner, so that one can talk about 'critical semiotic analysis' rather than critical discourse analysis (see Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2004; Fairclough 2005a: 77). The second use that the term 'discourse' can have is more concrete. A

discourse (or several discourses), refer to a particular way of representing a particular aspect of the world. I shall return to this definition of discourse as representation in Chapter Seven.

Critical discourse analysis is different from linguistic discourse analysis (for instance, socio-linguistics and conversation analysis) in its insistence on the productivity of combining linguistic theory and social theory. In linguistics the term 'discourse' most often refers to language-use in a social context. Yet, linguistic analyses that make insufficient use of sociological (here understood in a wide sense) concepts and categories can, according to Fairclough (1992: 12), make such approaches 'non-critical':

> Critical approaches differ from non-critical approaches in not just describing discursive practices, but also showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants.

This is not to say that sociological perspectives are necessarily absent in 'traditional' linguistic analysis, but that social theory seems to be seldom combined systematically with linguistic theory in ways that highlight the role of discourse in processes of social change. Nor is it to devaluate researchers working exclusively with linguistics, for their contributions have been crucial to the development of critical discourse analysis, and will presumably continue to be in the future. The point is that only by putting textual analysis into a wider social perspective can the role of discourse in processes of social change be fully appreciated.

As indicated above, critical discourse analysis differs also from the poststructuralist approach of Glynos and Howarth in some important respects. One key difference is that while critical discourse analysis insists on importance of providing detailed textual analysis, the poststructuralist approach of Glynos and Howarth can be considered as more oriented to identifying and explaining 'larger scale' patterns in the presence and usages of discourses. A second key difference is more complex and concerns their different ontologies. In the next section I will discuss these differences in more detail. In the following, however, I start with a discussion of Fairclough's so-called dialectical theory of discourse. Next, I shall describe his influential three-dimensional framework that distinguishes between three different dimensions in social analysis, namely structures, practices, and events.

6.3.1. A dialectical view of discourse

Fairclough grounds his work in a critical realist tradition (mainly drawing upon the work of Bhaskar (1975, 1986), but also Sayer (2000), Collier (1994) and Archer (1995, 2000)), and adopts Harvey's dialectical view of discourse (see for instance, Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 19-29; Fairclough 2001b, 2003: 25, 2005b).

In an attempt to provide theoretically ontological foundations for a critique of social relations perceived as unfair and unjust, Harvey (1996) has provided a definition of discourse that can be regarded as a response to the prevalence of what he perceived to be an often ineffectual and nihilistic social constructivist critique. While accepting that discourse is coextensive with the social, in the sense that the social reality can only be understood in and through discourse, Harvey emphasises that discourse is just one moment of the social process alongside other moments, for instance, social relations, social subjects with beliefs, different knowledge, values, material objects, and so on. Harvey (1996: 78) uses the term 'moments', rather than the term 'elements', for example, to indicate that the social is seen on as an ongoing process. As Fairclough (2005a: 77) notes it can be discussed what *exactly* these moments are. The key point here, however, is that discourse is one moment of the social alongside other moments. Fairclough, this time using the term 'element', writes that in such a perspective discourse analysis 'is not simply the analysis of discourse per se, but analysis of the relations between discourse and the non-discoursal elements of the social' (Fairclough 2005b: 924).

The relative weights of these moments in the configuration of the social also vary from case to case. This variability means that, although all moments of the social have a discursive aspect (or discourse moment), some structures, practices, and events may be more discursive than others (for example, compared to the work of a teacher, a carpenter's work is more non-discursive than it is discursive). Furthermore, the different moments of the social are held to be dialectically related, but not reducible to each other; that is, although they are different from one another other and cannot be reduced to one another, they are interrelated and 'internalise' or 'flow into' each other, with the effect that a discourse may be 'turned into things', as Fairclough (2006: 11, 30) puts it. Thus, a neo-liberal discourse, for example, may 'turn into' a neo-liberal policy regime that has 'real' and material effects upon people's lives.

This insistence on the need to maintain distinctions between the non-discursive and discursive is a key characteristic of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. Another way to

phrase it is to say that in Fairclough's dialectical view of discourse, discourse is both constitutive of, and constituted by, other moments, including non-discursive moments, of the social process, and that a key task for discourse analysts is to unravel such dialectical relations.

6.3.2. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework

It is in order to unravel such dialectical relations that Fairclough distinguishes between three different dimensions of social analysis that varies according to how abstract they are: social structures, social practices and social events (Fairclough 2003: 21-25, 2006: 30-31).[24]

In Fairclough's framework both social structures and social events are seen as parts of social reality and social practices are seen as mediating the relationship between them. Social structures have the potential of both constraining and enabling social events and practices. Yet, in line with a poststructuralist point of view, Fairclough emphasises that social practices and events are not determined by constraining or enabling social structures, as 'traditional', or orthodox, Marxist-inspired critical theory suggests (see for instance Adorno and Horkheimer 1979). Rather, the relationship between social structures and the social agency – evident as social practices – that operates in social events is a complex one. Social structures can only have effects upon the social *if* actors perform those social practices that in sum constitute them. The concept of ideology as naturalised, 'taken-for-granted' and sedimented discourses is central with respect to this 'dialectical' perspective. Fairclough (1992: 91) puts it this way: 'Subjects are ideologically positioned, but they are also capable of acting creatively to make their own connections between the diverse practices and ideologies to which they are exposed, and to restructure positioning practices and structures'. Hence, in this perspective also social agents have causal powers that affect social structures. Below I discuss the three dimensions of social analysis in more detail.

On the most abstract level there are *social structures*. By social structure Fairclough means 'the most general and most enduring (but still only relatively enduring) characteristics of societies' (Fairclough 2006: 30), and examples of social structures are more or less abstract entities such as economic structure, kinship systems, social class and language structures. Such structures are conceived of as both discursive and non-discursive, so that while, for example,

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[24] It is important to note that Fairclough since 1989 has presented several versions of this framework, all of which formulate and theorise its key concepts in slightly different ways. The following presentation is mainly based on the version presented in Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) and Fairclough (2003, 2006).

economic structures exist independently of our knowledge of them, once we start reflecting upon them, we draw upon certain discourses.

On the least abstract level of social analysis there are *social events*. In Fairclough's framework, texts – understood in its widest sense to include all forms of signifying elements (for instance, visual design, body language, sound and so on) – are understood as the discourse moments of social events.

Social practices, which are seen as mediating the relationship between social structures and social events, are defined as 'habitual, ritual or institutionalised ways of "going on"' (Fairclough 2006: 30), which are associated with particular fields, institutions and organisations. Social practices also have a discourse 'moment', and by drawing upon the work of Foucault (1984), Fairclough uses the term 'order of discourse' to describe the discourse moment of social practices in fields, institutions, and organisations. He defines an order of discourse as a 'the social organisation and control of linguistic variation' (Fairclough 2003: 24), and by 'linguistic variation' he, by drawing upon systemic functional linguistics (mainly the work by Halliday 1978, 1994), refers to how discourses, genre and styles are articulated together. However, in analysis of orders of discourse one can chose to focus more on discourses than on genres and styles and *vice versa,* and one can also choose to focus only on discourses. I shall focus on discourses in this dissertation.

As with discourses in general, it is possible to analytically distinguish between orders of discourses on several 'scales'. Fairclough (1992: 69; 1995: 12-13) writes about 'societal' orders of discourse (for instance, neo-liberalism, Thatcherism and the third way) and 'local' orders of discourses that regulate the practices in for instance, institutions like churches and schools, and in particular fields of policy-making and so on. The key point here, however, is not the precise nature of these distinctions, but the realisation that the identifications and distinctions between orders of discourse are dependent on how the research aim of an analysis is constructed.

It should also be emphasised that orders of discourse, as the above quotation of Fairclough suggests, 'control' what discourses can be used in a particular social field. As such they provide a repertoire of available discourses that, to different degrees and in various ways, can work ideologically in the sense that they are perceived as common-sensical. But orders of discourse are at the same time open to change and re-articulations of discourses. This suggests that orders of discourse can be viewed as potential conflictual configurations of discourses, and that orders of discourse are *not only* repertoires of available discourses; they also consist of

discourses that can be viewed as elements that are articulated and re-articulated by creative actors in struggles over hegemony. In Fairclough's framework the concept of order of discourse is therefore seen as 'the discursive facet of the contradictory and unstable equilibrium which constitutes hegemony', and 'explorations of tendencies of change within orders of discourse' is seen as 'significant contributions to current debates on social change' (Fairclough 1992: 93, 99).

Glynos and Howarth's approach does not invoke the Foucault-inspired concept of order of discourse. They do, however, provide related concepts. They present a distinction between 'the political' and 'the social' dimensions of what they refer to as the 'socio-political reality'. Broadly speaking, these two dimensions refer to the domain of sedimented discourses (the social) and the domain of contested discourses (the political) (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 113-117).

It could be argued that such a *singular* concept, that allow for the understanding of what discourses are contested and what discourses are naturalised and accepted, is missing in the approach of Glynos and Howarth (see Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 56-57) for a similar critique of Laclau and Mouffe). However, my position is that such a lack is not a weakness. What is crucial in Glynos and Howarth's approach is that it has a concept that allow for the distinction between sedimented and contested discourses.

Further on, in my view Glynos and Howarth's approach allows for an equally good understanding of the relationships between the usages of discourses in different social fields that can be analytically constructed on different scales. On the one hand, we can consider the discourses that I identify in this dissertation as a 'local' order of discourse (the order of discourse of the public financing of freeschools in the period between 2001 and 2005), and the analysis of it can also contribute to knowledge about a wider 'societal' order of discourse (the order of discourse of privatisation as public sector reform). On the other hand, we can also consider the discourses that I identify in this dissertation as contributing to knowledge about how the social logics of privatisation as public sector reform are sustained and challenged. Viewed in this light the concept of order of discourse does not add a significant explanatory dimension to the analysis presented in this dissertation. It is therefore not included in the research strategy of this dissertation.[25]

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[25] We may also note here that although the concept of order of discourse is central in Fairclough's approach, he does not apply it himself in his analysis of New Labour's third way discourse, which is his most comprehensive empirical analysis (I return to this analysis in section 7.2.2).

In the following I will, nevertheless, discuss in more detail the three different types of elements that orders of discourse consist of.

In Fairclough's framework *discourses* are seen as forms of social practice that represent aspects of the reality from a particular perspective, for instance, what may be called a conservative discourses of homosexuality, a secular discourse of religion, and so on. Two key features with Fairclough's definition of discourse should be emphasised: Firstly, discourses are resources used by social actors. They are 'different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people' (Fairclough 2003: 124). This means discourses can be thought of as 'resources' that people use when they make sense of the social world. Fairclough puts it this way: 'Discourses constitute part of the resources which people deploy in relating to one another – keeping separate from another, cooperating, competing, dominating – and in seeking to change the ways in which they relate to one another' (Fairclough 2003: 124). Secondly, discourses are analytical devices a researcher constructs in order to make the social phenomenon under study intelligible. This point entails that 'the question of delimitation is determined strategically in relation to the research aims' (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 144-145). Phillips and Jørgensen have given the following example of this kind of analytical exercise:

> For instance, if the researcher is interested in investigating the clash between established medicine and alternative treatment discursively, it may make sense to treat them each as discourses – that is, as homogenous fixations of meaning. However, if the researcher is interested only in the field of established medicine, it may make more sense to divide the discourse of established medicine into different discourses such as the 'discourse of medical practitioners' and the 'discourse of medical theorists'. (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 144)

This also means that discourses can be identified on different levels of abstraction or generality. As Fairclough (2003: 124) explains: 'discourses differ in their degree of repetition, commonality, stability over time and in what we might call their 'scale', i.e. how much of the world they include, and therefore in the range of representations they can generate'. I return to this concept of discourse as representation in the next chapter.

Genres refer to ways of acting. The concept of genre enables the analysis of the influence of structures and institutional constraints on texts, understood here in its broadest sense. Texts that belong to different genres have their own distinct generic features and conventions. The generic conventions that 'frame' the informal conversation between friends are different from the generic conventions that frame the production of newspaper commentary. Thus, it is important to be aware of how institutional pressure works to 'frame' texts in different ways. Genres can also be identified on different levels of abstraction. What may be called the genre of political debates is more abstract than, for instance, the genre of newspaper commentary or the genre of party manifesto, both of which are also parts of political debates. It is important to be aware that Fairclough also approaches genres as potential 'enactments' of discourses, so that, for instance, a discourse (of the social practice) of teaching may be enacted in a particular genre of lecturing.

While the concept of genre refers to ways of acting, *style* refers to ways of performing discursively.[26] This means that texts differ in the ways they perform discursively, depending on what kind of identity they project, consciously or unconsciously. This means that for Fairclough discourses may be 'inculcated' as styles. To stick with the above example, a discourse of teaching may be inculcated in a teacher's way of being, for instance, informal, collegial or encouraging.

Compared to Glynos and Howarth's concept of 'fantasmatic logics', Fairclough's conceptualisation of the notion of inculcation and why discourses 'turns into things' and thereby contribute to sustain, create or challenge social practices and regimes, in my view appears vague and underdeveloped. Fairclough does not problematise why subjects are 'gripped' by certain discourses in the same depth as Glynos and Howarth's approach does by importing the psychoanalytical notion of a 'split subject'. This underdeveloped area of Fairclough's work is also a limitation identified by Phillips and Jørgensen (2002: 90-91, 146). The key point here, however, is that in Fairclough's framework discourses may be enacted as genres and inculcated as styles.

In order to explain how discourses, genres and styles come to form distinct, and potentially hegemonic, orders of discourse, Fairclough invokes Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) concept of articulation. The analysis of how this articulation occurs in texts is what Fairclough refers to as 'textual/interactional analysis' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 63; Fairclough 2001a: 124-125, 2001c: 237-238, 2003: 209). Textual/interactional analysis comprises two sorts

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[26] The concept may also be used to refer to how identity is expressed in body language. See for example Fairclough's (2000b: 95-119) analysis of the bodily dispositions of Tony Blair.

of analysis: one, interdiscursive analysis of the articulation of discourses, genres and style, and two, analysis of linguistic practices and resources. Thus, in this framework interdiscursive analysis is a key component and it also seen as the mediating level of analysis, which is crucial in attempts to integrate social and linguistic analyses. As Fairclough (1992: 46-47) discusses his concept of interdiscursivity is similar to, and inspired by, other concepts such as 'dialogism' (Bakhtin 1981, 1986), 'intertextuality' (Kristeva 1986), 'interdiscourse' (Pêcheux 1982), and was also a key insight in Foucault's so-called archaeological work (1972).

6.4. Discussion of different views on the status of discourse

What the above discussion of the poststructuralist approach and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis makes clear, is that these two approaches shares one important premise: they both conceptualise change and hegemonic struggle in terms of articulation. In Laclau and Mouffe's perspective it is understood as a process of articulation of 'elements', and in Fairclough's framework is it discourses, genres and styles that are being articulated together. They differ significantly, however, in their views on the ontological status of the theoretical category of 'discourse'. Although ontology is about more than different views on the status of discourse, this difference is central when discussing these two approaches.

While discourse in the theory of Fairclough constitutes one moment of the social alongside other moments, the poststructuralist approach of Laclau and Mouffe understand discourse as coextensive with the social, in the sense that the social can only be understood in and through discourse (see Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 107 ff., 1987). This view means that they reject any distinction between the discursive and non-discursive. They also reject criticism about poststructuralist discourse theory being 'mentalist' or 'idealist' by claiming that the world is real despite our perception of it. Their point is that the 'real' world can only be grasped in and through discourse. Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 108) explain:

> The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' of

'expressions of the wrath of God' depends upon the structuring of a discursive field.

Nevertheless, for Fairclough, this rejection of the analytical distinction between the discursive and non-discursive appears problematic. He seems to suggest that this rejection can legitimate a 'judgemental relativism' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 32, 136) that works to sustain capitalist social formations that are, in the broadest meaning of the term, seen as unsustainable. According to Fairclough, such a view is potentially conservative and reductionist (for such critiques, see Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 93, 124-126; Fairclough et al. 2004; Fairclough 2005b, 2006: 29), because it does not put enough emphasis on the fact that political contestation and agency are constrained both by what Chouliaraki and Fairclough refer to as the 'relative permanencies' of institutions (or 'fields' in Bourdieu's terms) (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 22) and by wider and more abstract social structures that, as can be recalled from the above, are defined as 'the most general and most enduring (but still only relatively enduring) characteristics of societies' (Fairclough 2006: 30).

This view suggests that Fairclough regards Laclau's (1990: 35) concept of sedimentation as not being able to explain adequately how agency in political contestation is constrained and that this approach therefore is too voluntaristic in the sense that social agencies are granted too much power (see also Chouliaraki 2002: ft. 7). According to Fairclough (in his book co-authored with Chouliaraki), Laclau and Mouffe (1985) are also unable to explain 'which social forces have greater capacity to effect articulatory change and why' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 125). To answer this question, Fairclough argues that one has to examine both the discursive and the non-discursive conditions for their emergence (see for instance, Fairclough 2005b, 2006: 12, 28, 33, Fairclough et al. 2004), and in order to account for such conditions of possibilities for social forces, Fairclough seems to suggest, one has to locate the social practices and regimes under investigation into a social system which is capitalist and which is conceived as a social structure that has both non-discursive and discursive moments that are dialectically related.

On the other hand, discourse theorists in the tradition of Laclau and Mouffe seem equally sceptical of Fairclough's reliance on critical realism as he is to their definition of discourse as coextensive with the social. In the words of Torfing (2005: 7), Fairclough's reliance on critical realism 'tends to reduce discourse to a linguistic mediation of the events that are produced by the causal powers and mechanisms embedded in the independently existing structures of society'. It

thereby risks ending up with the kind of overly causal law-like explanations that Glynos and Howarth seek to avoid in their approach.

Fairclough's work is vulnerable to this criticism. He emphasises that our social formation is capitalist the following way: 'we see contemporary capitalist societies as heavily determined by (though certainly not reducible to) economic mechanisms' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 20, see also Fairclough 1995: 18). Although he points out that uses the term 'mechanisms', which he takes from Bhaskar's (1986) version of critical realism, without its 'mechanistic and deterministic connotations' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 19), does this insistence on heavily determination of economic mechanisms make his approach prone to criticism about it being too causal law-like.

Two different responses to the abstract and, in my view, unsolvable philosophical question of the ontological status of discourse can be identified.

The first response is to maintain the distinction between the discursive and non-discursive and adopt Fairclough's approach which acknowledges the poststructuralist insight that the social is socially constructed, but also criticises poststructuralist approaches, such as the one developed by Laclau and Mouffe, on grounds that they do not sufficiently take into account how social agency is constrained by the causal powers of social structures and the 'relative permanencies' of institutions. In short, such a response would operate with a social constructivist epistemology and a critical realist ontology, and also try to unravel the dialectical relationships between discursive and non-discursive moments.

A second response is to reject the distinction between the discursive and non-discursive and restrict the scope of the study to the discursive dimension. An important advantage of this response has to do with operationalisation. Fairclough's distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive social structures is problematic and difficult to maintain in empirical analysis. Phillips and Jørgensen point at the difficulties with this distinction in Fairclough's approach the following way:

> The main problem with his approach is that the consequences for empirical research of the theoretical distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive remain unclear. How can one demonstrate empirically that something is in a dialectical relationship with something else? Where does one locate the line of demarcation between two or more things that are in dialectical interplay? And how

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can one show exactly where and how the non-discursive moments influence and change the discursive moment – and *vice versa*?

(Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 89, italics in original)

I share this view about Fairclough's approach being unclear with respect to how to approach the distinction between the between the discursive and the non-discursive in empirical analysis. This means that I do not reject Fairclough's approach because I view its reliance on critical realism as necessarily causing too structuralist and causal law-like explanations that seeks to make necessity, rather than contingency, explicit. Rather, the reason is that Fairclough is unclear about how to understand, and to analytically approach in actual research, the distinction between the discursive and non-discursive.

However, as already stated, in Chapter Ten I shall use social theory in order to contextualise and characterise the debate about freeschools. And as will become evident one of the perspectives which I draw upon – Jessop's cultural political economy approach – is based on a distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive. This raises a question about integration. As Phillips and Jørgensen suggest (2002: 156) suggest, discourse analytical accounts that do reject the distinction between the discursive and non-discursive can still integrate social theory that is based on this distinction. However, if this integration is not to occur eclectically, but according to the criteria of complementarity (that is, the integration ought to contribute to the development of new concepts, vocabularies, categories and so on), then it is necessary to take into account if there are elements in the imported perspective that are inconsistent with the choosen discourse analytical framework. Thus, while this dissertation adopts the poststructuralist ontology of the logics approach, it draws upon social theories in order to contextualise and characterise the debate about freeschools only after having considered if there are elements of these perspectives that are inconsistent with my approach.

6.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented two different approaches to discourse analysis: Glynos and Howarth's poststructuralist logics approach inspired by the work of Laclau and Mouffe, and Fairclough's critical realist version of critical discourses analysis. I discussed the different views on the status of the category of discourse of these two approaches and suggested two responses to this difference: One, to adopt Fairclough's approach that distinguishes between the discursive

and the non-discursive; and two, to restrict the scope of analysis to the discursive dimension by adopting a poststructuralist ontology. This dissertation follows this latter suggestion and also adopts the poststructuralist ontology of the logics approach of Glynos and Howarth.

In the next chapter I discuss how I have modified this approach by incorporating elements from the approaches of Hajer and Fairclough.

7. Research strategy: A modified logics approach

7.1. Introduction

This chapter presents my strategy for describing and explaining *what* and *how* discourses were used in order to sustain and challenge the freeschool reform. This entails that I provide a theoretical model that includes concepts that allow for the understanding and explanation of the relationship between discourse and social change.

As I have already stated in the introduction, the chosen model, or approach, is Glynos and Howarth's poststructuralist logics approach, which I will seek to combine with elements of Hajer's argumentative discourse analysis and Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis. In the following chapter I shall describe and discuss how I use these elements in combination with Glynos and Howarth's logics approach.

Firstly, however, I shall construct the practice of contextualising and characterising the freeschool reform, and its attendant social logics, as part of a 'retroductive' form of social science explanation. Then, secondly, I describe and discuss how I use Hajer's concept of *storyline* and Fairclough's concept of *discourse* in order to understand and explain how the social logics of the reform were sustained and challenged. Thirdly, I examine in more detail how political and fantasmatic logics can be identified in storylines and discourses.

7.2. Social logics and retroduction

As discussed in the introduction, the usage of a discourse analytical perspective inevitably entails that one not only makes claims about *what* and *how* discourses are used, but also claims about *what* characterises the social practices that are being investigated and how they can be contextualised. In this section I problematise this practice of characterisation and contextualisation.

To begin with, we have seen how the concept of articulation is central in Laclau and Mouffe's poststructuralist discourse theory. The concept of articulation is also important in Glynos and Howarth's problematisation of their own logics approach. For them the practice of critical explanation is articulatory and involves the articulation together of theoretical and empirical elements (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 165). This means that the construction of an object of research is not an objective practice; rather, it is a subjective articulatory practice.

Glynos and Howarth invoke the concept of 'retroduction' in order to problematise such a view on research as an articulatory practice.[27] Retroduction (often used interchangeably with the term 'abduction') refers to a 'backward-looking modal form of inference with which many social scientists are familiar' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 24). It can be distinguished from induction that is used to predict future events and practices on basis of past observations, for example, how the numerous observations of black ravens could lead one to infer that all ravens are black. Roughly speaking, it is in such terms that Glynos and Howarth criticise interpretivist and hermeneutic approaches, whose research they refer to as 'contextualised self-interpretations'. While accepting the insight that any explanation of a particular social practice or regime requires an engagement with the involved actors' self-interpretations of these phenomena, they do nevertheless call for an explanation that somehow transcends these:

> While critical explanation requires an engagement with – and passage through – the contextualised self-interpretations of social actors, it is not sufficient to stop there if our aim is to develop conceptual tools with which to construct convincing explanations that have an equally convincing critical bite.
>
> (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 51)

Thus, although they are essential for a social scientific inquiry, it is insufficient only to provide extensive detailed and descriptive accounts of the contextualised self-interpretations of social actors as manifested in texts of different types.

Retroduction can also be distinguished from deductive methods in that it does not explain social events and practices by deducing them from pre-given premises that may or may not be true; for example, if one assumes that all ravens are black, then one can infer that the next one seen will be black. Again, roughly speaking, it is such causal law-like explanations that Glynos and Howarth seek to avoid. Rather than making such causal law-like *necessities* explicit, a retroductive strategy seeks to make explicit the *contingency* involved in the constitution of social practices and regimes.

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[27] Glynos and Howarth primarily draw upon Hanson (1961), Peirce (1960), Bhaskar (1975, 1998) and Sayer (1983). For a discussion of retroduction from a 'Bhaskarian' critical realist position, see Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson (2002: 96-106); and for a discussion of the relationship between the regulation approach and critical realism, see Jessop (2001).

Glynos and Howarth distinguish between two connected ways in which retroduction in social science explanation can be considered. They suggest that retroduction can be considered, firstly, in the way it plays a role in the practice of theory construction, and, secondly, in the way it plays a role in the practice of understanding and critically explaining particular social practices and regimes that are problematised from the perspective of a particular (or several) theory or paradigm (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 27, 41-47). By and large, this distinction corresponds with the distinction I made in the introduction between 'meta theory' and 'research strategy' (see section 1.4). As an example of a practice that foregrounds a 'retroductive logic of theory construction', Glynos and Howarth present Laclau and Mouffe's poststructuralist discourse theory that, as I have discussed, has its own ontological premises. As an example of an analysis that foreground the practice of critical explanation, although it is acknowledged that the boundaries between the practice of theory construction and the practice of critical explanation are blurred, they put forward an illustrative analysis to which I turn to below.

7.2.1. Glynos and Howarth's analysis of higher education reforms

Glynos and Howarth demonstrate the application of their 'logics' approach by sketching out an analysis of higher education reforms – or more precisely, so-called audit regime reforms – in the UK since the mid-1980s. Some of the key questions they ask are: 'How are we to characterise the new phenomena and practices? Where did this regime of practices come from, and why has it been installed so quickly?' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 171).

In order to answer these questions, they, by drawing upon a variety of different sources, contextualise the university reforms as one element in an overall hegemonic project to install a new political settlement in the wake of stagflation (slow economic growth accompanied by rising unemployment and inflation) that dislocated the UK post-war settlement in the 1970s (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 173, 199). A defining feature of the following Thatcherite regime (1979-1990) was that it succeeded in dividing the political debate into two camps. It 'involved a form of populist politics that successfully divided the existing "one nation" welfare state consensus into two camps, pitting those in favour of the newly proposed project against those associated with the post-war consensus' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 173). Another key feature was its neo-liberal and market-oriented inclination, and in this period 'universities were easily targeted as an outmoded and inefficient obstacle to realizing the ideals of market competition, lower public spending and greater consumer accountability' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 174).

Glynos and Howarth identify four social logics that 'when articulated together enable us to characterise the emergent regime of audit practices' that accompanied the sets of reforms since the 1970s: 'competition', 'atomisation', 'hierarchy', and 'instrumentalisation' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 171). These logics are interrelated and can be seen as part of a same network of practices. Moreover, they are also considered as 'context dependent constructions that are *retroductively* posited as a function of the rules and structures that inform practices and regimes' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 161, emphasis added). While a logic of competition can describe how the diverse 'subjects' (both individual, such as teachers or students, and collective, such as institutions or departments) in the higher-education system compete with each other in order to receive different rewards (salaries, grades, research funds and so on), a logic of atomisation can describe how subjects are isolated from each other in ways that work to 'downplay the social or structural aspect of success and failure in the self-understanding of persons and institutions'. Further on, a logic of hierarchy helps to describe a top-down mode of governance similar to the ways in which firms are governed, and a logic of instrumentalisation refers to the ways in which the 'potentially intrinsic and processual qualities of teaching and research' are downplayed 'in favour of their instrumental or exchange value'. These social logics, they propose, can help us establish '*what* the logics structuring the various audit regimes are' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 172, italics in original).

Having established what social logics are at play, Glynos and Howarth direct their attention to the political and fantasmatic logics in order to answer the questions 'how' and 'why' the audit regimes and practices came about and continue to be sustained (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 172). Part of the explanation of the political logics involved in the contestation over the meaning and value of the audit regimes, focus on the opposition between social agencies belonging to what they call the 'modernizers' and the 'traditionalists' (2007: 176, 200). On the basis of related research, Glynos and Howarth suggest that 'modernizers' constructed 'series of antagonistic equivalences', like ''surplus' versus 'deficit' departments, 'research active' versus 'research inactive' members of staff, 'good recruiters' versus 'bad recruiters', 'traditional' versus 'innovative' modes of service provision and so forth' that worked to establish the frontier between the two opposing camps (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 176). This kind of demarcation entailed, among others, that a discourse containing fantasies promising some kind of psychological fulfilment were constructed about academics as privileged, lazy or free-riding and

who were attempting to 'milk the system'. This discourse was constructed in opposition to a discourse of 'hard-working' self-made men (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 174).

Glynos and Howarth also suggest that university managers and administrators 'by means of various logics of difference' worked to neutralise resistance against audit reforms by easing the impact upon the staff and by attempting to 'manage change by addressing demands and by changing the structures of governance, so as to prevent or displace public contestation' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 176). Together, these kinds of political and fantasmatic logics worked to sustain audit regimes.

This illustration of how audit regimes emerged and are sustained highlights two important moments of the practice of critical explanation: First, they contextualise and characterise the audit regime and its attendant social logics; and, secondly, in light of this contextualisation and characterisation of the involved social logics, certain theoretical concepts – political logics and fantasmatic logics – are then applied in order to explain how audit regimes emerged and how they are sustained and challenged.

The next section shows how Fairclough's critical discourse analysis also conforms to a retroductive research strategy. It does so by discussing what seems to be Fairclough's most comprehensive empirical analysis, the analysis of the so-called 'third way' discourse of UK's New Labour under the first years of the Blair regime (1997-2007).

7.2.2. Fairclough's analysis of New Labour's third way discourse

When reflecting over their own analyses (not only of New Labour's discourse, but also of other discourses) in their book *Discourse in Late Modernity*, Chouliaraki and Fairclough write: 'we are coming from a particular position within the theoretical field, a particular knowledge interest, entailing a perspective […] which for instance is oriented to problems, to power, to ideology, and so forth' (1999: 66). Further on, they state that: 'CDA takes the view that any text can be understood in different ways – a text does not uniquely determine a meaning' and that

> CDA does not itself advocate a particular understanding of a text, though it may advocate a particular explanation. An explanation re-describes properties of a text (including the range of understandings it gives rise to) by using a particular theoretical framework to locate the text in social practice.
>
> (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 67)

A distinction is here made between 'understanding' and 'explanation'. While particular understandings of texts 'result from different combinations of the properties of texts and the properties (social positioning, knowledges, values, etc.) of the interpreter', particular explanations in critical discourse analysis results from the ways in which the properties of texts are 're-described' by using a particular conceptual language or theoretical framework.

In my view this way of locating texts and discourses within social contexts (or configurations of social practices) by drawing upon particular theoretical frameworks is retroductive. Or, in other words, re-description can be seen as a retroductive practice. I shall demonstrate below how Fairclough's analysis of the discourse of UK's New Labour conforms to a retroductive research strategy.

I see Fairclough's analysis of the third-way discourse as one particularly fruitful contribution to the debate about the meaning and value of contemporary centrist politics, not only useful for the analysis of how third ways are inflected from the left-of-centre, but also from the right-of-centre.[28] The key purposes of his analysis is to explain how interdiscursive articulations of discourses, genres, and styles and the use of linguistic practices and resources work together to hegemonise the discourse of New Labour. Fairclough's key arguments are, firstly, that New Labour's discourse stems from a neo-liberal and competition-oriented discourse of economic globalisation (Fairclough 2000b: 23 ff.); and secondly, that the discourse of New Labour is hybridised. Most importantly, it is seen as consisting of elements from a neo-liberal market-oriented discourse, a welfarist social democratic discourse and a communitarian discourse. Fairclough is sceptical to the idea that these discourses can be reconciled in a third way, and he suggests that New Labour's third-way discourse can be seen 'as a particular variant of the political discourse of neoliberalism' (Fairclough 2004: 111). As Fairclough puts it in the introduction of his book on the third way discourse of New Labour:

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[28] Results of Fairclough's analysis of the third way discourse of UK's New Labour, which involved the analysis of texts such as White Papers, Green Papers, manifestos, pamphlets, speeches, radio and television programmes, were presented in *New Labour, New Language?* (2000b). This book was intended for a wider audience and does not contain the same theoretical discussions as his preceding book from 1999 (*Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*, with Chouliaraki). His research on New Labour has also been published elsewhere (see Fairclough 2000a, 2001a, 2001c, 2003).

This book seeks to illuminate New Labour politics and government through a focus on language. I came to the book with a particular view of New Labour that has developed in the course of writing it. In common with many others, I see the politics of New Labour as rather different from how it represents itself, and as constituting a sharp break with the 'old' Labour Party. The crucial starting point for the politics of New Labour is the acceptance of the new international economic liberalism – 'the global economy' in its own terms – as an inevitable and unquestionable fact of life upon which politics and government are to be premised. My interest in the politics and language of New Labour starts from my view that it is profoundly dangerous for my fellow human beings for this new form of capitalism to develop unchecked, both because it dramatically increases inequality (and therefore injustice and suffering) and because it threatens to make life on earth ecologically unsustainable. I see my analysis of New Labour as within the tradition of critical social science – it seeks knowledge for purposes of human emancipation (rather than for instance to make organisations work more efficiently). Of course, we all have to make our own judgements about what is emancipatory (e.g. what can contribute to reducing inequality), so the important thing is that such judgements should be made explicit and be open to question and challenge, along with the analysis.   (Fairclough 2000b: 15-16)

One could say, then, that Fairclough in his analysis of New Labour draws upon a particular critical perspective in order to locate his analysis in a social context and to characterise the wider social structures in which the discourse he analyses is embedded and work to sustain. More specifically, the perspective he draws upon seems to be inspired by Marxism – a perspective that puts forward an analysis and critique of a particular form of capitalism ('economic liberalism' or neo-liberalism) that, in the widest sense of the term, is unsustainable. However, and as Fairclough indicates, this is one among many theories of capitalism, but apparently it is such a Marxist-inspired theoretical construction that Fairclough considers as having an emancipatory potential, and, presumably, more explanatory adequacy compared to other theory constructions of the emergence and development of the third-way discourse of UK's New Labour. As I suggested above (section 6.4), this reliance on Marxist-inspired theoretical perspectives makes Fairclough's approach prone to the criticism that it produces overly causal law-like explanations.

With respect to the critical explanation of how this third way discourse was sustained Fairclough, among others, draws upon the work by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and their concepts of 'articulation' and 'equivalence and difference'. However, his usage of the concept of equivalence and difference is different from Laclau and Mouffe's (1985). He approaches these logics in terms of 'classification', and suggests that by articulating together elements of different discourses in new combinations, previous differences between can be subverted in ways that result in that they are classified as co-existing elements of a new discourse, in this case a 'new' third way discourse (Fairclough 2000a: 182; see also 2003: 88-98). Thus, by showing both how elements of neo-liberal, welfarist, and communitarian discourses are articulated in relation to another (interdiscursive analysis) and how they are linguistically realised (textual analysis), Fairclough aims to explain how the third way discourse of New Labour in hegemonic struggle attempts to win the 'hearts and minds' of the people.

With respect to the identification of discourses and their linguistic forms, he, among others, examines vocabulary, the representation of social actors, the representation of processes, and the use of metaphors and nominalisations. For instance, he examines how the relationship between 'economic dynamism' and 'social justice' is obfuscated in texts by nominalisation. Nominalisation refers to linguistic practices where social processes are represented as entities (Fairclough 2003: 12-13, 143-145, 220). Fairclough (2003: 13) gives the example of how 'change' is represented in a text of Tony Blair: 'The modern world is swept by change'. Here the process of change is nominalised. The consequence is that the actors, or agents, in the process of change are made absent or backgrounded. Fairclough thus suggests that another way to phrase the above sentence is: 'Multinational corporations in collaboration with governments are changing the world in a variety of ways'. In this formulation active social actors are identified.

The above discussion of the analyses of Glynos and Howarth and Fairclough shows that although the two approaches differ with respect to ontology, their actual research strategies reveal only relatively small differences between them. They both problematise the research strategies of their analysis: Glynos and Howarth in relation to retroduction and Fairclough in relation to re-description, which I suggest can be seen as a retroductive practice. Moreover, their research strategies can be understood as consisting of two interrelated moments:

Firstly, by drawing upon different theoretical sources they both contextualise and characterise the social phenomenon – as manifested in empirical material or texts understood in a wide sense – they examine: audit reforms in the case of Glynos and Howarth and New Labour's

discourse in the case of Fairclough. Secondly, in light of these contextualisations and characterisations, and by using particular analytical concepts, they put forward descriptions and explanations of how these social phenomena were discursively created, sustained and challenged. Glynos and Howarth do this by using the concepts of political and fantasmatic logics, and Fairclough does this by putting forward both interdiscursive analyses and detailed textual analyses.

In this dissertation I shall also present a contextualisation and a characterisation of the social logics that can be associated with the freeschool reform, and like Glynos and Howarth (2007), I suggest that this practice of contextualising and characterisation can be seen as part of a retroductive form of social science explanation. More specifically, in Chapter Ten I shall draw on elements of Jessop's work on cultural political economy to contextualise the reform and elements of Rose's work on governmentality to characterise its social logics. I discuss further in section 8.2 how I do this. Next section starts presenting the key concepts I use in order to provide a critical understanding of the how the social logics of the reform are sustained and challenged.

7.3. Storylines and discourses

The modified version of Glynos and Howarth logics approach that is applied in this dissertation incorporates key concepts from the approaches of Hajer and Fairclough. In this section I start to describe and discuss these concepts, their relationship to each other, and their relationships to Glynos and Howarth's three-fold typology of logics.

7.3.1. Storylines

Hajer develops his concept of storylines through his reading of Foucault (most notably Foucault 1975, 1976) and discourse-theoretical ideas developed in the field of social psychology, and then especially the work of Harré (1993; Davies and Harré 1990), Billig (1987, 1988) and Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Edwards and Potter (1992). In the following I discuss this concept, starting with Hajer's understanding of discourse and its relationship with storylines.

Hajer (1995: 44) defines a discourse as 'a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities'. This is a definition of discourse on a rather high level of generality. Inspired by the work of Foucault, Hajer emphasises the importance of 'breaking-down' wider social discourses, such as discourses of discipline,

punishment, sexuality and the environment (which he is interested in), into smaller components (Hajer 1995: 47). For Hajer, as for Foucault and also Fairclough, political contestations are characterised by their interdiscursivity. He gives the example of the issue of acid rain. Because of the complexity and uncertainty attached to this phenomenon, the contestation over its meaning involves different discourses produced by different actors. For example, 'a policy document on acid rain may easily involve discursive elements from disciplines as various as physics, tree physiology, terrestrial ecology, mathematical modelling, economic, accounting, engineering, and philosophy' (Hajer 1995: 45). Thus, debates and discussions about environmental problems, like any political contestation in general, are characterised by their complexity and intermeshing of different discourses produced by 'a great variety of actors who not only all have their own legitimate orientations and concerns, but have their own modes of talking too' (Hajer 1995: 46).

Like Foucault also Hajer emphasises that the usage and invocation of discourses cannot be explained only by reference to political interests and strategies. He therefore distances his approach from studies that grant subjects too much power by treating discourses as passive tools that are used for strategic reasons, rather than as constitutive of the social. This does not, however, indicate that the identification of political interests and strategic uses of discourses are not important for Hajer. Rather, the point is that the analysis of these alone, is not sufficient for explanations of how political, and hence also social, change occurs. In such a perspective, political interests and preferences, and therefore also strategic usages of discourses, are not to be taken as pre-given. Instead they are seen as being constituted through discourses that change over time. Hajer highlights this point when describing Foucault's contribution to discourse analysis:

> Foucault's theory of discourse shows that the reference to institutional backgrounds or vested interests is an unsatisfactory circular explanation because institutions are only powerful in so far as they are constituted as authorities vis-à-vis other actors through discourse: similarly, interests cannot be taken as given a priori but are constituted through discourse. The point here is that interests have to be constantly reproduced and will change over time […]. (Hajer 1995: 51)

Yet, like so many other discourse analysts, Hajer identifies some shortcomings and ambiguities in Foucault's work. On the one hand, in Foucault's conceptualisation of the notion of interdiscursivity, Hajer sees an 'unduly' emphasis on 'coincidental recombinations' of discourses

(1995: 52), and, on the other hand, in Foucault's earlier work he identifies a structuralist tendency. Accordingly, Hajer identifies 'a need to devise middle-range concepts through which this interaction between discourses can be related to the role of individual strategic actions in a non-reductionist way' (Hajer 1995: 52), that is, in a way that steers a path between overly structuralist and overly voluntaristic accounts. To this end, he introduces the concept of 'storylines', which for him 'hints at a subtle mechanism of creating and maintaining discursive order' (1995: 56). I will return to this notion of how 'discursive order' is created and maintained below. In the following I concentrate on how Hajer develops and defines the concept of storylines.

In the development of this concept, Hajer draws inspiration from discourse-theoretical ideas developed in the field of social psychology. Hajer derives two central insights from this body of work, which he refers to as 'social-interactive' discourse theory (Hajer 1995: 52).

Firstly, according to this perspective's so-called 'positioning theory' (in particular Davies and Harré 1990) subject positions are not simply the product of how actors position or identify themselves through language, but also how they position other actors through language. In this perspective, discursive practice is, in other words, relational, and discourse analysis should, therefore, pay attention to the argumentative struggle – hence the label 'argumentative discourse analysis' – between competing social agencies. Billig explains:

> To understand the meaning of a sentence or whole discourse in an argumentative context, one should not examine merely the words within that discourse or the images in the speaker's mind at the moment of the utterance. One should also consider the positions which are being criticized, or against which a justification is being mounted. Without knowing these counter-positions, the argumentative meaning will be lost.   (Billig 1988: 91; cited in Hajer 1995: 53)

Thus, through the study of argumentative struggle one can describe the boundaries between oppositional positions of competing social agencies. As Hajer (1995: 54) puts it: 'the argumentative interaction is a key moment in discourse formation that needs to be studied to be able to explain the prevalence of certain discursive constructions'.

The second central insight Hajer derives from his reading of 'social-interactive' discourse theory, is that while actors are seen as actively using particular discourses as resources in

argumentative struggles, 'routinized understandings' can at the same time be seen as limiting the range of available discourses that they can draw upon (Hajer 1995: 56). This means that although 'social-interactive' discourse theory has a firm notion of the subject, it does not argue that all action and positioning is the result of an active process of taking up or denying positionings in an argumentative interplay.

Hence, like in the approaches of Fairclough and Glynos and Howarth, also in Hajer's approach discourses are understood as both being constituted by previous discourses, while at the same time opening the possibility that actors can creatively use and constitute new discourses. It is in order to describe and explain this relationship between the agency exerted by actors actively and creatively using discourses and the limitations on them created by 'routinized understandings' that Hajer finds the concept of storylines useful.

A storyline in Hajer's perspective is 'a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena' (1995: 56). Storylines thereby play a significant role in the way in which meaning in general is produced. Like mental schemata (or templates), they help us to organise and categorise information in recognisable and predictable ways. The 'key function of story-lines', Hajer elaborates, 'is that they suggest unity in the bewildering variety of separate discursive component part of a problem […]. The underlying assumption is that people do not draw on comprehensive discursive systems for their cognition; rather these are evoked through story-lines' (Hajer 1995: 56). In this perspective storylines works metaphorically by enabling subjects to 'fill in the gaps' in their understanding of a problem or a social phenomenon. This means that the articulation of a specific element of a particular storylines invokes the storyline as a whole. Hajer explains:

> Story-lines are narratives on social reality through which elements from many different domains are combined and that provide actors with a set of symbolic references that suggest a common understanding. Story-lines are essential political devices that allow the overcoming of fragmentation and the achievement of discursive closure.   (Hajer 1995: 62)

Hajer elaborates further that, firstly, storylines 'have the functional role of facilitating the reduction of the discursive complexity of a problem and creating the possibilities for problem closure', and, secondly, that they can give debates a ritualistic and more permanent character by

becoming ''tropes' or figures of speech that rationalize a specific approach to what seems to be a coherent problem'; in short, the usage of storylines can be seen as 'the ways in which one talks' on certain occasions; and thirdly, that they allow actors to expand their understanding in the sense that they allow them illustrate through language how his or her understanding fits into the debate as a whole (Hajer 1995: 63).

Although there might be a consensus on the basic arguments of a storyline, this does not mean that actors interpret the meaning of it the same way. These different interpretations are manifestations of different political commitments. For Hajer (1995: 65-66), actors that share the usage of a storyline are part of what he calls a 'discourse-coalition', which may include a wide range of actors such as policy-makers, journalists, experts and so on. This also means that shared storylines are characterised by their necessary interdiscursivity.

In this perspective, the result of political contestation can therefore be that some discourses are articulated together to form storylines that produce 'discursive closure', and that thereby are central in 'creating and maintaining discursive order' (1995: 56). This notion of 'discursive order' is similar to Fairclough's 'order of discourse' (see section 6.3.2). Although Hajer does not say much about the concept of 'discursive order', in his approach social change in a given field 'occur according to rules regulated by a discursive order', and 'storylines play an essential role in the transformation and reproduction of this order' (Hajer 1995: 48, 66). As such, we can say that storylines play an important role in the sustainment and challenge of what in the approach of Glynos and Howarth is called social logics. Hence, a key task for discourse analysts is to identify patterns in terms of storylines that are used. This is also a key task of this dissertation.

From the point of view of Glynos and Howarth's approach, the concept of storylines seems fruitful. The integration of the concept of storylines into this approach can contribute to the understanding of the relationship between social, political and fantasmatic logics. As I shall continue to discuss below, the concept of storylines can explain, firstly, *how* political logics are operational in the sustainment and challenge of social practices and regimes and their associated social logics; and, secondly, it can also explain *why* certain discourses are adhered to and as such also how fantasmatic logics are operational in the production of what Hajer (1995: 62) refers to as 'discursive closure'.

The next section discusses in more detail how Fairclough's concept of discourse is applied in this dissertation.

7.3.2. Discourses

To start with, it is useful to re-call that Fairclough uses the term discourse in two different senses. Firstly, discourse (without the definitive and indefinite articles 'the' or 'a/n') is in a critical realist perspective understood as a moment of the social alongside other moments. Secondly, a, or several, discourse(s) (as a noun with the definitive and indefinite articles 'the' or 'a/n') is understood as a representation of a segment of the social reality from a particular perspective (Fairclough 2003: 124). It is this latter definition that is of interest here. Because, as discussed in Chapter Six, I do not endorse the notion of several discursive and non-discursive moments of the social as I do not find it to be useful or applicable in empirical analysis. Instead I prefer the Laclau and Mouffe inspired poststructuralist ontology of Glynos and Howarth, which presupposes that 'all practices and regimes are discursive entities' and that these are 'located within a field of discursive relations' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 109). I have also endorsed Glynos and Howarth's attempt to operationalise Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory by distinguishing between three types of logics. This typology suggests that discourses have three main functions:

One, they not only define, but also sustain or challenge, the rules of a particular order or regime and they are what make the practices they consist of 'tick', to use Glynos and Howarth's term (2007: 135). As discussed above, the concept used to characterise these rules is social logics, which I have explained are contextualised and characterised in a retroductive manner. Two, discourses work to sustain or challenge social logics by creating or subverting difference. As discussed above, these two features are always co-present. This is because attempts to subvert differences by creating relations of equivalences between different discourses, presupposes a discourse which is constructed as different and that thereby work to hold the opposing and re-articulated discourse together. It is these co-present operations that are attempted captured through the concept of political logics. Three, discourses can also sustain or challenge social logics by working ideologically to produce closure. This they do by invoking representations with fantasmatic aspects that conceal, or suppress, differences, complexities or ambiguities. As discussed in section 6.2.2, this fantasmatic function of discourses suggests that discourses have both rhetorical and ideological properties.

While the first one is not (as discussed in section 6.4), these two latter assumptions about discourses are indeed compatible with Fairclough's definition of discourses as representations of

segment of the social reality from a particular perspective that differ in terms of how much of the social world they include.

In this dissertation I shall analytically construct and identify discourses on several levels of abstraction. I will, for example, identify a discourse of the knowledge-based economy, an expert discourses and a discourse of the state's governability that were used by the government and the Progress Party. Further on, and more importantly, in the following case study I shall identify how discourses – and elements of discourses as I discuss further below in section 7.4.1 – are articulated together to form storylines in attempts by competing political actors sustain or challenge social logics.

This usage of Hajer's concept of storylines is similar to Laclau and Mouffe's concept of discourse because it allows for the understanding of the three functions of discourse discussed above. In other words, storylines, firstly, define and institute the social logics of a particular regime of practices; secondly, they work to sustain or challenge social logics by creating or subverting difference; and, thirdly, they work ideologically to produce closure. This means that the concept of storyline is given a similar theoretical status in my approach as the concept of discourse, defined as a structured totality of articulated elements (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105), has in the logics approach. As I continue to discuss in Chapter Eleven, one advantage with this approach, is that it makes it possible to describe the variety of 'elements' that are articulated together in attempts to sustain or challenge the freeschool reform in a more precise and tangible manner. This thereby makes it easier for others to discuss the validity of the claims that I make about the elements – in this case discourses – part of hegemonic projects. Many others scholars, usually working with discourse analysis in what can be called a Foucaultian tradition (including Ball (2007)), write about discourses, rather than elements or some other similar term, in this manner.

7.4. Political and fantasmatic logics in storylines and discourses

In this section I describe and discuss how political and fantasmatic logics can be identified in storylines and discourses. Before that, however, it is important to stress that Glynos and Howarth, inspired by Heidegger (1962), distinguish between the *ontical* and the *ontological* dimensions of their logics approach (2007: 153 ff.). Whereas 'an ontical inquiry focuses on particular objects and entities that are located within a particular domain or 'region' of phenomenon'; an 'ontological inquiry concerns the categorical preconditions for such objects and their

investigation' (2007: 108). In their approach the concept of social logics is therefore viewed as foregrounding the ontical dimension and the concepts of political and fantasmatic logics are viewed as foregrounding the ontological dimension. This means that while social logics are viewed as context-dependent constructions, political and fantasmatic logics are viewed as ''formal constructs' that enable us to account for orders and practices in a variety of historical contexts' (2007: 161). They therefore suggests that the concepts of political and fantasmatic logics are more 'robust' than the concept of social logics as there can be a myriad of social logics but only *two* political logics (equivalence and difference) and *one* fantasmatic logic defined by the function of closure (2007: 163). However, at the same time they do also emphasise that this suggestion about the 'robustness' of political and fantasmatic logics can also be misleading:

> the empirical instantiation of political and fantasmatic logics can be as varied as the practices being analysed. The rhetorical moves involved in constructing chains of equivalences or in breaking them down are as varied as the social contexts in which they function. And the same is true for fantasmatic logics: there may only be one fantasmatic mode of enjoyment (conceived as a function of closure), but the way this is fleshed out will be as varied as the contexts in which it is operative.
>
> (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 163)

In their illustrative analysis of audit regime reforms, Glynos and Howarth do not, in a systematic manner, specify what such 'rhetorical moves' could be, or the ways in which fantasmatic logics may be empirically instantiated. On the one hand, this can be seen as a limitation of their approach. On the other hand, such a stabilisation of method by the provision of guidelines could inhibit further development of this approach.

Nevertheless, for the sake of the clarity of this dissertation, there is a need to define the particular practices that are paid attention to in the case study presented in Part Three; that is, what ontical manifestations of political and fantasmatic logics that are focused on and paid attention to. In my view, this kind of specification is something that scholars working with the logics approach of Glynos and Howarth could benefit from doing. In the following I therefore discuss how the concepts of political logics and fantasmatic logics can be operationalised by identifying 'relations of equivalences', 'positionings' and 'representations of social actors' in storylines and discourses.

7.4.1. Relations of equivalences

In order to clarify the relationship between storylines, discourses and political logics, I shall revisit Glynos and Howarth's conceptualisation. I shall reiterate three main points:

Firstly, while the concept of social logics allows for the characterisation of practices and regimes on a mainly synchronic axis, the concept of political logic allows for the description and understanding of the synchronic dimension of attempts to sustain and challenge practices and regimes. Secondly, in their perspective all practices can be conceived as discursive. This means that all practice can be understood as signifying practices. It was with respect to this ontological assumption that Laclau and Mouffe, and later Glynos and Howarth, drew inspiration from structural linguistics, and then in particular Saussure's (1974) notion of syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions in language. Thus, as Glynos and Howarth (2007: 143) say, 'political logics must in the first instance be a species of logics of signification as such'. Thirdly, and related to the above, in Glynos and Howarth's perspective the concept of logic of equivalence captures the substitutive, or paradigmatic, dimension of a Saussureian notion of signification by making reference to an 'us-them' axis: 'two or more elements can be substituted for each other with reference to a common negation or threat' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 144). In contrast, the logic of difference captures the combinatory, or syntagmatic, dimension of a Saussurian notion of signification by accounting not only for difference among separate elements, but also by keeping them separate and distinct.

This suggests that while the logic of equivalence operational in the creation of shared storylines can be thought of simplifying and condensing the meaning of a contested social phenomena; the logic of difference, on the other hand, can be thought of as operational in attempts to break-down and weaken the coherence, and hence also the credibility, of a storyline by expansion and complexification of the political 'space' surrounding the contested social phenomenon. In order to elaborate this argument further, it is useful to review Fairclough's attempt to operationalise Laclau and Mouffe's concept of equivalence and difference.

Fairclough has re-developed the concept of equivalence and difference over a longer period of time. In one of his earlier formulations, briefly discussed in section 7.2.2, he uses the concept to operationalise what he calls a 'processual view of representation' (Fairclough 2000a: 176). Here he makes two suggestions. Firstly, he suggests that the concept of equivalence and difference can be seen as 'a general characterisation of the social process of classification' and

that people in all social practices are continuously dividing and combining – producing (also reproducing) and subverting divisions and differences'. Secondly, he suggests that 'elements (words, phrases etc.) are constantly being combined and divided in texts' and that 'prior combinations and separations are constantly being subverted' (Fairclough 2000a: 182). In a later formulation Fairclough elaborates further on how to operationalise the concept of equivalence and difference:

> These are respectively tendencies towards creating and proliferating differences between objects, entities, groups of people, etc. and collapsing or 'subverting' differences by representing objects, entities, groups of people etc. as equivalent to each other. This may seem to be a rather abstract theoretical point, but it is an aspect of the continuous social process of classification. Classification has crucial effects such as whether political processes and relations are predominantly represented, understood and acted upon in terms of the division between 'left' and 'right', or how diverse economic and social phenomena and changes are subsumed under 'globalisation' as equivalental instances or aspects of it. Thus classification and categorisation shape how people think and act as social agents.
>
> (Fairclough 2003: 88)

Thus, in the two above extracts elements are referred to as firstly, 'words, phrases etc.' and, secondly 'objects, entities, groups of people, etc.'. In his latest re-development of this concept in his book *Language and Globalisation* (2006) Fairclough does not make reference to Laclau and Mouffe's original conceptualisation and nor does he include the concept of logic of difference in his account. But in similar terms as before, and still oriented towards detailed textual-analysis, Fairclough here refers to how 'expressions' are textually constructed in 'relations of equivalence', and how they thereby are classified as co-existing elements of a particular category (Fairclough 2006: 42, 134).

In the following case study I will operationalise the concept of political logics by identifying constructions of 'relations of equivalences' between discourses, or elements of discourses, that thereby are classified as co-existing parts of the same policy, in this case the freeschool reform. I shall define the concept of elements rather broadly to include expressions, demands and features associated with discourses.

7.4.2. Positionings

Notions of classification and categorisation, albeit in a different way, also seem to underpin the positioning theory which Hajer draws upon in his approach. Crucial in positioning theory, as discussed by Hajer, is that in order to understand an argumentative struggle it is not simply enough to describe how actors position themselves, it is also necessary to describe how they position others. Further on, Hajer also emphasises that the study of argumentative interaction is crucial for the study and explanation of the construction of prevalent discursive formations and that discourse analysis is about the investigation of 'the boundaries between the clean and the dirty, the moral and the efficient', and how the particular framing of a discussion 'makes certain elements appear as fixed and appropriate while other elements appear problematic' (Hajer 1995: 54). In a relational perspective on meaning-making, these assertions are unproblematic.

The concept of positioning is also helpful because it allows one to distinguish, on the one hand, between positioning practices geared at polarisation and the accentuating of difference ('we are different with respect to this'); and, on the other hand, positioning practices geared at neutralising, pacifying or managing opposition by subverting difference ('we are not different with respect to this'). While the former practices can be understood as ontical manifestations of the logic of equivalence working to strengthen political frontiers between competing storylines by cancelling out differences between discursive elements, the latter can be understood as ontical manifestations of the logic of difference working to weaken political frontiers between competing storylines by accommodating and incorporating differences between discursive elements.

In the case study I shall identify how actors in argumentative struggle position themselves and their associated political projects, as well as how they position competing actors and their associated political projects.

7.4.3. Representations of social actors

As discussed in section 6.2, the concept of fantasmatic logics is intrinsically linked with the subject's experienced dislocatory status of social reality, and when discourses work to conceal the contingency of social reality, they can be understood as working ideologically. Also Hajer (1995: 56, 62) seems to hint at the fantasmatic and ideological dimension of storylines when suggesting that storylines allow subjects to 'fill in gaps' in their understandings, and that storylines are essential political devices that allow the overcoming of fragmentation and the

achievement of 'discursive closure'. Yet, he does not specify or discuss these fantasmatic dimensions as elaborate as Glynos and Howarth. They helpfully distinguish between two co-present dimensions that fantasmatic discourses can, but do not necessarily need to, exhibit.

On the one hand, there is the 'the beatific dimension of fantasy' present in discourses that promise 'a fullness-to-come once a named or implied obstacle is overcome' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 147). They give the examples of discourses of 'omnipotence or total control' as a beatific discourse. The fantasies in a beatific discourse can be seen as having a stabilising dimension as it promises a state of being without, or with minimal, disturbances, once the 'named or implied obstacle is overcome' (Howarth 2008: 17). On the other hand, there is as 'the horrific dimension of fantasy' present in discourses that foretell 'a disaster if the obstacle proves insurmountable' and they give the example of a discourse of 'impotence and victimhood' as a horrific discourse (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 147). Whereas fantasies in a beatific discourse are seen as having a stabilising dimension, fantasies in a horrific discourses can be seen as having a destabilising dimension that have an obstacle or force that needs to be overcome or removed in some manner (Howarth 2008: 17).

In order to illustrate how fantasmatic discourses may work to challenge regimes and practice and their associated social logics, they give the example of how debates on social policies in the US, which often assumes that welfare system is inefficient, frequently invoke a fantasmatic discourse of single African-American mothers exploiting the welfare system on the expanse of hard-working tax-payers. Another related example could be how a fantasmatic discourse of particular ethnic minority group receiving privileges with respect to social-benefits arrangements can work to challenge, and change, a nation's welfare system (see Mickler 1998).

Glynos and Howarth also write that fantasies 'typically rely upon narratives which possess features distributed between public-official and unofficial forums' (2007: 147). They indicate what they mean by 'public-official and unofficial forums' when they suggest a 'methodological rule of thumb' for empirical analysis aiming to identify ontical manifestations of the fantasmatic objects of discourses: 'empirical evidence indicating the presence of a fantasmatic object can often be identified by asking *whether or not it resists public official disclosure'* (2007: 148, italics in original).

In order to illustrate this claim about fantasy and public disclosure, they draw upon a study by Lewis (2005: Ch. 3) on the political practices and struggles that resulted in the UK's *Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994*. In explaining how this act, which is seen as

'draconian and anti-nomadic', was legitimated, Lewis shows how the passage of the Bill through parliament in 1992 was accompanied by 'an outpouring of virulent and often irrational attack' on so-called 'New Age Travellers' in the tabloid press. In these reports, new age travellers were in a horrific discourse constructed as an obstacle to the morally upstanding British communities, and as a threat to the Tory promises of a healthy economy and a good society, for instance, by constructing them as lazy, anarchic, sexually deviant and as drug users. Although these horrific constructions resisted public-official disclosure in the sense that they were never presented in the serious broadsheets or by politicians in the parliament, they did appear in the 'margins of public official discourse' (2007: 148). That is, they were circulated in the tabloid press, and as private 'off-the-records' accounts.[29]

The above examples make an important suggestion with respect to how the concept of fantasmatic logics allows for the understanding of *why* particular storylines have the potential to provide subjects adhering to them some kind of closure. They suggest that fantasmatic objects often – but not always – are social actors that are attributed with either horrific or beatific forms of agency. With respect to this we can note here that Hajer explains that: 'Story-lines are devices through which actors are positioned, and through which specific ideas of "blame" and "responsibility", and of "urgency" and "responsible behaviour" are attributed' (Hajer 1995:64-65). What this suggests is that, as in narratives in general, storylines also contain discourses of social actors that are given particular roles in social processes. An obvious example is the 'villains' possessing demonic traits and 'heroes' having superpowers in stories centred on a 'good' versus 'evil' conflict. Hajer's explanation of the relationship between storylines and the positioning of social actors, also suggests that positioning of actors and representation of social actors are similar practices and that these two analytical categories are overlapping.

With respect to the attribution of agency, van Leeuwen's (1996; see also Fairclough 2003: 145-150) work on the representation of social actors is useful. He distinguishes between a range of different ways in which social actors are represented. One of his basic distinctions deals with the ways in which social actors are represented as either active or passive in the social processes of which they are part.

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[29] Elsewhere Howarth (2008: 17) suggests that often such fantasmatic discourses 'operate below the level of official public disclosure, manifesting themselves in jokes, off-the-record remarks, multifarious informal practices, slips of the tongue, tabloid stories, and so forth'.

As I show in the case study, the ways in which social actors are represented is of great importance with respect to the attribution of responsibility for social changes. In the case study presented in Part Three, the fantasmatic aspects of the political contestation is therefore identified by examining discourses of the social actors part of the freeschool reform. This is of course not to suggest that fantasies *only* come in the form of fantasies about social actors. Rather, as discussed above, and as Glynos and Howarth (2007: 147, italic in original; see also 153) write: 'the logic of fantasy (in the singular) appears ontically in many guises – hence our use of the term fantasmatic logic*s* (in the plural)'. In the case study, however, I shall direct the attention to the horrific and beatific forms of agency in the discourses of the social actors involved in the freeschool reform: the state, public schools, private school and parents.

7.5. Conclusion and presentation of research questions

In this chapter I presented the research strategy I pursue in order to achieve the research aims of this dissertation. As a whole, this strategy can be considered as a modified logics approach. Before I summarise the key concepts in this strategy, I shall present the research questions its application will answer:

- *How can the reform be contextualised and what forms of social logics characterises the reform?*
- *What storylines and discourses were employed by the opposing constellations in attempts to sustain or challenge the reform and its associated social logics, and what political and fantasmatic logics were operational in them?*

These two sets of research questions correspond to the distinction between '*contextualisation and characterisation*' and '*sustainment and challenge*', which organises the case study in Part Three.

In order to present my research strategy I proceeded in the following manner: Firstly, I constructed my approach as a retroductive form of social science explanation that involves two interrelated key moments: One, the contextualisation and characterisation of the social logics that are being examined, and two, the critical explanation of how these social logics are sustained or challenged in attempts to make a bid for hegemonic status. I made clear that I, in common with both the analyses of both Glynos and Howarth and Fairclough, use other work – in this case, the work of Jessop and Rose – to contextualise and characterise the social logics of the freeschool

reform. Secondly, and in order to provide a critical understanding of the processes of sustainment and challenge, I introduced storylines and discourses as key concepts in my research strategy. In my modified logics approach, storylines, and the discourses they consist of, can sustain or challenge the social logics characterising a particular field or domain. Thirdly, I specified how one can identify ontical manifestations of the political and fantasmatic logics that are operational in storylines and discourses. I choose to limit the analytical focus in the case study to the identification of ontical manifestations of 'relations of equivalence', 'positionings', and 'representations of social actors'.

The next chapter describes and discusses how I proceed during the analysis of the empirical material in order to answer the research questions posed above.

8. Analytical procedure

8.1. Introduction

In order to make the analysis put forward in this dissertation more transparent in this chapter I describe and discuss how I proceeded in the actual analysis when answering the research questions posed in previous chapter. Before I do that, two caveats needs to be entered.

Firstly, although guidelines for how to conduct a discourse analysis have been produced by several discourse analysts (see for example, Fairclough 2003: 199 ff., 2006: 168-169; Glynos and Howarth: 2007: 201-208; Hajer 2005 306-307; Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 138-175), there is a general agreement that there is no 'clear-cut' procedure. This should not be seen as a problem. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 17) have argued, while a stabilisation of a method for discourse analysis would have institutional and especially pedagogical advantages, this could inhibit the development of new discourse analytical perspectives, as well as integrationist interdisciplinary engagements with other disciplines.[30]

Secondly, and related to the above, it is generally accepted that the analysis of a larger archive involves different interpretative stages and readings (on this see for example Meyer 2001; Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 124). Interpretation in this perspective can be considered as the practice of making what Glynos and Howarth refer to as actors' – in this case politicians and political parties – 'contextualized self-interpretations', intelligible by means of describing the discourses that the researcher finds in the empirical material that is analysed. These discourses are then, in a retroductive manner (see section 7.2), articulated together with particular theoretical concepts to form an explanatory account, or narrative, of how particular regimes and practices and their associated social logics are sustained and challenged – in this case, how political and fantasmatic logics operational in storylines and discourses sustained or challenged the freeschool reform.

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[30] This does not mean that what can be called the straightforward appropriation of guidelines provided by other discourse analysts who have analysed similar texts is necessarily a bad idea. For example, with respect to software-based corpus linguistics (aimed, for instance, at identifying collocations patterns of different words), this approach may very well be a useful way to quantify findings generated through qualitative discourse analysis or to test hypotheses generated through similar corpus analysis (on this see Fairclough 2003: 6; and for examples of applications of Fairclough's version of critical discourse analysis that included corpus analysis, see Fairclough 2000b; Mulderigg 2003; Pearce 2004).

Although I already had an understanding of the debate on freeschools before I sampled and started examining the texts, it is reasonable to divide the analytical procedure I followed into three readings. I shall describe and discuss these three readings.

8.2. Identification of social logics

In the first reading I systematically read and examined the seven party manifestos and the three government's bills and recommendations from the Parliament Committee on Education and Research to the parliament (for a description of the empirical material, see section 1.5). I also read and examined other relevant texts such as White papers and speeches. On the basis of this reading, and by the usage of selected theoretical approaches (Jessop's and Rose's), I was able to contextualise and characterise the reform and its attendant social logics. I have already described this practice as a moment in a retroductive form of social science explanation (see section 7.2).

8.3. Identification of discourse and storylines

In the second reading I examined transcripts from the three parliamentary debates and the 594 newspaper texts that were part of the public debate about freeschools. Inspired by how Hajer proceeds in one of his analysis, I also proceeded by identifying the key issues and aspects of the debate. I shall explain this in more detail.

First of all, it is no coincidence that I found inspiration for my analytical procedure in Hajer's work. Compared to the two other approaches, one of the strengths of Hajer's approach is that he does present a larger study where he applies his own approach. While the two other approaches are stronger theoretically, they do, in my view, not provide applications of their own approaches that are as comprehensive as Hajer's. On the one hand, Glynos and Howarth's analysis of higher education reforms is, as they point out, only illustrative. On the other hand, Fairclough's New Labour analysis is rich in its suggestions for how to do detailed textual analysis, but does not, compared to Hajer's study, to the same extent, examine a large amount of empirical material with the aim of identifying larger-scale patterns.

On the basis of a close reading of how he uses this concept in one of his own case studies (Hajer 1995: Ch. 4), and on the basis of a later presentation of his 'argumentative discourse analysis' approach (Hajer 2005), it is possible to discern guidelines for how to proceed in empirical analysis. The analysis I found inspiration in is Hajer's probably best known and acclaimed analysis of the emergence of a discourse of 'ecological modernisation' as a dominant

way of conceptualising environmental problems and the challenges they pose to existing institutional arrangements.

In general terms, Hajer defines ecological modernisation as 'the discourse that recognises the structural character of the environmental problematic but nonetheless assumes that existing political, economic, and social institutions can internalise the care for the environment' (1995: 25). According to Hajer, the discourse has three main characteristics. Firstly, this discourse makes environmental degradation calculable (through 'cost-benefit' analyses, for example). Secondly, environmental protection is portrayed as a 'positive-sum game' equating pollution with inefficiency. A third and related characteristic is the assumption that economic growth and the resolution of environmental problems can in principle be reconciled.

In his study of the controversy over acid rain in the UK between 1972 and 1989, which also included concerns about dead trees in West Germany (*waldsterben*) and dead fish in Norwegian lakes, Hajer sets out to examine an 'eco-modernist' shift in discourses used to discuss the best approach to environmental problems and the regulations they would entail. His study of the acid rain controversy follows three basic steps.

First, on the basis of interviews with central actors in the debate, his reading of secondary literature and a variety of documents which are part of the policy-making process, he provides an examination of the major events in the controversy (Hajer 1995: 106-111). In this dissertation I have done this already in Chapter Three where I provided a chronological account of the debate on freeschools. Secondly, and by using the same empirical material, he identifies the storylines that he found to be structuring the debate. He identifies two competing storylines: a 'traditional-pragmatist' storyline that did not challenge the existing regime and an 'eco-modernist' storyline that did in important ways challenge this regime. These two storylines he then presents as 'ideal typical compositions' (Hajer 1995: 120). Thirdly, and still using the same empirical material, and after having presented the storylines, Hajer continues with an analysis of 'the context of the argumentative game in which they acquired, sustained, and transformed their meanings'. This examination, which involved a focus on how the involved actors positioned themselves and their projects, is necessary, says Hajer, for the understanding of 'the political impact of these storylines' (Hajer 1995: 120).

While the analysis of this 'argumentative game' is mainly diachronic, the analysis of the two storylines is synchronic (Hajer 1995: 112, ftn. 21). In this diachronic analysis he describes how these two storylines held together two different 'discourse-coalitions' consisting of

scientists, interest-groups such as Friends of the Earth, policy-makers and others. However, in this part of the study, he not only identifies two discourse-coalitions adhering to the two competing storylines, he also identifies three key issues on which the actors held competing claims: 'what damage was done; what role science had to play in the decision-making; and whether the existing regulatory practice was sufficiently equipped to deal with the acid rain issue' (Hajer 1995: 125). On the identification of these three key issues, Hajer states:

> between them these three issues (the image of damage, the role of science, and the issue if regulation in the strict sense) cover the most essential practices through which acid rain was framed, and illustrate how specific structural discourses (such as science) were drawn upon and how discursive strategies were played out.
>
> (Hajer 1995: 125)

Further on, and with respect to the political practices he directs the attention to, Hajer says: 'obviously, there are many other practices that have exerted influence on the evolution of air pollution discourse and the way in which acid rain was taken on, but it is impossible to cover the whole domain in similar detail' (Hajer 1995: 125). Although Hajer does not problematise the key issues he identifies in this way, these issues can be seen as functioning as what Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 113; see section 6.2.2) refer to as 'floating signifiers' in the controversy.[31]

In the case study presented in this thesis, I follow Hajer's analytical procedure and also identify key issues on which competing actors held competing claims. More specifically, in my analysis I started out my second reading by categorising texts and extracts of text according to *actors* and what I found to be prevalent *themes* that seemed important for the purpose of the dissertation at that time. I shall explain this in more detail.

Firstly, and with respect to *actors*, I categorised text fragments produced by politicians belonging to parties in the Bondevik coalition as well as the Progress Party, and by politicians belonging to parties in the red-green constellation. This amounted to seven categories, as there were seven political parties that were part of the two different constellations. I also categorised fragments of text – sampled by the use of the Atekst archive – that were produced by interest groups that were against the law (such as teacher unions), interest groups in favour of the new

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[31] We may note here that also Phillips and Jørgensen (2002: 148) suggest that floating signifiers can work as indicators for what Fairclough (inspired by Foucault) calls 'orders of discourse' (see section 6.3.2).

law (such as freeschool owners), and newspaper commentaries (editorials and commentaries by 'non-politicians') arguing either against or in favour of the new law. In addition I categorised extracts from commentaries written by academics and scientists – or so-called 'experts'. In total, then, there were 12 categories of text fragments: seven parties, interest groups for and against the new law, commentaries for and against the new law, and 'experts'. However, as discussed above, the following analysis is restricted to the discourses of the seven political parties and the members of these parties who had a seat in the Parliament.

Secondly, and with respect to *themes*, I placed fragments of text into different categories on the basis of how they contained arguments that were often repeated or of how they contained some expression of linguistic forms (for example, a metaphor, a vivid expression, an image, and so on) that made some positions and arguments more explicit than other formulations. After the first round of reading the sampled texts in this way, I ended up with 17 different categories of themes. I gave the categories the following names (listed here in no particular order): 'Sweden and other countries', 'accepted resignation', 'regional policy', 'neighbourhood schools' (*grendeskoler*), 'commercial actors', 'municipal economies', 'party-strategic discourse', 'control', 'outlook on life' (*livssyn*), 'distrust', 'modernity rhetorics', 'evil circles', 'resources', 'sponging off' (*skumme fløten*), 'technocracy', 'veto-right and local democracy' and 'vocational training and narrow subjects' (*smale fag*). As most texts commented on many different themes, fragments from the same texts were often placed in several categories.

As the analysis proceeded the 17 categories referred to above were changed and given new names. This process can be described as a 'back-and-forth' movement between earlier categorisations, analysis of the empirical material and development of the theoretical framework. This means that during the process, some categories were either rejected or changed. By proceeding in this manner I ended up by identifying three key issues that the abovementioned categories of themes revolved around. In reality these issues are of course overlapping and internally related, and there are no 'clear-cut' distinctions between them.

The first key issue concerned quality enhancement and more specifically the claim the reform would enhance quality in both private and public schools; the second key issue was related to accusations from the red-greens that the reform would cause more social segregation; and the third key issue concerned what can be called the reform's pragmatic dimension actualising questions like why did, or did not, the old law work, and will the new law work according to its intentions?

I structured the case study according to the identification of these three key issues, and by categorising texts part of the debate in this way I was also able to identify issues and aspects that were important in each one of these sub-debates. This means that I analytically constructed the debate about freeschools as consisting of what can be seen as three interrelated 'sub-debates' which each had their distinctive issues and aspects. This is illustrated in the table below:

Table 1. Key issues in the debate about freeschools
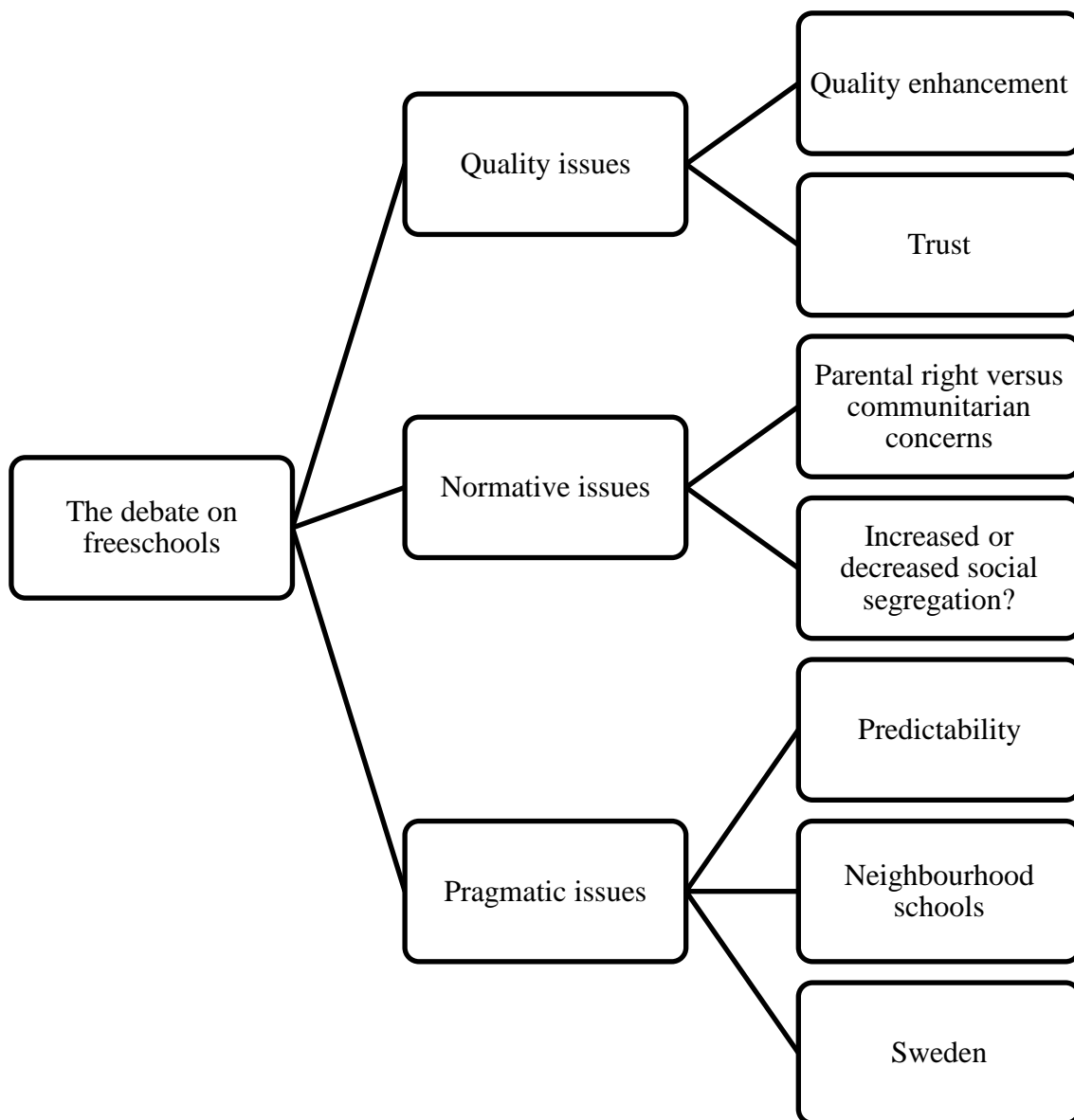
For example, during the analysis I found that with respect to the reform's pragmatic aspects, there were three issues on which the competing actors held different claims: Firstly, if the law would ensure more or less predictability for parents and municipalities who owns the public schools; secondly, if the reform would make it easier for parents in rural areas to maintain or establish neighbourhood schools; and thirdly, if experiences in Sweden, which has implemented a similar reform in 1992, indicated that it was pragmatic to implement the freeschool reform in Norway.

By categorising texts fragments in this way I was able to identify discourses that were recurrently invoked and how they came to form two distinct storylines that I have called 'the destructive-release' storyline used by the red-greens and 'the necessary-supplement' storyline used by the government and the Progress Party.

8.4. Identification of relations of equivalences, positionings and representations of social actors

In the third reading I re-read the texts that I examined in the second reading by directing the attention to the particular the construction of relations of equivalences, the positioning of actors and their political projects, and the representations of social actors involved in the reform (the state, public schools, private schools and parents). This allowed me to identify prevalent ontical manifestations of political and fantasmatic logics that worked to sustain or challenge the social logics associated with the freeschool reform.

This means that while arguments and linguistic forms were the main units of analysis in the second reading, and relations of equivalences, positionings and representations of actors were the main units of analysis in the third reading, all these units can be understood as constituting, and being constituted by, discourses and storylines. This also means that these units of analysis are overlapping. It is clear that arguments and the usage of linguistic forms such as metaphors, analogies and so on, can work *both* to make some relations of equivalences, positionings more explicit *and* to represent social actors.

8.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have described and discussed how I proceeded during the empirical analysis in order to identify the social logics of the reform, the discourses and storylines that sustained or challenged it, and the political and fantasmatic logics that were operational in these discourses and storylines. I described how the analytical procedure was divided into three main readings.

The first one involved that I used the perspectives of Jessop and Rose to contextualise and characterise the social logics of the reform as it was represented in the texts that I analysed. The second involved that I, inspired by Hajer's (1995) analysis of the acid rain controversy in the UK, identified three key issues in the debate about freeschools that each had their own distinctive issues and aspects. By identifying recurrent themes, linguistic forms and arguments presented by the selected actors in relation to these issues and aspects, I was able to identify patterns in terms of discourses and storylines that were used. In the final reading I directed the attention to the ontical manifestations of the political and fantasmatic logics that were operational in the discourses and storylines I identified. I did this by choosing to focus on three practices: the construction of relations of equivalences, positionings and representation of social actors.

Part Three: Analysis

9. Introduction

The case study has two chapters and is organised according to a distinction between '*contextualisation and characterisation*' and '*sustainment and challenge*'.

Chapter Ten consists of two sections that each provides theoretical substance to the dissertation's claims about the context of the reform and what social logics that characterises the freeschool reform. More specifically, in section 10.2 I draw on elements of the so-called cultural political economy approach developed by Jessop, and in section 10.3 I draw on elements of the work of scholars, and then especially Rose, who, inspired by the later work of Foucault, provide a particular governmentality perspective on how power is exercised in modern societies. Of course other theoretical perspectives could also have been used for these purposes. But among the perspectives that I have knowledge of, I considered these to be the most fruitful and attractive (for other examples of use of these perspectives in discourses analyses of related phenomena, see Ball 2007; Fairclough 2006; Nokkala 2007).

With respect to the integration of elements of the approaches of Jessop and Rose into the research strategy presented in previous chapters, it is, as discussed in section 6.4, necessary to take into account whether there are elements of these approaches that are inconsistent with the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the chosen discourse theoretical framework. As both approaches emphasise and highlight the role of discourse in the process of social change, it appears that there are no tensions with respect to epistemology. They both adopt a social constructivist epistemology underpinned by the idea that the social process is socially constructed. Yet, with respect to ontology and the question of the ontological status of discourse there are differences.

On the one hand, and as will become evident, Jessop's approach shares the ontological premises of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, which maintains the distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive.[32] However, as discussed in section 6.4, I have restricted the scope of this dissertation to the discursive dimension by adopting Glynos and Howarth's

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[32] One the one hand, while drawing upon the work of Fairclough (1992, 2003), Jessop (2004: 166) holds that the discursive construction of the knowledge-based economy 'can be read as a distinctive semiotic order that (re-) articulates various genres, discourses, and styles around a novel economic strategy, state project, and hegemonic vision and that affects diverse institutional orders and lifeworlds'. On the other hand, Fairclough has drawn upon the cultural political economy approach in his recent work, and has also 'embedded' his latest version of critical discourse analysis in the cultural political economy approach of Jessop (Fairclough 2005, 2006: 7, 165). It should also be noted that Fairclough and Jessop have co-authored (together with Sayer who has developed his own version of critical realism, see Sayer 2000) an article that makes the case for the integration of discourse analysis into critical realism (see Fairclough et al. 2004).

poststructuralist logics approach. The account of the cultural political economy approach below should, therefore, be considered as a contribution to the contextualisation of the freeschool reform.

One the other hand, Rose, who is inspired by the work of Foucault, does not discuss the distinction between the discursive and non-discursive. This is a distinction that Foucault (1972) maintains but that Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 107), and later also Glynos and Howarth (2007: 108-110) reject. Nonetheless, Rose's perspective seems to be compatible with the ontological premises of the logics approach of Glynos and Howarth. This makes it possible to translate elements of his approach into discourse analytical terms consistent with the ontological (or meta theoretical) premises of the modified logics approach of this dissertation. More specifically, we may see what Rose interchangeably refers to as governmental 'rationalities', or 'programs' (or some other similar term), as social logics that are contextualised and characterised in a retroductive manner.

After having established how this dissertation, as moment in a retroductive form of social science explanation, contextualises the reform and characterises its social logics, I continue in Chapter Eleven to examine closer how the social logics of the reform was sustained and challenged by applying the modified logics approach presented in the previous chapters. I start doing this, in section 11.1, by presenting what I found to be two competing storylines that were invoked in the debate. I call these the '*necessary-supplement*' storyline and the '*destructive-release*' storyline. These descriptions are 'ideal-typical compositions' (Hajer 1995: 120) and do not examine in detail the discourses – and their attendant political and fantasmatic logics – that were articulated together to form these storylines. As discussed in section 8.3, Hajer also presents his case study of the acid-rain controversy in the UK in this manner. As the invocation of one element of a storyline may activate a fuller understanding of the whole storyline, it does, for presentational reasons, make sense to present the storylines that I identified during the empirical analysis before attention is directed to the discourses that formed them. This I do in section 11.2, which is divided into three sections reflecting the identification of the three key issues in the debate (see section 8.3). In contrast to the ideal-typical reconstruction of the two competing storylines, this examination is primarily diachronic (and not synchronic), and directs the attention to how important issues and aspects in the debate were contested and how political and fantasmatic logics were operational in the discourses that were used.

10. Social logics: Contextualisation and characterisation

10.1. The freeschool reform and competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy

Jessop's cultural political economy approach (2004; 2008; Jessop and Sum 2006; Jessop and Oosterlynck 2008) has three key characteristics. First, it insists on the importance of considering the historicity and institutional settings of political and social phenomena. Secondly, it takes the 'cultural turn' within the social sciences seriously but avoids 'throwing the baby out with the bath water' by overstating the causal effects of discourse. Along with Fairclough this is something Jessop (2004: 171; see also Jessop 1990: Ch. 10) suggests that Laclau and Mouffe (1985) do. Thirdly, and in accordance with the two above features, it seeks to examine the relationships between co-evolving non-discursive and discursive processes. Thus, as mentioned above, this means that in common with Fairclough's approach, also the cultural political economy approach distinguishes between the discursive and the non-discursive.

A key concept of the cultural political economy approach is the concept of 'economic imaginaries'. This concept is informed by 'the recognition of the hypercomplexity of the natural and social worlds and the impossibility of observing and explaining these worlds (and their interaction) in real time' (Jessop 2008: 16). Because of this hypercomplexity, Jessop maintains that social research should distinguish between ''the actually existing economy' as the chaotic sum of all economic activity' from the economy (or economies) 'as an imaginatively narrated, more or less coherent subset of these activities' (Jessop 2004: 162, 2008: 16). One such dominant economic imaginary, argues Jessop, is that of the knowledge-based economy. This does not mean that Jessop thinks that this imaginary adequately describes the dynamics of the contemporary economy (or economies) and the role knowledge has in it. On the contrary, he writes that 'it misrepresents knowledge as a 'factor' of production' and 'understates the extent to which every economy is a knowledge economy' (Jessop 2008: 14; see also 2004: 169). Nonetheless, this imaginary has achieved the status of what Jessop calls a 'master discourse'.[33] It is seen as circulating globally and as able to subsume many other discourses that characterise a diversity of different social fields, for instance, discourses indicated by ''buzzwords', such as 'expert

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[33] It is important to note that Jessop's earlier formulation of the cultural political economy approach (Jessop 2004) seem to use the concepts of 'master discourses' and 'master narratives' interchangeably, whereas a more recent formulation (Jessop 2008) only uses the term 'economic imaginary'. Apart from these differences, it is outside the scope of this dissertation to discuss further the differences between these three concepts ('economic imaginary', 'master discourse' and 'master narrative').

systems', 'e-commerce', intellectual capital', 'human capital', 'knowledge workers', 'intellectual property', and 'lifelong learning''(Fairclough 2006: 47).

Jessop emphasises that competitive knowledge-based economies can be 'inflected' through different strategies, making the master discourse of the knowledge-based economy seem to function like a Rorschach inkblot that sustains 'alliances and institutionalized compromises among very disparate interests' (Jessop 2004: 168). He has earlier distinguished between three different strategies that are being pursued by states in attempts to become international competitive: neo-corporatist, neo-statist and neo-liberal strategies (Jessop 1994: 266-268; Jessop and Sum 2006: 111-115).[34] In Jessop's perspective no state pursues a 'pure', for instance, neo-liberal strategy. Rather, elements of different strategies for achieving competitiveness are by different states combined in various hybrid ways depending on historical and contextual factors. With respect to neo-liberal strategies, Norway has, together with the other Nordic countries, and in contrast to other Anglo-Saxon countries, such as the UK, the US and Australia, undergone what may be called a 'circumscribed neoliberalisation' (Harvey 2005: 115, 156). One reason for this is Norway's strong social democratic tradition, as, for instance, reflected in the public school system. Another reason is the huge incomes the Norwegian state got, and still gets, from oil and gas export. As a result of this, calls for reform of the Norwegian Keynesian welfare state during the 1980s and 1990s were not primarily legitimated by reference to the need to counteract stagflation, but by the need for the public sector to be more efficient (Tranøy and Østerud 2001, 19-20; Østerud, Engelstad and Selle 2003, 37, 201) and modern (Christensen and Lægreid 2001, 70-74). These reforms can also be seen on the background of a growing electoral support of the Conservative Party, which in 1981 was elected into government with a record high 31.7 percent of the votes. This meant that since the end of World War II the party had almost doubled its electoral support.

While neo-liberal versions of the knowledge-based economy seem to be hegemonic on a global scale, there is nothing inevitable about this, and there is 'certainly room for counter-hegemonic versions' (Jessop 2004: 170). The so-called 'Finnish success' illustrates this. Although Finland is characterised by its welfarist educational system, this country has alternated with the US as number one on the World Economic Forum's international competitiveness index since 1998 (WEF 2003), and Finnish pupils are also performing very well on the OECD-initiated

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[34] Jessop and Sum (2006) add a 'neo-communitarian strategy' to this typology.

PISA tests (on the Finnish success, see Castells and Himanen 2002). It is however important to stress that any contestations about how to become competitive knowledge economies work to reproduce the competition-oriented master discourse of the knowledge-based economy (Jessop 2004: 170). This master discourse of the knowledge-based economy has for the 20 last years or so been figuring as part of the strategies and policies of a diversity of actors across many fields and seems to guide states, in their local, regional and national bodies, and supranational bodies, such as the EU, in the search for competiveness. Today competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy is seen as crucial for the welfare, or even survival of 'sites' (or economic spaces, such as regions and nations) and 'actors' (such as universities and corporations).[35]

Although I have read and analysed the manifestos of all the seven parties, a glance at the manifestos of the Norwegian Labour Party and the Conservative Party will suffice to illustrate the salience this discourse in Norway. Let us first consider an extract from the Conservative Party's manifesto from a section entitled '*Exploiting the possibilities in an open world*':

> In an open world, jobs, knowledge, and capital can be moved from one part of the globe to another in a short period of time. Because of the high cost of production, Norway is less attractive for labour-intensive industries than it used to be. While it is positive that less-developed countries are becoming competitive industrial nations that create growth and welfare for its inhabitants, there is a challenge for Norway and other high-cost countries to create new value. Norway's richness in resources and our competencies, nevertheless, give us a good starting point for having our say in a context of demanding international competition. The Norwegian business sector has great potential for growth both inside and outside Norway's borders.

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[35] One way to approach the inflection, or translation, of the master discourse of the knowledge-based economy into the strategy of different actors (both individual and collective) at different 'sites' is to see this process as 'recontextualisation' (Fairclough 2006: 33-36; see also Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 93-95; Fairclough 2003: 32-33, 139-141). Recontextualisation in this perspective is defined as a process whereby a discourse (or several discourses) – in this case a master discourse of the knowledge-based economy – colonises and is appropriated by social actors in different social contexts. Thus, it is not a matter of an external entity – in this case a discourse – colonising a passive space (or 'site' or 'field'); rather, as any space is characterised by its own particularity, recontextualisation is also a matter of social actors' active appropriation, or negotiation, of the 'external' discourse.

The effective commercial life and the huge production of oil and gas make Norway a rich country today, but we have no guarantees that this will be the case tomorrow. The future's value creation will be based on knowledge and competencies, even within our traditional natural-resource-based activities. It takes time to change economic structures. This is why the groundwork for the commercial life of tomorrow must start now.

The Conservative Party wants Norway to remain one of the world's best countries to live in. The most important thing society can give to children and young people, is a good education. Knowledge will equip the individual to exploit the possibilities in an open world. This is why the Conservative Party will continue the work of creating a better educational system that gives all children a great potential for development, and we shall put more emphasis on higher education, research, and innovation.   (Høyre 2005: 5-6)

This rather long section states that the vague process of globalisation creates challenges in the sense that international competition is increased. Strategies are, therefore, geared towards responding to this new situation by enhancing competitiveness in ways that can give Norway comparative advantages. It is inferred that, apart from Norway's rich natural resources, knowledge and competencies are the keys to international competitiveness and the well-being of the population.

The Bondevik II government seemed to express such concerns about competitiveness when reacting to the results of the OECD-initiated PISA tests. Norway's unexpectedly low score on the PISA tests in 2000 and 2003 (PISA 2000, 2003) generated a heated debate about the quality of the Norwegian school system and contributed to a 'dislocation' of Norwegian educational politics – and this occurred also in other countries experiencing so-called 'PISA-shocks' (for instance, Denmark, Germany, and Austria).[36] Thus, when the Bondevik II government came into power in 2001, Norway had already become a nation of 'laggards' and its international competiveness was threatened, as the leader of the Conservative Party, Erna Solberg, put it at the party's annual congress in 2005 (Solberg 2005). One of the reasons for this

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[36] For discussion of the concept of dislocation, see section 6.2.1.

sorry state of affairs, it was argued, was that the reward was minimal even though Norway spent more money on schools than almost every other country. Thus, the manifesto of the Conservative Party in a section entitled '*The school in change*' identified this mismatch between money spent on education and the anticipated results in this manner:

> Although there has been a huge increase in the amount of allocated resources, this alone is not enough to guarantee quality in education. Too many pupils leave primary school without adequate reading and writing skills. Too many pupils leave upper secondary education before they have finished. Norwegian pupils only achieve mediocre results in international tests, and perform especially poorly in mathematics, physics, and biology. (Høyre 2005: 17)

What is significant here is that the suggestion of what is needed most for the improvement of the Norwegian school system is not more resources, but something else.

The law on freeschools from 2003 was part of this 'something else'. It can be seen as part of a 'reform-package' that the Bondevik II government introduced in order to enhance both the quality of the Norwegian school system and Norway's international competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy.[37] As such, the freeschool reform can be seen as a part of an emerging Norwegian competition state. More specifically, it can, to use the terms introduced in Chapter Five, be seen as a part of a shift in the role of the state from being a deliverer of public services to becoming a commissioner and controller. In this case this shift involves a re-investment of the state's resources to 'quasi-public' organisations with the intention of stimulating competition, and hence also, quality enhancement.

It is important to stress that although none, or few, explicit reference were made to the global knowledge-based economy, or some other similar term, in the parliamentary debates on freeschools and newspaper texts part of the debate between 2001 and 2005, this does not mean that the discourses that were used by the different parties did *not* emanate from a master

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[37] Another integral part of the Bondevik II government's reform package was the so-called 'Knowledge Promotion' reform, which was implemented in the autumn of 2006. According to one White Paper, the Knowledge Promotion reform signalled a 'system change' in the ways in which lower education was governed (St. mld. nr. 30 (2003-2004): 25). This reform also involved the introduction of a new national quality-assurance regime that would make 'strong' and 'weak' ways of running schools more visible through a national monitoring system (St. mld. nr. 30 (2003-2004): 23-29). The work with this quality-assurance regime was started by the Labour government in 2001 (the Stoltenberg I government, 2000-2001) after the first PISA 'shock' in 2000.

discourse of the competitive knowledge-based economy. On the contrary, this absence can be seen as an indication of a discourse that has been 'taken-for-granted', naturalised and made commonsensical. It does appear undisputable that it is important to enhance the quality of schooling and education in order to secure international competiveness and thus also the well-being – if not survival – of the nations. Put in other words, the overall political discourses of all the involved political parties seem to be built up around assumptions about the global economy and its relationship with knowledge and competiveness.

This was also the case with the Labour Party. They also invoked a discourse of the knowledge-based economy, and they also wanted to make Norway 'one of the strongest knowledge societies in the world' (Arbeiderpartiet 2005: 4). Their party manifesto, in a chapter entitled '*The Knowledge Society – Work and Education*', stated that:

> The work place of tomorrow demands competency regardless of what line of business it is. Even outside working life the demands for knowledge are higher. This puts new demands to the educational system. It creates demands on working life, where everybody must be able to participate and have the possibility to acquire new knowledge during the process. And this requires that we strongly support research and development in order to stay ahead in the development of knowledge.

> Our industry and working-life, our welfare, and our democracy depend on everybody being able to take part in knowledge-development. The building of the knowledge society must involve all parts of society and all sides of politics.
>
> (Arbeiderpartiet 2005: 12)

Later in the manifesto, under '*Partnerships for innovation and economic development*', Norway's 'comparative advantages' are identified the following way:

> Norway has many advantages. We have a competent and highly educated population, and we have stable conditions in a peaceful part of the world. We are rich in natural resources and have good access to raw material in several fields. In some fields we have world-class competency-milieus. Our industrial democracy is a significant factor of strength in the value creation in Norwegian industry and

working-life. We shall never manage to compete with low-cost countries in terms of labour costs. Instead we shall meet the international competition with knowledge and competency.   (Arbeiderpartiet 2005: 16)

This statement suggests that the Labour Party also accepted the idea that a key to the Norwegian population's welfare was competitiveness in the global knowledge-based economy. However, as I show in the next chapter, they did not accept that the freeschool reform was the way to go. The next section characterise what social logics the freeschool reform can be associated with.

10.2. The freeschool reform as advanced liberal government

The governmentality approach is heavily inspired by the works of Foucault in the late 1970s and early 1980s – his so-called 'genealogical phase'. Unlike his earlier work of his so-called 'archaeological phase' (which has inspired the development the three approaches to discourse analysis discussed in Chapters Six and Seven), his work on governmentality was less concerned with the role of discourse in processes of social change than it was with the 'art of government'; that is, the ways in which we are governed by others and the ways in which we govern ourselves. A key difference between the cultural political economy approach and the governmentality approach is that the former tends to focus on the ways in which strategies – and the discourses that legitimate and constitute them – are geared towards achieving a relatively stable rhythm of capital accumulation (the *why* of power), whereas the latter tends to focus more on problematising the regimes of government that are associated with these strategies (the *how* of power).

In order to problematise the contemporary 'art of government', Foucault traced the emergence of what he termed 'governmentality' to a process originating in the mid-eighteenth century when the state took over responsibility for the lives and well-being of the population (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000; Hindess 1996, 1998; Neumann 2003; Rose 1999; Rose et al. 2006). For instance, the allocation of the responsibilities of looking after the sick and the needy transferred from institutions like the church and the physicians to the government, which would execute these duties with hospitals, asylums and poor houses. The emergence of this governmentality and its associated regimes of governance were closely connected with the development of liberalism as a political ideology in the seventeenth and eighteenth century – an ideology that ever since has dominated political thought in Western industrialised countries.

Liberalism can be seen as partly the result of the breakdown of the feudal system as the dominant social order. The new and 'modern' social order was characterised by the formation of nation-states administered by a state apparatus that had the population within its territorial borders as its subjects. The state's overarching aim was, as it is now, to secure the population by keeping them alive and productive. The emergence of this liberal governmental rationality can also be associated with the reformation and counter-reformation. These developments, which resulted in the establishment of regimes of governance that were subordinated religious doctrines, contributed to creating a tradition of subordination to a higher authority (Hindess 1996: 107-108).

Thus, government in Western liberal states from the end of the eighteenth century came to be characterised by attempts to secure the population in different ways. Foucault referred to this type of state as the 'pastoral' state, and the idea of a welfare state can be seen as an extension of this pattern of thinking. However, as this change in thinking about the relationship between ruler and ruled resulted in an unparalleled state intervention in the lives of its citizens, the state was forced to come to terms with the fact that too much government and too much intervention into people's lives were not the best ways to stimulate wealth and provide prosperity. As Danaher et al. (2000: 90) put it: 'People were more co-operative, and worked more productively, it seemed, when confronted with the carrot, rather than the stick'. Thus, it was thought that the 'free' enterprise of individuals was the best principle for producing happiness and the 'good' society. The state, therefore, exists in a field of tension. On the one hand, the state is expected to secure the living conditions and liberties of the population by ensuring productivity. On the other hand, it is often accused of limiting the individual liberties of its population.

With this perspective, we may view the emergence and proliferation in the 1980s and the early 1990s of neo-liberal forms of government, as a critique of the excessive intervention of the state. The Left, however, also launched certain criticisms against the welfare state, for instance, for its large bureaucracies, its centralising tendencies, and the domination of welfare expertise. Rose has called the new governmentality that emerged out of this problematisation of the welfare state and its technologies '*advanced liberal government*' (Rose 1999: Ch. 4).

As suggested by Ball (2007), this form of government shares many, but importantly not all, of the premises of a neo-liberal forms of government, and many advanced liberal technologies of governance have been 'adopted and retained by social democratic strategies, notably in the programs that came to be termed the Third Way' (Rose et al. 2006: 92). A key characteristic of advanced liberal government is that power is exercised in the name of freedom.

In this perspective, freedom is not opposed to government; rather freedom is viewed as a principal strategy of government. As Rose explains, 'ideas of freedom have come to define the ground of our ethical systems, our practice of politics and our habits' (1999: 10). Another related key feature is its dual emphasis on what Rose (1999: 154; Rose et al. 2006: 91) calls 'autonomisation and responsibilisation'. This entails a shift from the state's direct governance of the population to a more indirect form of government or 'governance-at-a-distance', whereby institutions and the individuals they consist of are held responsible, or accountable, by the use of monitoring (or auditing) devices that makes their practices calculable and more visible so that others can evaluate them. Furthermore, these devices, which also characterise the neo-liberal inspired international trend often called 'new public management' (Rose 1999: 150; Rose et al. 2006: 95), seem to be competition-oriented as they tend to emphasise production output rather than input, and to link rewards to performance.

A key argument of this dissertation is that the freeschool reform can be seen as an attempt to introduce a form of what Rose has called advanced liberal government that involves the operation of both neo-liberal social logics and welfarist social logics.

We may consider here, for example, how the first bill represented the law by linking together freedom of choice, the rights of parents to choose schools for their children, and the need to enhance the quality of Norwegian schools: 'The aim is that increased diversity in public schools and freeschools shall contribute to improve the quality in both public schools and freeschools at the same time as the rights of parents are secured' (Ot. prp. 33 (2002-2003): 52). And in another bill concerning the freeschool reform it was stated how freedom of choice and diversity can enhance quality: 'In the department's point of view, freedom of choice and diversity will create a basis for better quality in Norwegian education because *it sharpens the awareness* about tasks, purposes, users, and alternative ways of solving tasks' (Ot. prp. 64 (2003-2004), 7, emphasis added).

On the one hand, the argument that diversity will enhance quality by 'sharpening awareness', appears consistent with a neo-liberal market-oriented logic. Provided that actors, in this case, parents, have the freedom to choose between several public and private alternatives, they will act in ways that 'sharpen the awareness' of school owners, which is to the benefit of all because it will enhance the overall quality of Norwegian schools. Moreover, in such a perspective, it is the state's role to ensure the freedom of choice by regulating various social practices through law. In this case the state does this by introducing a new law concerning the

public financing of privately owned schools, which will allegedly lead to more diversity. The Conservative Party also attempted to sustain such a neo-liberal logic when dealing with related issues. For instance, the 2005 manifesto made it explicitly clear that with respect to higher education, competition is positive: 'The Conservative Party believes that competition can lead to the development of quality and diversity in education and is positive to an increase in the number of private alternatives' (Høyre 2005: 19).

On the other hand, the bills – and the law – contained three elements that traditionally have been associated with a welfarist logic: one, it would not be allowed for schools to select pupils according to performance and skills; two, there was a limit on school fees so that 'everybody' could afford it; and three, it would not be allowed to run freeschools on a commercial basis (UFD 2003: § 3-1, 6-2, 6-3). All of these criteria reflect a traditionally welfarist concern that, if left unregulated, the introduction of freeschools would have a negative effect by increasing social segregation. Hence, it can be argued that the reform was characterised by two key social logics: Not only by a neo-liberal logic of competition, but also by welfarist logic.

The co-existence of these two social logics in this particular case is unsurprising for two interrelated reasons: Firstly, issues concerning the need for private alternatives in lower education have, as discussed in Chapter Three, traditionally been controversial; and secondly, as the Bondevik II government was a coalition government (consisting of the Conservative Party, the 'centrist' Liberal Party, and the 'centrist' Christian Democratic Party), reconciliatory traits are not unexpected. One can get an idea of the concessions the Conservative Party seems to have made during the policy-making process by briefly comparing the manifestos of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party. In contrast to the Conservative Party's manifesto, the manifesto of the Liberal Party emphasised that they are pro-freeschools as long as they were not run on a commercial basis, there were no selection of school students according to performance and skills and there were limits on school fees (Venstre 2005: 123). Such conditioned support of the new law was not evident in the Conservative Party's manifesto.

In the poststructuralist logics perspective presented in Chapters Six and Seven, social logics are sustained and challenged by discourses. As I will get back to in the next chapter, a key argument of this dissertation is therefore that the government's, and then in particular the Conservative Party's, discourse of the law resembles a third-way discourse. Not in the sense that it was explicitly claimed that this reform demonstrated the possibility of finding a third way, but in the sense that this discourse articulated together elements from both a traditional welfarist

discourse and a neo-liberal discourse. This proposition also acknowledges the fact that the government, as I show in Part Three, strongly and explicitly rejected claim that the law about freeschools equalled a privatisation of Norwegian lower education.

With respect to this denial of privatisation, it is relevant to highlight Rose's rejection of the idea that regimes of government should be seen as realisations of some underlying philosophical or theoretical assumptions. He gives the example of Thatcherism to illustrate this point. What has been named Thatcherism is not the result of Thatcher, or some policy advisor reading the work of Adam Smith. Rather, it is the contingent result both of what was perceived as possible at that time and that particular context, and of what alternatives and policy instruments were available. This means that new ways of governing are invented in an *ad hoc* way, 'as practical attempts to think about and act upon specific problems in particular locales' (Rose 1999: 27-28; see also Rose et al. 2006: 97). Rose explains how the naming of the Thatcherite regime of government as neo-liberal came into being the following way:

> in the course of this process, a certain rationality, call it neo-liberalism, came to provide a way of linking up these various tactics [of the Thatcherite regime], integrating them *in thought* so that they appeared to partake in a coherent logic. And once they did so, once a kind of rationality could be extracted from them, made to be translatable with them, it could be redirected towards both them and other things, which could now be thought of in the same way – as, for example, in the various deployment of the notion of entrepreneurship. And such rationalities were then embodied in, or came to infuse, a whole variety of practices and assemblages for regulating economic life, medical care, welfare benefits, professional activity and so forth.   (Rose 1999: 27)

Such processes of 'rendering various elements internally consistent', as Rose et al. put it, are never finished. Rather, governmental rationalities 'are constantly undergoing modification in the face of some newly identified problem or solution, while retaining certain styles of thought and technological preferences' (Rose et al. 2006: 98).

What the discussion above makes clear is that the usage of the term neoliberalism (or welfarism for that matter) is not unproblematic. As Rose et al. (2006: 97-98) suggest, naming an element of a practice or regime (or of what Rose et al. 2006: 97 refer to as 'programs') as 'neo-

liberal' can, on the one hand, indicate a family resemblance, or an affinity, with other related practices or regimes. On the other hand, the same practice of naming can lend:

> itself to a kind of cookie-cutter typification or explanation, a tendency to identify any program with neo-liberal elements as essentially neo-liberal, and to proceed as if this subsumption of the particular under a more general category provides a sufficient account of its nature or explanation of its existence.
>
> (Rose et al. 2006: 97-98)

Thus, although a practice or regime can have neo-liberal elements, this does not mean that the whole practice or regime can be considered as neo-liberal. With respect to this, we may note here that Fairclough suggests that one can see the discourse of the UK's New Labour towards the end of the 1990s as a 'particular variant of the political discourse of neoliberalism', even though one of his key arguments is that the discourse of New Labour is a hybrid one consisting of elements from a neo-liberal discourse, a welfarist discourse, and a communitarian discourse (Fairclough 2004: 111; see also Fairclough 2000a, 2001a, 2001c). This perspective makes his work prone to criticism of the kind of cookie-cutter typification or explanation to which Rose et al. refer.

The key point here, however, is that the emergence of new forms of governance are to be understood as being introduced in hybridised ways involving, as Rose et al. (2006: 98) put it, 'the rather contingent coalescence of a wide array of criticism of social forms'. A key purpose of governmentality research is therefore to produce 'an empirical mapping of governmental rationalities and techniques' (Rose et al. 2006: 98). This mapping can serve to *destabilise* existing regimes and practices by revealing 'the historicity and the contingency of the truths that have come to define the limits of our contemporary ways of understanding ourselves, individually and collectively, and the programmes and procedures assembled to govern ourselves' (Rose 1999: 276-277).

This suggests, firstly, in addition to elements of neo-liberal and welfarist discourses also other discourses and elements of discourses can sustain forms of what Rose has termed advanced liberal government; and secondly, that such discourses can be identified by a detailed 'empirical mapping'. Indeed, such an 'empirical mapping' is also a key task of the case study in Part Three, which aims to present a critical explanation of how the reform and its neo-liberal and welfarist social logics were sustained and challenged by the usage of a variety of discourses.

10.3. Conclusion

In this chapter I have contextualised the reform and characterised its social logics. I have made two key arguments: Firstly, by using elements of Jessop's approach, I argued that the freeschool reform can be contextualised as a part of an emerging Norwegian competition state. More specifically, it is part of a 'reform-package' introduced by the Bondevik II government in order to enhance the quality of the Norwegian school system and Norway's international competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy. Secondly, by using elements of Rose's approach I argued the reform can be characterised as a form of advanced liberal government characterised by both its neo-liberal competition-oriented social logics and its welfarist social logics. I also argued that the presence of elements of both neo-liberal and welfarist discourses made the government's, and then in particular the Conservative Party's, discourse of the law resemble a third-way discourse.

What this suggests is that we may contextualise and characterise the freeschool reform as *a third way project of an emerging competition state*. The next chapter examines further how the reform was sustained and challenged.

11. Political and fantasmatic logics: Sustainment and challenge

11.1. Competing storylines

We can represent the negotiation over the meaning and value of social logics the freeschool reform as a competition between different storylines. In my analysis I identified two distinct storylines that structured the debate. I have called these the 'necessary-supplement-storyline' and the 'destructive-release storyline'. Although the different parties had their different reasons for why freeschools were a 'necessary-supplement' or a 'destructive-release', there were nevertheless patterns in their usage of discourses when debating the reform. It is on the basis of the identification of these patterns that I in the following provide ideal-typical accounts of these storylines. As will become evident the descriptions of these storylines are short, and that is related to a key feature of storylines: they work as 'short-hands' in debates and they condense, and thereby also reduce, the complexity of different discourses.

11.1.1. The necessary-supplement storyline

A discourse of crises was central in the necessary-supplement storyline. Despite the fact that Norway had spent a record-high amount of resources on public schools, international tests had showed that Norwegian pupils' performance was mediocre compared to other OECD countries. As more freeschools would enhance the quality of the whole school system they were therefore necessary supplements to public schools. While the Progress Party and some factions of the Conservative Party were explicit about competition being a quality-enhancing mechanism and thus invoked a neo-liberal discourse, the other parties supporting the reform, as well as other factions from the Conservative Party were reluctant to employ a neo-liberal discourse with its competitive element, which implies the sorting of 'the winners' from 'the losers', to describe the freeschool reform and their own positions. Instead, they used expressions such as 'schools will learn from each other' and 'schools will pull each other up' in order to suggest that the reform would raise the quality all schools, and thus everyone would be a winner. Despite these differences, however, the parties in the government and the Progress Party agreed that an important result of the reform would be the improved quality in both public and private schools.

Apart from quality concerns, there were also other reasons supporting the view that the freeschools were necessary supplements to the public schools. One important reason was freedom

of choice. According to its proponents, the reform would ensure more freedom of choice for parents to choose a school for their children, and in the case of older pupils, for pupils themselves to choose a school. Hence, this storyline insisted that it was parents who wanted to establish alternative schools, and it was they who needed the freedom to choose from a more diversified offer of schools for their children.

In this storyline opposition to the reform was deemed not only as nostalgic and outdated, but also as distrustful both of parents being able to make the 'right' choice for their children and of the ability of public schools to meet the challenges that an increase in diversity of schools entailed.

This storyline repeatedly gave assurances that the reform should not – and would not – in any way undermine the public schools or increase social segregation. On the contrary, it was repeatedly emphasised that the law stated that there would be limits on tuition fees so that 'everybody' could enrol, that the commercial running of schools was prohibited, and that the enrolment of pupils was required to be based on the same criteria as for public schools.

The old regime, it was claimed, was not fair because it privileged parents who wanted their children to attend schools based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles and parents who could afford to enrol their children in private schools. The new reform would be a corrective measure, and parental rights and freedom of choice would not be as limited as it used to be. This storyline portrayed the resistance to this extension of parental rights and freedom of choice as an indication of a gross inconsistency in the opposition's supposed egalitarian outlook.

Another important reason why the reform was necessary was that it was pragmatic. According to the government, the reform would replace the dependency of the applications' outcome on the prevailing political winds. The process of applying would be much more predictable because the reform would transfer decision-making power from politicians to bureaucrats. Moreover, the new reform would also make it easier, and hence also ensure increased opportunities and freedom of choice, for parents in rural areas. According to this storyline, the reform would enable public neighbourhood schools in rural areas that were either shut down or threatened to be closed as a result of municipal budgetary deficits to re-establish themselves as freeschools with 85 percent financial support from the state.

The government's main source of inspiration was the law on private schools implemented by the Social Democrats in Sweden in 1992. Experiences with this law showed that the overall effect on quality had been positive and that the red-greens' fears of increased social segregation

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were unwarranted. As a similar reform had allegedly been a success in a neighbouring country, it was pragmatic to do 'what works' there in Norway.

In short, this storyline envisages a 'win-win' situation: the reform would improve the quality of both public and private schools, it would expand parental rights and freedom of choice, and it would make the state's exercise of power more pragmatic.

11.1.2. The destructive-release storyline

While accepting that something needed to be done in order to improve the unsatisfactory quality of Norwegian lower education, the destructive-release storyline presented both a very different diagnosis of the problem and a very different prescription.

The freeschool reform was a step in the wrong direction and was constructed as yet another attack from the Norwegian Right on the welfare state. Accordingly, this storyline presented the freeschool reform as a key example of the government's misguided policies of privatisation. The argument that it was possible both to implement the freeschool reform and, at the same time, to improve the quality of *both* public and private schools was rejected. Instead, the freeschool reform would undermine the public school system. The metaphor of 'drainage' was central in this storyline. As a result of the reform, the funding to municipalities would decrease and would thereby cause the further drainage of public schools.

Other tendencies accompanying the freeschool reform would also cause drainage of the public school system. It was argued that upper secondary private schools would seek to establish themselves in larger cities and only offer study programs and subjects that were inexpensive to run. The public school system would then be left with the responsibility of providing schooling in rural areas and the responsibility of offering more 'narrow' subjects and study programmes that were more expensive to run. Often, the metaphor of 'sponging off' was used to describe how these practices of private schools would drain the public school system. In addition, despite the claims of the reform's proponents, this storyline insisted that the government could *not* prevent private school owners from illegally taking out 'hidden profits' from the running of schools.

Together these tendencies would facilitate a development whereby the quality of public schools would further deteriorate. These would make them a less attractive option, and parents of pupils in public schools would choose to enrol their children in private schools. And this would again lead towards a downward spiral of the quality of public schools. This storyline, therefore, claimed that the main social actors empowered by this reform would not be the parents but

instead profit-seeking private actors. It was these who embodied the destructive forces of the market, and it was these that the reform would 'release' into a critical but vulnerable area of the Norwegian welfare state.

For these reasons the freeschool reform was seen as a gateway to the privatisation of Norwegian lower education. The notion of 'forced freedom' was central in this perspective. Even parents who in principle were positive and supportive of the public school system would choose private schools for their children as a result of the fear of letting their children languish in impoverished public schools. In a similar way, the argument that the freeschool reform would increase the freedom for rural communities to establish or re-establish neighbourhood schools was constructed as a kind of 'forced freedom of choice', almost a mockery of the principle. Thus, this storyline regarded parents, and in some cases also municipalities, as victims of a law imposed upon them – and not at all as the freedom-seeking actors who would benefit from the law.

In this storyline the overall effects of the freeschool reform on the quality in lower education would be negative, and there were no good reasons for its implementation. As schools based on alternative religious and pedagogical principles under the old regime were already viewed as legitimate supplements, this storyline asserted that there was no need to change the financing system as dramatically as the government did. Furthermore, contrary to the government's claims, the experiences in Sweden showed that their critics were right: The introduction of more private actors into the field of lower education increased social segregation and did not have any substantial quality-enhancing effects.

11.2. Discourses

In order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how the necessary-supplement storyline and destructive-release storyline sketched out above were discursively constructed, it is necessary to provide a detailed description and analysis of the debate in which they were created, used and challenged. Therefore, and as discussed in Chapter Eight (section 8.3), I will in the following show how the debate about freeschools focused on three key issues on which competing political parties held different claims: *Will it enhance the overall quality of the Norwegian school system? Is the law fair? Is it pragmatic?*

According to the identification of these three key issues, I have structured the following examination into three sections that I have called 'quality issues', 'normative issues' and

'pragmatic issues'. Below I proceed by providing illustrative examples of prevalent discourses that were invoked in the debate on these issues. I also describe and explain how political and fantasmatic logics were operational in these discourses. It can be re-called here that I operationalise the concepts of political and fantasmatic logics by identifying relations of equivalences, positionings and representations of social actors.

As I show below not all parties had equally much to say about all issues. Therefore in some sections I only describe and analyse what the key protagonist in each case had to say. Overall, the key players in the debate were, on the one hand, the Conservative Party and to a lesser extent the Christian Democratic Party; and, on the other hand, the Labour Party and to a lesser extent the Socialist Left Party. As will become evident all the different political parties seem to have ranked the questions of quality, normativity and pragmatic differently. This reflects what we following Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 112) can see as different nodal points in their respective, and overall, political discourses.

I will start the examination of the discourses that were invoked in the debate by analysing the discourses on quality enhancement that were invoked. The reason for this, as discussed in Chapter Ten, is that quality enhancement was the major concern for the Conservative Party, which also was the most powerful party in the Bondevik II coalition.

11.2.1. Quality issues

Discourses that revolve around what I have called quality issues are discourses that are concerned about the process of quality enhancement in Norwegian schools, not only freeschools but also in public schools. As will become evident, the following examination centres on the discourses produced by the Government and the Progress Party. The reason for this is not that the red-greens were *not* concerned about quality, but that it was the government, which was supported by the Progress Party in this matter, that needed to convince the public that the changes they proposed would enhance quality. Put in other words, the burden of proof was on their shoulders and they needed to explain why change was necessary and why the changes they proposed were commonsensical with respect to obtaining better quality in both public and private schools.

In the following I proceed by, firstly, analysing in more detail how the different parties in the government and the Progress Party constructed the process of quality-enhancement. I then go on to analyse discourses of trust – an element that in the necessary-supplement storyline is crucial in the process of quality enhancement.

11.2.1.1. Quality enhancement

The Conservative Party was the most powerful party in the Bondevik II coalition. When they got into government in the autumn of 2001, one of their key issues was to improve the quality of schooling and education so that Norway, as it said in the so-called Sem Declaration produced in October 2001, could become 'a leading-edge nation with respect to technology, competencies, and knowledge' (Sem-erklæringen 2001). As discussed in Chapter Ten, the law about freeschools can be seen as part of the reform-package that the government introduced in order to achieve this aim of competitiveness in the global knowledge-based economy.

Different politicians constructed the relationship between the law and quality-enhancement in different ways. Consider first how Aarset of the Conservative Party in the parliamentary debate in May 2003 represented this relationship:

> We shall let new and existing schools grow in healthy competition with each other and with the public school, because there is no single answer to what is a good education and no single answer to what is a good school, and because diversity and freedom of choice contribute to the cultivation of quality.   (Ot. 2003a)

Here it seemed that 'healthy competition' and 'diversity and freedom of choice' were part of the process of cultivating quality. Inspired by the perspective of Fairclough we can therefore say that relations of equivalences were constructed between competition, diversity, freedom of choice and quality enhancement and that these elements were represented as parts of the freeschool reform. This way of stimulating quality enhancement is familiar from the private sector and commercial markets, and this emphasis on 'competition', 'diversity', and 'freedom of choice' as being central for quality enhancement, can be associated with a neo-liberal discourse.

Then consider how Eriksen, from the same party and in the same parliamentary debate, in a more defensive tone, seemed to refrain from representing competition as part of the quality-enhancing process:

> I strongly believe that the freeschools will make the Norwegian school better. It is not because freeschools will compete with the public schools, but it is because freeschools and public schools can learn from each other, and because diversity

leads to better quality than uniformity, and because knowledge is not a given size that can be divided. It is not the case that if one learns more, then one takes from those who will learn less. Knowledge is something that grows, something that spreads itself. This is important to remember.   (Ot. 2003a)

This extract indicates that competition is *not* the process through which the Norwegian school will become better, but it is by diversification and learning. In terms of the analytical framework presented in Chapter Seven, we can say that Eriksen here positions herself as an actor *not* in favour of competition between schools, and that this positioning works to neutralise opposition and hence also to weaken political frontiers in the debate.

What these two examples show is how two politicians belonging to the same party in the same parliamentary debate appear to position themselves differently with respect to competition and also represents the process of quality enhancement differently. However, individual politicians also positioned themselves and represented the process of quality enhancement in different ways in different contexts. Consider how Clemet's discourse of quality enhancement seemed to change. In a newspaper interview in April 2002 she answered the question 'What is the main difference between the school the social democrats have fought for and the school that you wish for?' by positioning herself in the following way: 'I want to have more freedom of action, and I want gradually to increase the latitude of each school. I believe in competition, and I want to make it possible for several freestanding schools to receive support. While the social democrats are concerned about the system, I am more concerned about the individual'. In addition to positioning herself in favour of competition between schools, this statement also works to position the Conservative Party as concerned about 'the individual', while the 'social democrats' are positioned as more concerned about 'the system'. One important reason why competition between schools is something Clemet finds desirable, is given later in the same interview: 'I believe [the increase in number of freeschools] will increase the pressure on the public school to improve itself' (Clemet in Adresseavisen 2002). A few weeks later, however, in a newspaper comment entitled '*Quality in the school*' Clemet did not mention competition as a key mechanism in the process of quality enhancement:

We wish for greater freedom of action at the local level, both with municipalities and with schools, and we want to introduce a bill on free-standing schools, so that

the freedom of choice for parents and pupils will become more real and so that public schools will get something out of comparing themselves with them and maybe learning from them. (Clemet 2002)

In addition to positioning the Conservative Party as a 'freedom' party, this extract shows how Clemet makes a reference to processes of learning that are supposed to occur through the comparisons with other schools. This suggests that also 'learning' can be added to the chain of equivalence constructed by the government so that it involves learning, competition, freedom of choice, diversity and quality enhancement. This is not, of course, to suggest that these concepts are equal in the sense of being similar, but that they are defined and constructed by reference to what they are not, in this case the old freeschool regime supported and favoured by the red-greens.

In the parliamentary debate when the law was passed in May 2003, Clemet represented the process of quality enhancement by using a vocabulary similar to the one used in the bill presented in April 2004 (Ot. prp. 64 (2003-2004); see also Chapter Ten):

We believe that freedom of choice and diversity will create a basis for better quality in the Norwegian schools, as they will sharpen awareness about tasks, purposes, users and alternative ways of solving tasks. The government's most important priority in school politics is to improve the quality of the public school system. A certain number of freeschools is also one, but far from the most important, tool because it can stimulate the work on quality in all schools. (Ot. 2003a)

Thus, Clemet positions herself and the Conservative Party as in favour of 'freedom of choice' and 'diversity', and it is freedom of choice and diversity that 'will sharpen awareness' and 'stimulate the work on quality in all schools'.

Later, in a newspaper comment by Clemet published in April 2005, the notion of 'learning' is again important. In this comment entitled '*Knowledge Promotion and Freeschools'*, Clemet represented the relationships between 'freedom of choice', 'increased diversity', 'visibility' and 'learning' the following way:

Definitely, the most important task in educational policies is to improve the quality of the public school system. But freedom of choice is not incompatible with this. Increased diversity can make visible other ways of solving tasks, and thereby all schools may learn something from each other. More diversity can imply more creativity in the work of giving each pupil a better education.   (Clemet 2005)

In other words, provided that actors have 'freedom of choice', they will act in ways that will benefit 'all schools'. And the desirable effects that the introduction of the new law will have on 'all schools' will occur as the result of an increased diversity that makes 'visible other ways of solving tasks' in ways that 'can imply more creativity in the work of giving each pupil a better education'.

Bergesen, the State Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Research, who was a high-profile figure in the public debate on the freeschool reform, put forward a similar argument in newspaper comment entitled '*Freeschools, control and quality*': 'We believe the key to better quality lies in clearer requirements for achievement, greater openness about learning results, and accountabilisation of both public and private school owners' (Bergesen 2002). In the perspective presented in Chapter Seven we can therefore say that the chain of equivalence had been extended even more, so that in addition to competition, freedom of choice, diversity, learning and quality enhancement, also more 'visibility' and 'openness' is constructed as parts of the reform and as parts of processes of quality enhancement. As discussed in Chapter Ten, this way of using 'visibility' and 'openness' (or transparency) to discipline desirable behaviour and make actors more accountable are also key characteristics of what Rose (1999) has termed 'advanced liberal government', that share some, but not all, premises of neo-liberal government.

What the above examples demonstrate is how politicians of the Conservative Party positioned themselves differently with respect to the desirability of competition between schools, and how they represented the law, and its attendant social logics, by drawing upon different discourses. Some of these discourses can be seen as neo-liberal and as working to sustain a neo-liberal social logic.

This association with neo-liberal policies of privatisation, and other forms of competition-oriented governance, seemed to have caused problems for the Christian Democratic Party. The problem was not only that the opposition accused them of paying lip-service to the Conservatives; there was also an internal struggle within the party. This internal struggle seemed

to have intensified during the annual congress in mid-May 2003, when factions within the party suggested that a paragraph in a party manifesto entitled '*Choices of values in local politics*' was removed because it was seen as too critical of the law about freeschools. The proposed paragraph stated: 'The Christian Democratic Party is aware of, and wants to take into consideration, that an increase in private schools in some places can create problems for the public school, with respect to both finances and resources' (Dagsavisen 2003e). Despite all the assurances from the Conservatives and politicians belonging to the other faction of the Christian Democratic Party, here it says that freeschools can pose a threat to the public schools. According to Christian Democratic party leader Svarstad Haugland in a newspaper article, this was a 'very important signal to give' (Svarstad Haugland in Dagsavisen 2003e). Yet, a few days later she made it clear that the intention with this signal was *not* to make the impression that the Christian Democratic Party was more concerned about the public school than the Conservative Party, and that there therefore were significant differences between the two parties with respect to educational policies:

> It is wrong to say that we are more occupied with the public school than the Conservative Party is. The development of private schools can contribute to putting more focus on the school, and that is positive, but I am not afraid that the system of private schools will take over the public sector. (Svarstad Haugland in NTB 2003b)

Nevertheless, for Lilletun, as well as other Christian Democratic members of the Committee on Education and Research (Lyngstad, Tørredal and Sahl) these formulations about freeschools posing a threat to the public school were 'unfortunate'. Therefore, they suggested to remove these formulations from the party manifesto and to replace them with a paragraph that emphasised the party's support of policies that would strengthen the public school. Prime Minister Bondevik of the Christian Democratic Party and several regional bodies of the party were also negative to the proposed formulation that party leader Svarstad Haugland supported. The result of the struggle was a removal of the formulation.[38]

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[38] In the debate surrounding the struggle, Lyngstad suggested that the formulations were misguided because there already was a formulation present in the bill concerning the obligation of municipalities to make a statement about the desirability of one or several freeschools (Lyngstad in Adresseavisen 2003b). In this way, then, it was possible to maintain the party's traditional strong support of the public school system, to secure parental rights and the rights of

Above I have already described how Svarstad Haugland referred to the process of quality enhancement as a matter of private schools 'putting more focus on the school'. In common with the Conservative Party, the Christian Democrats also invoked a discourse of diversity in order to explain how quality enhancement was supposed to occur. This means that, apart from securing the rights of parents and minority groups, diversity in relation to schools was also desirable because of its quality enhancing effects. As Lyngstad put it in a newspaper comment, which worked to position the Christian Democrats as in favour of more diversity: 'By simplifying the criteria for authorising freeschools, we wish to attain a greater diversity of schools. We believe this will contribute to raising the quality in both freestanding and public offers' (Lyngstad 2003b). Lyngstad indicated how the process of quality enhancement was to occur as the result of more diversity in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed: 'We must manage to create a strong public school at the same time that we have freeschools. These schools can increase pedagogical diversity and effect a reciprocal development among each other' (Ot. 2003a). Here the process of quality enhancement is represented in terms of 'reciprocal development', and not in terms of 'competition', as in the above examples of statements made by politicians of the Conservative Party. Hence, also 'reciprocal development' can be seen as included in the chain of equivalence constructed in the government's discourse of quality enhancement.

For reasons discussed above, compared to the Conservative Party's discourse of quality enhancement, there seemed to be a tendency for the Christian Democrats to avoid using terms that more easily can be associated with a competition-oriented neo-liberal discourse of quality enhancement. Consequently, Christian Democrats often positioned themselves and their party by pointing out that freeschools were meant as a 'supplement', and not a 'competitor' to the public schools. As Tørresdal said in the parliamentary debate in May 2003: 'The Christian Democratic Party wishes to defend the right to establish freeschools as a supplement to public schools. There is a difference between being a supplement to and being a competitor against the public school' (Ot. 2003a). And the principal reason why there was a need for this supplement, it seemed, is that it would help secure the parental right to choose schools for their children. In other words, in the Christian Democrats' discourse of the law, concerns about quality enhancement were less important than concerns about parental rights, and the reason why freeschools were necessary supplements revolved around parental rights rather than quality enhancement.

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minority groups, and to enhance quality in both freeschools and public schools. I discussed the question of how these statements should be dealt with by the Directorate in Chapter Three).

As their coalition partners, the Liberals also emphasised that diversity was desirable in itself because of parental rights and freedom of choice. And in common with their political partners, they stressed that the quality-enhancing aspects of processes spurred by increased diversity would *not* be due to the competition between schools. Consider firstly how Skei Grande of the Liberal Party, Voie of the Conservative Party, and Lyngstad of the Christian Democratic Party rejected such claims about they being competition-oriented in a co-authored newspaper comment entitled *'Caricature and reality in the Norwegian school debate'*:

> The myth that some are now trying to strengthen is that the Bondevik II government regards the school as a business and uses such words as 'customer', 'consumers', and 'competition'. This is totally wrong! On the contrary, each article, quotation or debate shows a holistic view on both learning and people. The Bondevik II government wants to defend the continued high allotment of resources on schools – we use more than most other countries – and the average number of pupils per teacher is among the best in the world. Increased resources alone are nonetheless no guarantee that we shall solve the school's problems or that they will lead to higher quality! We emphasise, therefore, more local latitude and independence for each school and less central control. All research shows that this is what gives us quality in the school. (Voie, Lyngstad and Skei Grande 2003)

Thus, they position themselves and their parties as not in favour of competition between schools and backed up by 'all research', they concluded that 'more local latitude and independence for each school and less central control' is 'what gives us quality in the school'. As Eriksen in the above extract, also this positioning as not in favour of competition work to weaken political frontiers in the debate by neutralising opposition which can be understood in terms of a logic of difference.

Then consider how Skei Grande, who previously had been a school-board member in the municipality of Oslo, in the parliamentary debate in October 2004, used the term 'enrichment' to describe the quality-enhancing effects of diversity: 'I have been on the school board in Oslo, which is one of the municipalities that has the most private schools. The private schools here enrich the public sector' (Ot. 2004). In the parliamentary debate in May 2003 Skei Grande provided a more detailed elaboration of how quality enhancement was assumed to occur through

'enrichment'. Similar to the Christian Democrats and factions of the Conservative Party, she again stressed that the intention of the law is not to introduce competition: 'The Liberal Party's starting point here is not competition. We have another starting point. Our argument is that we believe that by letting loose people with new ideas, new ways of working, and new ways of thinking, we shall get better products'. Hence, also 'enrichment' and 'letting loose people' appears to be included in the chain of equivalence constructed in the government's discourses of quality enhancement.

According to Skei Grande there is neither enough freedom in the public school nor enough diversity in the ways of running schools and in the range of choices available for parents:

> When I was on the school board in Oslo, we really tried to implement more extensive efforts in the public school. […] It was impossible! I believe that all of the ideas that good pedagogues, good pedagogues with great visions for the future, who wish to develop the school, must get the room to develop new ways of working, because we cannot manage it in the public school as it is today.
>
> (Ot. 2003a)

Here it is suggested that while public schools constrain creativity, freeschools can 'let it loose'. As will become clear in the next chapter, this is a quite different metaphor than the 'release' (*frislipp*) metaphor used in the destructive-release storyline. Here it is human potential and creativity that is released, and not private alternatives and their attendant destructive forces.

This way of representing social actors is familiar in other debates about the advantages and disadvantages of introducing private alternatives in the public sector. Often in such debates proponents of policies of privatisation have constructed actors in the public sector as ineffective, static, homogeneous, and not modern, whereas actors in the private sector are effective, dynamic, heterogeneous, and modern. In the extract above Skei Grande constructed the old regime as homogenous and a constraint on human creativity, and the new regime as heterogeneous and as 'letting lose' (and thereby enabling) human creativity. This discourse has a beatific dimension as it suggests that once the public school sector is reformed by changing the public financing of private schools, human creativity will no longer be constrained but be let loose with the result that the quality in both public and private schools will be boosted.

What the above examination of the coalition parties' discourses of quality enhancement shows, is a struggle for internal and external hegemony. Both within and between the parties that were part of the coalition, different discourse of quality enhancement were used. On the one hand, Conservative politicians, including on occasions Clemet, positioned themselves and their party as in favour of competition. On the other hand, Conservative politicians and politicians of the Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Party explicitly positioned themselves as not in favour of competition as a quality enhancer.

Despite the differences in terms of discourses of quality enhancement, there was still something that the coalition parties agreed on. What united these parties, and hence also the necessary-supplement storyline, was that more freedom of choice, more diversity and quality enhancement in both public and private schools would be important results of the reform. This is also something the Progress Party adhered to. But compared to the parties in the coalition, the Progress Party was more explicit about competition being a key mechanism in the expected process of quality enhancement, and they explicitly positioned themselves as in favour of competition between schools.

Consider, firstly, the following example from Sortevik in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed: 'The Progress Party has a strong belief that increased diversity and increased competition for pupils could create a better school for all' (Ot. 2003a). Furthermore, for Sortevik, the term 'supplement' for describing the function that freeschools would have after the law had been implemented was not precise. After first noting what he saw as the Christian Democrats 'unenthusiastic' attitude towards the law, he interpreted the way in which the Christian Democrats used the term 'supplement' and how this usage related to the principle of parental rights the following way:

> I have a question on how the Christian Democratic Party can actually balance their party-view when it comes to the parental mandate and parental rights, on the one hand, and the view of private schools as supplements to the public school, on the other. But I have actually got an answer in representative Lyngstad's main speech. I interpret from him that the word 'supplement' is replaced by 'alternative'; we in the Progress Party think that it is a good solution. I am able actually to interpret him even further. When he quite rightly describes in precise terms the important

condition that the freeschools stand for the renewal of the educational and schooling offers, one is actually able to replace the word 'supplement' with 'renewer'.   (Ot. 2003a)

Thus, the Progress Party's discourse seemed to assume that a 'renewal' of the school system is necessary. And, as argued above, compared to the parties in the government, they were more explicit about the role that competition played in this renewal.

Another example of how this view was made explicit was provided by Sortevik in the parliamentary debate in October 2004: 'According to the Progress Party's view, it is also important to ensure diversity and competition between schools, and thereby stimulate the running of the important and necessary development of quality within the school sector, for the benefit of pupils, parents, and the entire society' (Ot. 2004). As discussed above, this way of facilitating quality enhancement by competition is familiar in the private sector and commercial markets, and the Progress Party's discourse can be seen as explicitly invoking elements of a neo-liberal competition-oriented discourse.

11.2.1.2. Trust and quality enhancement

As discussed above, in the necessary-supplement storyline increased diversity and freedom of choice were important elements in the expected process of quality enhancement. Yet, while these elements were necessary in order to enhance the overall quality of Norwegian lower schooling, there were also other elements that needed to be present if this diversity and freedom of choice were to have such overall positive effects. In this storyline one such element was trust, and a discourse of trust was often co-articulated with the discourses of quality enhancement discussed above.

Typically this discourse of trust constructed opposition as distrustful of the capacity of public schools to compete with private school and positioned the parties in favour of the reform as trustful and the opposing parties as distrustful. To start with, consider how Clemet in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed in May 2003 explained the relationship between diversity and freedom of choice: 'We believe freedom of choice and diversity will lay the foundation for better quality in the school because it sharpens the awareness of the tasks at hand,

the goals, the users, and alternative ways of solving tasks' (as can be recalled this formulation is almost identical to the formulation in the bill reprinted in Chapter Ten). Thus, the introduction of more freedom of choice and diversity in the domain of lower education will have positive effects for the whole school system. The opposing view, that the freeschool reform would have negative effects upon the school system, was often denounced as distrustful of not only parents – as I discuss this further in the next section on normative discourses – but also distrustful of the public school system and its ability to compete with freeschools. As Clemet put it in a newspaper comment: 'Opposition to the freeschools implies in reality a deep mistrust of parents and pupils and the public school' (Clemet 2005). Voie of the Conservative Party, in newspaper comment entitled '*Pupils and parents decide on freeschools*', put it this way: *'*One cannot have much trust in the public school when one anticipates a mass-escape of pupils as soon as the opportunity displays itself' (Voie 2005).

Also in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed in May 2003, claims about the red-green opposition being distrustful were made. Consider first how Eriksen made such a claim:

> The Socialist Left Party, the Labour Party, and the Centre Party obviously believe that there are hordes of rich and resource-rich parents who will take their young and flee from the public school as soon as they get the chance to a freeschool with meagre finances, to a freeschool with lower-paid teachers. Why do they not trust the public school that they are otherwise preoccupied with protecting? I do not think that we shall see caravans of parents with their young who are fleeing away from public schools, quite simply because the vast majority of parents want to have their children in the public school, because they think that it is good. (Ot. 2003a)

Like Voie in the previous example, also Eriksen positions the opposing political parties as distrustful of the capacity of public schools. She also debunks a discourse of what Voie referred to as a mass-escape of pupils once the law was implemented by representing the red-green opposition's discourse as irrational and as having, in the terms of Glynos and Howarth's perspective, a horrific aspect which reveals an image of a situation characterised by loss of control and feelings of impotence.

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The Liberal Party invoked a similar discourse of trust. Consider how political advisor, Atle Hagtun, in a newspaper comment entitled '*Stoltenberg's distrust of the public school*', commented on the claim that freeschools would 'drain' the public school of resources: 'The Social Democrats fear freedom as usual and have little trust in their own educational policies, when they do not dare to take a chance that the public school can deal with a handful of privately owned freeschools' (Hagtun 2005). Thus, the Left, in this case the Labour Party, did not have enough faith that the public school could match the standards of freeschools and thereby avoid being out-competed by them. According to the Liberals, then, pupils would not 'escape' the public schools and into freeschools as a result of the new law.

The Progress Party, in common with the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, also pointed out that they were not afraid of changes anticipated as a result of the implementation of the law. The fears that increased freedom of choice would lead to a mass escape of pupils from the public schools was unwarranted and so too was the fear that public schools would not be able to keep up the pace with private schools. According to Sortevik in the parliamentary debate in May 2003, the Labour Party's and the Socialist Left Party's opposition indicated a 'revealing lack of confidence in their own school system and a revealing rejection of parents' and pupils' free choice'. Rather than viewing the freeschool reform and its associated freedom of choice and diversity as something negative, one should, Sortevik suggested, see it as beneficial for all parties involved:

> According to the view of the Progress Party, the new law will allow for a win-win situation. The publicly owned schools should be stimulated into making better schools when the other school owners can start schools more easily. In the Progress Party we actually have confidence in that the public school will use this challenge to their previous monopoly-right in a manner that is positive for the pupils.
>
> (Ot. 2003a)

Thus, an influential positioning in the necessary-supplement storyline can be identified: While the parties in government and the Progress Party have trust in public schools and their capacity 'to keep up' with private schools, the red-greens do not as they fear a mass escape from the public schools to the private schools.

I shall continue to discuss the government's and Progress Party's discourses of trust in section 11.2.2.1 where I examine how a discourse of trust in the capacity of parents to make the right choice for their children legitimated the claim that freedom of choice and parental right should be expanded.

11.2.1.3. Conclusion

In this section I have examined how discourses revolving around quality issues were used in the debate and how they relate to the competing storylines.

In section 11.2.1.1 I showed how the parties in the Bondevik II coalition and the Progress Party represented processes of quality enhancement. On the one hand, I showed how politicians belonging to the Conservative Party at times invoked elements of a neo-liberal competition-oriented discourse of quality enhancement and how they on other occasions invoked discourses of quality enhancement that *cannot* be associated with a neo-liberal discourse. I also showed how politicians from the Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Party used similar discourses by using terms such as 'reciprocal learning' and 'enrichment', rather than 'competition'. Compared to the parties in the government, the Progress Party was more explicit about competition being a key mechanism in the anticipated process of quality enhancement, and they explicitly positioned themselves as in favour of competition between schools. Despite these differences, however, a central discourse in the necessary-supplement storyline, which was shared by all these parties, assumed that key results of the reform would be increased freedom of choice, increased diversity and quality enhancement in public and private schools.

In section 11.2.1.2 I showed how the government's and Progress Party's discourses of quality enhancement rested on the assumption that diversity is desirable, and that 'trust' is imperative for this diversity to have an overall positive effect upon the Norwegian school system. More specifically, I showed how the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the Progress Party positioned the opposition as distrustful of the ability of public schools to respond to the challenges brought on by the increased diversity and freedom of choice accompanying the reform.

The next section examines the different discourses that were invoked in the debate on the reform's normative dimension.

11.2.2. Normative issues

Debates about how to organise and run schools concern what many consider to be the most valuable we have: Our children. The debate about freeschools is therefore linked intrinsically to questions of ethics and value systems, and involves the presence and usage of discourses of what I here call 'normative issues'. By and large, in this debate these were discourses that refer to questions about the legitimate exercise of state power, and a key question with respect to this was whether or not the law was fair. As I show in the following, the different parties had different answers to this question, and the aim of this chapter is to examine the different discourses that were invoked in the debate with respect to such issues. I will do this by examining two normative aspects of the freeschool reform:

Firstly, I examine how the necessary-supplement storyline constructed the reform as increasing equality of opportunity for parents to choose education for their children, and how the principle of parental right to choose was weighted against communitarian concerns about the future autonomy of children enrolled by their parents in private schools. By communitarian concerns I mean concerns about schools whose practices can potentially limit pupils prospects of succeeding later in life, for example by not teaching according to standardised curricula or by exposing pupils in Christian or Muslim fundamentalist schools for forms of mental abuse.

Secondly, I discuss how the different parties disagreed on the question of whether the law would cause more or less social segregation. More specifically, I shall direct the attention to two features of the two competing storylines. With respect to the necessary-supplement storyline, I examine how a discourse of crises paved the way for the introduction of the reform, and how the government constructed the reform as including what I call welfarist 'safeguards'. With respect to the opposing destructive-release storyline, I examine how the red-greens constructed the reform as 'drainage' of the public school where freeschools would 'sponge off' the state, and where their 'release' would cause a development leading to increased social segregation.

11.2.2.1. An expansion of parental right and freedom of choice

As I show in the following, the freeschool reform, according to the government and the Progress Party, made the state's exercise of power fairer than it used to be.

According to the Conservatives, the old regime limited parental rights. By removing the criteria that only schools based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles, the proponents claimed that this move would expand freedom of choice and parental rights. During the

parliamentary debate when the law was passed, this is how Clemet invoked a discourse of freedom of choice and parental rights:

> We wish to make parental rights a reality for everyone. We do not have compulsory schooling in Norway. The private sector is not a branch of the state. It is not the state who owns our children. Everybody has the right to choose an alternative school for their children, but in practice this right does not apply for everybody. Today there are mainly three groups who can practice their parental rights, namely those rich enough to pay for a privately financed and/or commercially run schools, those wanting religious/ethical schools, and those who want schools based on so-called alternative pedagogical principles'. With the new law, which is actually a law that provides subsidies, all parents will become equal.   (Ot. 2003a)

Here we see how Clemet positions the Conservative Party and, it can be inferred, the opposing red-green coalition. While 'we wish to make parental rights a reality for everyone', under the contemporary regime supported by the red-green coalition is limited in the sense that 'there are mainly three groups who can practise their parental rights'. This is also to suggest that while 'we' are popular, 'they' are elitist.

Rafiq of the Conservative Party, also during the same debate, provided another example of such a discourse: 'This freeschool law that will be passed today will contribute to giving parents and pupils a genuine freedom of choice and diverse offers of schooling. Up until now pupils and parents have had a limited freedom of choice' (Ot. 2003a). Thus, for the Conservatives the law was more just and more democratic than the old law. The new law would increase the opportunities for parents to choose schools for their children and thus parental rights would become more 'real'.

Not only the Conservatives, but also the Christian Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, and the Progress Party repeated this claim about expanded parental rights and more freedom of choice throughout the whole debate, thus making it an important element of the necessary-supplement-storyline.

In an attempt to demarcate the political frontiers, and thus position the different parties part of the debate, Lyngstad from the Christian Democratic Party, in a newspaper comment entitled '*Freeschools – a parental right'*, explained the difference between the Christian

Democrats and the Labour Party on the issue of freeschools when the law was passed in May 2003 also by associating the old regime with elitism:

> We want to ensure that freeschools become a real choice and not dependent on the wallet. We do this precisely through the public financing of freeschools, which the Labour Party is so much against. The consequence of the Labour Party's opposition against the financing of freeschools is that we shall get a division between those who can afford to pay and those who cannot. […] The Christian Democratic Party does not wish for this. We do not want commercial schools reserved for the richest. We want to have a secure financing of the freeschools along the same lines as the public schools. Equal right to education is a central slogan of the Christian Democratic Party. In opposition to the Labour Party that fills this concept with rhetoric, we substantiate it with practical content.   (Lyngstad 2003a)

In a sense, then, the Labour Party's argument – which I come back to below – had been turned on its head. According to the Christian Democrats, it was the Labour Party's, and not the policies of the Bondevik II coalition government, that would increase inequality in terms of opportunity to choose education.

The Liberal Party also constructed the red-greens opposition as inconsistent with their egalitarian outlook. Skei Grande of the Liberal Party in the parliamentary debate in May 2003 exposed this alleged inconsistency in the following way: 'One does not want to give subsidies to the freeschools, but one believes that they are too expensive for poor children. One believes that only the rich go to these kinds of schools. The same parties insist that the public school should have a geographical intake – not a free choice of school – and this makes it so that those who live in rich residential areas stay together' (Ot. 2003a). In other words, the red-greens preferred policies, and their resistance against the law, worked to reduce equal rights to education.

Also the Progress Party argued that the old regime reduced equal rights to education. According to Sortevik, the opposition against the new law not only entailed an acceptance of that 'it is the wallet that is important and decides which pupils have the possibility to enrol, that is, those who can actually afford to choose a private or an independent school' (Ot. 2004), it was also inconsistent with the egalitarian outlook of the Left. This is how Sortevik pointed out this alleged inconsistency in the manifesto of the Socialist Left Party: 'the Socialist Left Party uses

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slogans for this parliamentary period, "people power against money power". But it is not exactly people power when pupils and parents who wish to choose schools are also allowed to do so?' (Ot. 2004). Thus, again we see how the red-greens' argument was turned on its head in the necessary-supplement storyline. It is also an example of how parents are represented as active actors: it is they who should be given more freedom of choice, and it is they who will benefit from the new law. I return to this particular discourse of agency below.

What the examples above show is that according to the-necessary-supplement storyline, the old regime supported by the red-green coalition not only thwarted parental rights and the freedom of choice, it also increased social segregation because it sustained an elitist regime where only a privileged few could afford to enrol in private schools. The new regime, the proponents argued, would expand the freedom for parents to choose, irrespective of social class or group, and thus make the Norwegian school system fairer. It would, in short, make equal right to education more 'real'.

Hence, in the discourse of the parties of the Bondevik coalition the red-greens and their associated political project were positioned as unfair and elitist, while they positioned themselves and their own political project as fair and popular. Above I have shown how these positionings were realised in different binaries such as: 'actors in favour of parental rights for everyone' versus 'actors in favour of limited parental rights', 'actors in favour of increased freedom of choice for everybody' versus 'actors in favour of freedom of choice reserved for a few' and 'policies reducing social segregation' versus 'policies increasing social segregation'. In terms of the analytical framework used in this dissertation this also means that the Bondevik II coalition's discourse involved the construction of relations of equivalences between discursive elements such as 'parental rights', 'freedom of choice' and 'equality of opportunity'. The effect was that these elements were classified as parts of the same category, in this case, the freeschool reform.

One way to understand this claim about expanding equal right to education is to see it as invoking elements of a welfarist discourse typically associated with the Left. As I continue to discuss below in section 11.2.2.2, also other elements of a welfarist discourse were frequently invoked in the debate, thus making the government's discourse resemble a third way discourse. In the following, however, I examine how the freeschool reform actualised questions of how to manage the tension between parental rights and communitarian concerns.

As discussed in Chapter Three, previous debates about private schools between 1945 and 2001 have to a large extent revolved around questions concerning the principle of parental rights and the freedom of parents (and in the case of older pupils, the pupils themselves) to choose a school for their children versus the principle of protecting children against school practices that can harm their future autonomy and prospects of living a happy life. The clash between these principles was also central in the debate about freeschools between 2001 and 2005.

In order to gain a better understanding of what is at stake here, it is worthwhile to recall how Labour's previous Minister of Education and Research, Trond Giske, commented on the so-called ACE schools (Accelerated Christian Education) in a parliamentary debate in April 2001. These schools used textbooks that claimed, for example, that women were inferior to men. There was also no teaching of Darwin's evolutionary theory as it contradicted the idea that God placed humans on the earth. Giske commented on these schools in a parliamentary debate about the public funding of an ACE school in the county municipality of Vest-Agder as follows:

> It makes an impression on me to see textbooks showing a mother beating her crying children with a bat. It makes an impression on me when it is revealed that small children when answering questions during the process of admission must answer that they are saved. It makes an impression on me when one ACE principal says that he sees it as advantageous that teachers who will be trained with ACE do not have teacher training. It makes an impression on me when the slave trade is practically described as God's way of Christianising the blacks.
>
> (Giske in Stortinget 2001, quoted in Tuastad 2006: 380)

Despite such reservations the Conservative in the debate on freeschools nevertheless again gave priority to parental rights. They justified this position by appealing to international conventions and Norwegian law.[39] Consider, for example, Clemet in a newspaper comment published in September 2004:

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[39] References to UN human rights were integral components in all the three bills (see Ot. prp. 33 (2002-2003); Ot. prp. nr. 80 (2002-2003); Ot. prp. 64 (2003-2004).

Parents have, according to international conventions, the right to choose an alternative school for their children, and this right is particularly relevant when it is tied to the freedom of religion. We can either like or dislike these schools, but we cannot forbid them. But we can place demands on them, including the school's curriculum in order for them to receive public support, and this we do. The practice of the Department of Education has with respect to this been the same during the last three governments.   (Clemet 2004)

Although the red-greens refuted the implicit suggestion that the old law did not comply to international conventions (see for example Meltveit Kleppa and Bjørnstad in Ot. 2003), this quotation is nevertheless an example of how the government attempted to legitimate the law by reference to an international authority. This extract also shows, however, that while parental rights have priority over concerns about the future autonomy of children enrolled in 'extreme schools', it was, and still should be, possible for the state to regulate these schools by requiring them to follow a standardised curricula.

Apart from limiting parental rights by demanding that schools are obliged to adopt a standardised curriculum, the Conservatives emphasised that parents, and not the state, know what is best for their children. Eriksen of the Conservative Party made this view clear in the parliamentary debate in May 2003:

The Socialist Left Party, the Labour Party, and the Centre Party allow a certain freedom of choice, by supporting the current law on private schools. But it will not extend any further than the choices that the Labour Party, Socialist Left Party, and Centre Party believe that parents can make. There is an extreme mistrust against the parents. There is an agreement that the politicians are obviously better suited to make on behalf of children those choices that parents ought really to make.
                                                                 (Ot. 2003a)

In this way the red-green opposition was positioned as distrustful of the capacity of parents to make the right choices for their children. They were also positioned as not being on the side of parents, but as being 'against' them.

Aarset, also of the Conservative Party, seemed to root the Labour Party and the Socialist Left Party's alleged distrust in a 'fundamental fear of change' the following way:

> The leftists, with the Labour Party and the Socialist Left Party, base much of their resistance against the new law on freeschools on a fundamental fear of change – a fundamental fear of politicians placing power in the hands of parents and pupils, and a fear for what diversity and freedom of choice can lead to. We are not afraid.
>
> (Ot. 2003a)

Thus, the opposition feared not only diversity, but also the changes that were expected to occur as the result of increased diversity: More power in the hands of parents and pupils and more freedom of choice.

Hence, another influential positioning in the necessary-supplement storyline can be identified: while the 'we', in this case the Conservative Party, are positioned as trustful (and as being on the side) of parents, 'they', in this case the red-green coalition, are positioned as distrustful of parents and as being 'against' them. This means that the discourse of trust, which I started to analyse in the previous section, not only includes a positioning of the opposition as distrustful, but also includes a positioning of the red-green opposition as distrustful of the capacity of parents to make the right choices for their own children. This latter kind of positioning also suggest that parents are the active actors in the social processes expected to be facilitated by the new law; that is, it is parents who will be experiencing more freedom of choice and it is parents who will benefit from the freeschool reform.

The Christian Democrats, who traditionally have been the primary defenders of parental rights in debates about private schools, defended parental rights in similar terms as the Conservatives. They often justified the law by reference to international human-rights conventions. As mentioned, the Conservatives also invoked this argument, but politicians belonging to the Christian Democratic Party made the same point more frequently. The Christian Democrats, moreover, appeared to consider the principle of parental rights to be more important than communitarian concerns about the future autonomy of children. In a response to claims by Reikvam of the Socialist Left Party that the debate about freeschools was 'ideologically loaded', Sahl of the Christian Democratic Party clearly described the lines of demarcation as follows:

We are ourselves, of course, aware of that we are founded on a clear ideological foundation, where, among others, parental authority is superior to the authority of society when it comes to the responsibility for children's upbringing. The Christian Democratic Party has always held the parental banner high and it is not strange, therefore, that the Labour Party and Socialist Left Party, which in this area have a completely different starting point, attack the Christian Democratic Party. On the contrary, it is completely expected. (Ot. 2003a)

Hence, for the Christian Democrats, the debate about freeschools was in many ways a repetition of previous debates when parental rights were weighed against communitarian concerns about the future autonomy of children. Lyngstad of the Christian Democratic Party drew this parallel:

The debate today has become a faithful copy of earlier debates on freeschools. It shows that there is an ideological division between those who are willing to take the consequences of the parent's right to choose the education and upbringing of their children and those who want to set limits to this right. (Ot. 2003a)

The Christian Democrats, in common with the Conservative Party, also relied on the state's capacity to control and to make sure both that pupils were taught according to the criteria set by the state and that schools followed Norwegian law in general (see Lyngstad in Ot. 2003a). In this way, the future autonomy of children enrolled in alternative schools would not be threatened (see also Tuastad 2006: 394 for description of this kind of argumentation in the 1999 debate about ACE schools).

This suggests that the tension between the principle of parental rights and communitarian concerns about the future autonomy of children was managed by the Bondevik II coalition by their invocation of what I suggest we can call a discourse of governability – in this case this involved a control that ensured that school obeyed to Norwegian law and standardised curricula. In this discourse the state's ability to govern and to control allowed parental right to be exercised without posing any threat to the future autonomy of children.

In accordance with the primacy the Christian Democrats gave to parental rights, they often positioned the opposition against the new law as distrustful of parents. According to this

view, this opposition presumed that parents were unfit to choose what is right for their children. As Lyngstad expressed it in a newspaper commentary entitled '*The Socialist Left Party wishes for a school for the riches*: 'The Christian Democratic Party trusts parents. The Socialist Left Party suffers from a fundamental distrust of parents' ability to make choice for their children' (Lyngstad 2005). Thus, also the Christian Democrats positioned the opposition to the law as a manifestation of a deep-rooted distrust of parents.

Another central and related element in the government's discourse of parental rights was its concerns about the rights of minority groups, or to be more precise, the rights of parents belonging to minority groups. As Eriksen states in the parliamentary debate in 2004: 'An extensive diversity is important for being able to maintain the rights of minorities' (Ot. 2004). This concern about the rights of minority groups seemed especially important for the Christian Democratic Party, whose electorate comprise many parents enrolling their children in Christian schools belonging to different religious minority groups. Consider Lyngstad's suggestion that parental right is a core democratic value:

> I believe that a democracy is characterised by how it treats minorities, and how it preserves their rights. It is therefore completely fundamental for the Christian Democratic Party that the rights of parents have support. We wish for a strong public school, but it is not the freeschools that constitute the threat against it.
>
> […]
>
> The Christian Democratic Party believes […] there is no contradiction between working for a strong public school and ensuring parents the right to choose another form of education for their children, one in line with their own ideals. We regard this right as an important democratic right. The law on freeschools protects the rights of minorities and is therefore a democratisation of the school. (Ot. 2004)

The Liberal Party shared the emphasis on minority rights. Skei Grande of the Liberal Party remarked on this concern in the following way:

> This debate is actually a debate on freedom, a debate on the right to choose as well as the right to develop something new, the right to be different, and the right to

build up the local community in other ways. The small minority that is being talked about today goes to private schools and makes use of this freedom, but in no way threatens others' liberties.   (Ot. 2004)

In this extract we see that also in the Liberal Party's discourse it seems that it was parents who were the active actors in the social processes assumed to result from the reform, and it was them who needed to be 'freed'.

This discourse of parents as being in the need to be freed has a fantasmatic aspect. More precisely, it has a beatific dimension that involves a promise of something better that will be realised once the reform is implemented. What it does not take into account, however, is that not all parents want to be 'freed' in this way. As such this discourse also can work ideologically to background opposing discourse and to represent the reform as commonsensical. I will return to this beatific discourse of parents later. The next section, however, examines what perhaps was the most controversial issue in the debate: *Would the law increase or reduce social segregation?*

11.2.2.2. Increased social segregation?

In the following I examine how the different parties disagreed on the question of whether the reform would increase social segregation in terms of the distribution of children with different socio-economic backgrounds across schools.

I start by continuing to examine how the necessary-supplement storyline claimed that contrary to claims by the red-greens the reform would not increase social segregation. Above I have already demonstrated how the necessary-supplement storyline constructed the reform as making equal right to education more real, as it, in contrast to the old regime, did not privilege particular social groups with respect to freedom of choice. I also suggested that this claim can be seen as invoking elements of a welfarist discourses usually associated with the Left. In the following I shall examine further how the claim about increased rather than less social equality was sustained by the usage of a discourse of crises and by the invocation of other elements of a welfarist discourse.

11.2.2.2.1. No increased social segregation

As I showed above, key elements in the-necessary-supplement storyline was its claim that it would expand parental rights and thus extend the freedom of parents to choose schools for their

children. Private schools would no longer be the preserve of those parents who could afford to enrol their children in expensive private schools that did not receive state support (for instance, international schools), and for those parents who wanted their children to attend schools based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles and that did receive support. Another related key element in this storyline was the rejection of claims of the red-green opposition that the law would increase social segregation. It is to this that I now turn.

11.2.2.2.1.1. A discourse of crises

Although parents of children in private schools on average had a higher education than parents of pupils in public schools, the statistics showed, according to Clemet, that parents of children in private schools on average had lower income than parents of children in public schools (Clemet in NTB 2003c; Clemet 2003).[40]

But more significantly in the debate on freeschools, however, was that research also showed that the Norwegian public schools systematically reproduced social inequality. In an evaluation of the so-called Reform 97, initiated by the Labour Party and conducted by the Norwegian Research Council, the results showed that, compared to the other Nordic countries, Norwegian pupils with parents with low education systematically performed worse than those pupils with parents with higher education (see Aftenposten 2003a). As parents with higher education tend to have higher income, they can afford to live in more expensive areas compared to those with lower education, who tend to have lower income. In larger cities, such as Oslo, the schools and their pupils' performance on tests reflected this settlement pattern. Clemet seized this point about social inequality and social segregation reflecting each other in larger cities in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed in May 2003: 'There is already social and ethnic segregation in Norwegian schools, especially in the large cities, because residential segregation leads to the segregation of schools, which accompanies the principle of nearby schooling' (Ot. 2003a).

Thus, not only were Norwegian pupils' performance mediocre in the PISA tests (see section 10.2); the unitary school system also systematically reproduced social inequality. A key

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[40] In a newspaper interview Bergesen acknowledged that parents of pupils in private schools on average had a higher education than parents of pupils in public schools by referring to them as an 'academic elite' (Bergesen in Dagbladet 2003b).

question was therefore *not* whether the law would result in social segregation, but whether it would decrease social segregation.

This way of responding to accusations that the law would increase social segregation by – backed up by research reports – invoking a discourse of systematic reproduction of social inequality in the public school system, was a key moment in the government's struggle for hegemony. It worked to debunk the red-green's – and then especially the Labour Party and Socialist Left Party – discourse of the school as a multicultural meeting place. I shall describe some of the key features of this discourse and how it was used in the debate on freeschools.

In this discourse public schools had been, and still were, places for pupils with different background to meet and to integrate. Protests against the law often employed the imagery of the child of the business executive going to school together with the child of the factory worker, and where Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and others were all together. Thus, their discourse constructed the old regime as one that establishes multicultural meeting places. Consider the following image described by Schjøtt-Pedersen of the Labour Party in a newspaper comment:

> The school is the glue of Norwegian society; here we learn not only the subjects, but also common values. That the daughter of the director and the son of someone who receives social assistance from the state go to the same class makes the lines of division break down, since one learns to know different parts of society. It is not uniformity. But if we are to have one school for the rich, one for the poor, one for Muslims, one for Buddhists, one for atheists – yes, then we get uniformity and entrenched antagonisms in society. The Labour Party will, therefore, protect the common school. (Schjøtt-Pedersen 2002)

This image has a fantasmatic aspect. It presents a romantic and beatific discourse of the old regime that was threatened by an external threat, in this case the freeschool reform endorsed by the Bondevik II coalition. The above extract by Schjøtt-Pedersen also exemplifies a concern about what can be called 'minority uniformation' (*minoritetsensretting*). Such a concern is related to discourse of the public school as a multi-cultural meeting place and was expressed by Konglevoll of the Labour Party in a newspaper commentary entitled '*The Common school in danger*':

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It has been said in this debate that the new law on private schools will lead to diversity. I disagree wholeheartedly. With this new law we can get a new kind of school for the theoretical, one for the somewhat Christian and another for those who are very Christian, one for Shia Muslims and another for Sunni Muslims. That is not diversity; on the contrary, it is uniformity. It is a school where one can only be with like-minded children. It is close-minded. (Konglevoll 2003)

What the above examples show is how, on the one hand, relations of equivalences were constructed between the new law, uniformity and social segregation, while on the other hand relations of equivalences were constructed between the old regime, diversity and social integration. Labour's previous Minister of Education (1990-1995), Gudmund Hernes, attached this concern about minority uniformation and integration to the increase in immigration: 'Norway has been a homogeneous society. Now the country is on the way to becoming something else because of the increased immigration. That is precisely why it is important that the school is a meeting place where children from different backgrounds spend time together and learn about each other' (Hernes in NTB 2002a).[41]

However, it was this beatific discourse of the public school as a multicultural meeting place that was challenged when the Norwegian Research Council's evaluation of the Reform 97 was published in the spring of 2003. The result of was a damage to the image of the Norwegian unitary school system as egalitarian that paved the ground for change.

11.2.2.2.1.2. A welfarist discourse

A crucial element in the changes the government held to be part of the freeschool reform concerned, as discussed in the previous section, freedom of choice. Bergesen explained his view on freedom of choice in general terms and in relation to freeschools in a newspaper comment entitled '*The Struggle over Freedom of Choice*':

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[41] The concern about minority-group uniformity was also attached to concerns about the future autonomy of pupils in schools based on alternative religious principles. For the Labour Party's women's movement, headed by Bekkemellem Orheim (also the party's spokesperson in educational policies) this concern was strong, and at the annual Labour Party congress in 2002, they proposed a removal of state support to religious schools altogether. This proposal was, however, rejected.

I believe that each person and each family is able to make reasonable choices. The good society for me is a society where the greatest number possible has the greatest possible opportunities to choose how they themselves will arrange their lives, so long as it does not limit the freedom of others. We need, of course, a government that can ensure security and basic welfare – such as education and health – and for infrastructure that can only be realised though public financing. But within this framework we can make our choices, for example, between public and independent schools or between municipal and private home care. […] I believe in freedom of choice, not as some metaphor or religion, but as a basis for a good society, because I believe that each of us has the right to make his or her own choices. I do not accept that someone should make choices for me that I can very well make myself. Like deciding that "the unitary school" is best for all children, and, therefore, they will be placed in a set school by a public body.   (Bergesen 2005b)

Here we again see an example of how parental rights and freedom of choice are given priority over concerns about the community as a whole, as long as this freedom is exercised within the limits set by the state. This position is characteristic of the general political discourse of the Conservative Party: It advocates a reduced but strong state.

While the freeschools reform can be seen as an 'ideological shift' (Eriksen in Ot. 2003a), part of 'a system change' (St. mld. nr. 30 (2003-2004): 25) and a central part of what the Conservative's party leader Erna Solberg in a speech at the annual party conference in May 2005 called the Conservative Party's overarching 'value-reform' which involved 'increased freedom of choice' (Solberg 2005), it was in the debate about freeschools explicitly emphasised that this freedom should not be exercised at the expense of the freedom of others. In another newspaper comment published in October 2002, Bergesen responded to accusations that the new law would increase social segregation in the following way:

This crowning argument is taken completely out of the air and has nothing to do with the present bill. On the contrary, the government has always emphasised that the freeschools will be open for all and that selective enrolment of pupils will not be accepted. If a school were to get many applicants, it will have to make its priorities based on unbiased considerations, such as geographical proximity,

siblings or grades, that is, criteria that are used in the public schools today. It will not be permitted to choose pupils, for example, according to the parents' income or similar social conditions.

The parents, however rich they may be, will not have the opportunity to contribute economically to the school beyond what is necessary to cover the portion of the costs not covered by public subsidy. The condition for public financing is tuition fees are so low that the schools are practically open to all people with normal incomes.   (Bergesen 2002b)

Accordingly, and as already discussed in Chapter Ten, in the law that was passed in May 2003 it was clearly stated that schools cannot freely select whom to enrol and that tuition fees should be limited.

Clemet, in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed, expressed the point as follows: 'we think that freedom of choice is positive in itself, but that freedom of choice must be as equal as possible for everybody and not a freedom at the expense of others' (Ot. 2003a). Consider also how Clemet stressed the same in a newspaper comment entitled '*Knowledge Promotion and freeschools*':

Some have the need or want to choose an alternative school. The opportunity to do so should, as far as possible, be the same for everybody. As with the old law on private schools, the law on freeschools makes it possible to get subsidies from the state, so that school fees can be limited. But the terms are even stricter than before:

– The quality of the offer must be at least as good as in the public school.
– School fees cannot be more than about 15 percent of the running costs in the public school.
– It is not permitted to "sort" pupils.
– Any form of open or hidden profit-making is not permitted. All the school's money should benefit the pupils. The control is stricter than it used to be.

(Clemet 2005)

As discussed in Chapter Ten, these conditions reflect a concern that the introduction of freeschools not based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles could potentially increase social segregation if left unregulated. One way to interpret these conditions is to see them as what I called 'welfarist safeguards' that can be seen as emanating from a welfarist discourse. As discussed in Chapter Ten the co-existence of elements of a welfarist discourse characterised by its emphasis on equal right to education and a neo-liberal competition-oriented discourse of quality enhancement made the Conservative Party's discourse on the reform resemble a third-way discourse characterised by its embracement of forms of what Rose (1999) has termed advanced liberal government.

One way to understand this usage of elements of a welfarist discourse, as suggested in the previous section on parental rights, is to see it as intrinsically linked with a discourse of the state's governability and control. This discourse can work ideologically by 'ironing out' the possibility that there may be some truth in the red-green's insistence on the socially destructive effects of the reform. I return to the examination of this discourse of governability and control below.

11.2.2.2.2. Increased social segregation

Despite the welfarist assurances in the government's discourse of governability and control, the red-green opposition was not content. They still feared that the law would increase social segregation, the reason being that the law would gradually cause what was often metaphorically represented as 'drainage' (*utarming*) of resources from the public school system. This involved that freeschools would 'sponge off' the public schools system and that the 'release' of these schools would eventually result in more social segregation among social groups with different socio-economic status. I shall deal with these claims in turn.

11.2.2.2.2.1. The freeschool reform as 'drainage'

Bekkemellen Orheim's use of the 'drainage' metaphor to spell out the position of the Labour Party in the parliamentary debate in 2004 was typical: 'In this debate the Labour Party has given a very clear answer on what our stance is with this case. We support the current law. We also say very clearly that, with this policy and with this development that this government supports, there will be a drainage of the public school' (Ot. 2004). Bjørnstad of the same party in a newspaper comment entitled '*Threatening the Common School*' further made use of this metaphor:

The new law makes it so that powerful foreign actors, with clear commercial interests, can establish private schools in Norway. These schools can choose to offer the cheapest or the most popular programmes of study and they can hire the best teachers. These schools have no incentives to contribute to the expensive programmes or to admit pupils who truly need special arrangements. The danger of drainage of the public common school is, therefore, great. (Bjørnstad 2005)

This statement suggests that 'this development that this government supports', as Bekkemellem Orheim put it in the extract above, involves commercially run schools that drain the public common schools of resources.

In the perspective of Glynos and Howarth (2007) the usage of the metaphor of drainage reveals an important fantasmatic aspect in the red-greens' destructive-release storyline. In a fantasmatic discourse public schools were represented as being threatened from 'the outside', in this case commercial schools that eventually would drain the public schools of resources. Hence, in this discourse commercial schools embody the obstacle that prevents closure for the subjects that are psychologically investing in it. I continue to discuss the metaphor of drainage further below, but here I should like to call attention to another claim, which was related to the claim about drainage, that of reduced state funding to public schools.

The Socialist Left Party argued that there had been a decrease in funding of the public school under the Bondevik II coalition government. When the government's national budget for 2003 introduced a 35 percent increase in funding of freeschools, this provoked a reaction from the Socialist Left Party. For them it was impossible to understand how 1.8 percent of the schools in Norway could get such an increase while the remaining 98 percent were left to struggle with poor school buildings, reduced funding to the SFO (the programme for after-school activities for young children, *skolefritidsordningen*), poor library services, and so on (Halvorsen 2003; Reikvam in Dagsavisen 2002c; Reikvam in Ot. 2003a).

The Conservatives, however, backed up by statistics, rejected this claim about reduced funding to public schools by showing that the funding had been steadily increasing and that it

would continue to do so.[42] The Conservatives' key point was that the solution to the problem of improving the quality of the Norwegian school was not to pour even more resources into a system which the Norwegian state, by OECD standards, had already spent a record-high amount of resources on, but instead to introduce a 'system change'. As Clemet put it in a newspaper comment entitled '*Quality in the School'*: 'Often there is not a lack of resources but a systematic problem that prevents the schools from doing better, and so we must do something with the system' (Clemet 2002).

Yet, while the opposition also seemed to acknowledge that something needed to be done about the systematic reproduction of social inequality in public schools, and about the educational system in order to enhance the performance of the pupils – and thereby also invoked a discourse of crises – they did not agree that the freeschool reform was what was needed to improve the situation. As Halvorsen from the Socialist Left Party put it in a newspaper comment in June 2003:

> The evaluation of the previous extensive school reform, Reform 97, shows anyway that the conditions for the public school are far from idyllic. Contrary to how it presents itself, the school cannot manage to even out the differences among the pupils, but actually contributes to reinforcing differences between genders, social backgrounds, and ethnic origins. In addition we know that reading skills among Norwegian pupils are too poor, and that we have mediocre results in mathematics and natural sciences. But that more private schools will solve the problems of the all-too-large differences in the public school is impossible to understand!
>
> (Halvorsen 2003)

Similar to the Labour Party and the Socialist Party, the Centre Party also focused on the municipal economies in their explanation of why public schools were threatened form further deterioration under the Bondevik II government. In the parliamentary debate when the law was passed, Meltveit Kleppa referred to the numbers produced by the 'Technical Reporting Committee' (*Teknisk Beregningsutvalg*) that showed that the economic situation for the

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[42] See for examples, Bergesen 2004a; Bondevik and Clemet 2003; Clemet in Ot. 2004; Eriksen in Ot. 2003a; Voie, Skei Grande and Lyngstad 2003.

municipalities had worsened over the last two years.[43] According to Meltveit Kleppa in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed, it was not unsurprising that the quality of public schools was deteriorating:

> It is actually the case that 55 percent of the municipalities are forced to make cuts in such a vulnerable area. Therefore, we see both that schools get shut down, and that the support hours will be taken away. For those who wish for good and exciting common public schools, it should be fundamental to work towards having stronger municipal economies instead of what we now see: a slashing of many municipalities' economies. Yes, there is even a suggestion that follows from this law that the financing will be stronger for the alternative schools. There is, then, only one end result, and that is an undermining of the public school.

> (Meltveit Kleppa in Ot. 2003a)

In this extract there is a positioning of the Centre Party and the parties in government. While they want to strengthen municipal economies, the Bondevik II coalition allegedly prefers policies that 'slash' many municipal economies.

Skjælaaen, from the same party, points at the relationship between poor municipal economies and the freeschool reform in a newspaper comment entitled '*Clemet and the Resources*' the following way:

> It is a puzzle that this government provides a better financing of private schools, while at the same time the public school's budgets are reduced. Many private schools have long waiting lists. Parents say that they choose private schools for their children because then they know that they will get a better offer of schooling. Is it not a puzzle for the Minister of Education and Research and the rest of the

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[43] The Technical Reporting Committee for municipal and county-municipal finances is a partially composite committee charged with reporting, statistical processing, and professional evaluation of data concerning the economy in the municipalities and in the county-municipalities. The Committee comprises of members from the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, the Ministry of Finance, and the Central Bureau of Statistics. (Source: http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/krd/dep/443466/teknisk-beregningsutvalg-for-kommunal-og.html?id=449207 (accessed 14.11.2008)).

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parties in government, that parents choose private schools for their children because the public school does not provide a good enough offer of schooling?

<div align="right">(Skjælaaen 2002a)</div>

Thus, in the Centre Party's discourse, the continually poor municipal economies and the government's freeschool reform would 'undermine' the public school. I shall come back to the argument made by Skjælaaen about parents choosing private schools for their children because the public schools are not good enough below.

11.2.2.2.2.2. Commercial actors 'sponging off' and profiting

With respect to the argument that the reform would drain the public school system of resources, the metaphorical expression '*skumme fløten*' was important. Translated literally into English this means 'to skim the cream off the milk'. However, this translation does not quite capture the significance it had in the debate. Instead, I shall use the expression 'sponging off' in order to capture better the provocative tone that this expression carried in this debate. In general terms we can say that such 'sponging off' practices appear in many guises, either in the way of legally taking advantage of somebody or something, or by being fraudulent and thereby break the confines of the law. In the debate on freeschools the metaphor referred to an actor (or several actors) bent on taking advantage of somebody or something, in this case, commercial actors bent on taking advantage of a new law. More specifically, it was used to claim that upper secondary freeschools would seek to establish themselves in the larger cities, and only offer programmes of study that were cheap and popular, leaving the public schools to bear the costs of running more expensive programmes.

The political significance of accusations of social actors 'sponging off' something or somebody should not be underestimated. As the previously given examples in section 7.4.3 of fantasies about particular social groups 'sponging off' the welfare system paid by the tax money of 'hard-working' individuals suggest, such accusations appear to be salient in contemporary political discourse. Moreover, they do seem to resemble scapegoat practices where feelings (either individual or collective) such as frustration, hostility and aggression are displaced and projected onto another social actor.

This is an example of how the 'sponging off' metaphor was used by Labour party leader

Stoltenberg when commenting on the law in an interview:

> This marks the beginning of schooling based on difference in Norway. Our policy is good schooling for all, not only for some. It is insane for commercial actors to receive state support in order to sponge off of Norwegian schools and to establish schools in central residential areas with popular and cheap subjects.
>
> <div align="right">(Stoltenberg in Dagsavisen 2005d)</div>

In addition to illustrating the usage of the 'sponging off' metaphor, this extract also contains a positioning of 'our' and 'their' educational policies: While the red-greens want 'good schooling for all', the parties supporting the freeschool reform want good schooling 'only for some'.

State Secretary Bergesen, of course, rejected this argument about freeschools 'sponging off' public schools. Although there was a tendency of freeschools wanting to establish themselves in larger cities and offering cheap and popular courses (Bergens Tidende 2005a, 2005b), he rejected the use of the 'sponging off' metaphor by pointing out that the financial support from the state was dependent on the average cost of running the same type of school in the same municipality. This calculation meant that freeschools offering cheap programmes of study received less financial support than schools offering more expensive ones (Bergesen 2005a, 2005c). Hence, in common with the accusations that there had been a reduction in the state's funding to the public school system, the government also deemed these accusations as unwarranted.

What this demonstrates is that the argument about freeschools 'sponging off' was contestable. On the one hand, localisation patterns of the freeschools, and overviews over courses and study streams that they offered, can be seen as indicating a sponging-off tendency that reveals what can be called a 'mishap' in the policy of the Bondevik II coalition. On the other hand, the financing system was, as Bergesen points out, designed with the aim to ensure that freeschools, that wanted to establish schools in larger cities and that wanted to offer cheap and popular courses, could not receive more financial support from the state than what equivalent public schools in the same municipality did.

Thus, important fantasmatic aspects in both storylines can be identified. On the one hand, the red-green's destructive-release storyline involved a horrific discourse of freeschool 'sponging off' that had fantasmatic aspects as it worked ideologically to conceal the actual complexities of the reform. On the other hand, the Bondevik II coalition's necessary-supplement storyline can be seen as involving a beatific fantasy of total control, or governability, which worked ideologically to conceal the potential regulatory flaws of the law.

This discourse of the state's governability was contested by the red-greens also with respect to the question of the possibility of freeschools owners to take out profits. As discussed in Chapter Three, this contestation intensified during the winter of 2004/2005. Then the Directorate of Education and Research experienced a rush of applications from actors like Akademiet, Sonans, Noroff and John Bauer, which wanted to establish schools that offered popular and cheap courses of study in the larger cities. John Bauer, among other, promoted their schools by offering free textbooks, PCs and a holiday trip to enjoy the warmer climate of the South (*syden*).[44] The tuition fee was about 10 000 NOK per year (Aftenposten 2005b; Bergens Tidende 2005d). In the areas where these actors wanted to establish new schools, the rush of applications spurred a heated debate about the desirability of the freeschool reform.

As I show below the two opposing camps had different interpretations of the state's ability to regulate their practices according to the intention of not allowing school owners to profit from their operations.

On the one hand, and as I have already discussed above, the Labour Party and the Socialist Left Party, before the law was implemented in December 2004, repeatedly claimed that the reform would cause a 'release' of commercial actors in lower education in Norway. Not only would this 'drain' the public schools of resources, it would also increase social segregation. The assumption that the state could not prevent freeschool-owners from making profits from running their schools was central in the destructive-release storyline.

On the other hand, the law clearly stated that the financial support from the state should be to the benefit of pupils, and that it was not allowed for freeschool-owners to take out profit from the running of schools.

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[44] County politician of the Labour Party, Roger Ingebrigtsen, labelled these schools as 'espresso-schools' as they, according to him, intended to start up schools in the main streets close to coffee bars (Ingebretsen in Bladet Tromsø 2005).

However, not all factions within the Conservative Party were against a commercialisation of freeschools. There was disagreement about this issue. On the one hand, Clemet, along with Bergesen and others, had repeatedly emphasised that it was not possible, nor desirable, for schools to be run commercially. On the other hand, according to the Conservative Party's Youth League (The Norwegian Young Conservatives), headed by Torbjørn Røe Isaksen, there were no good reasons why it should be illegal to make money on running schools while it, for instance, was legal to make money on the care for the elderly. Also other groups within the party (in the regions of Hordaland and Stavanger) supported this view on freeschools and profit and proposed at the annual congress in early May 2005 that this should be part of the manifesto for the parliamentary period from 2005 to 2009 (Aftenposten 2005c, 2005e; Stavanger Aftenblad 2005a). However, the majority did not endorse this proposal.

Also statements in the media by representatives of private schools indicated that there was a desire to make a profit. Already in the hearing process of the law in the autumn of 2002, Treider and Wang private schools (and colleges) expressed disappointment with the restrictions concerning profit (Klassekampen 2002). Representatives of Swedish private schools also announced that they wanted to make money in Norway when the law was implemented (Dagsavisen 2003f). The director of John Bauer in Norway, Rune Eikeland, explained why they, despite the fact that the law prohibited schools to be run commercially, wanted to establish themselves in Norway: 'Our motivation for wanting to invest in Norway is an interest in educational activities. Over time we believe also that the law can be changed to be commercial. We are thinking in the long-term' (Eikeland in Bergens Tidende 2004).

For the government, however, what the motivations were of actors such as John Bauer had for establishing private schools in Norway seemed irrelevant. As Bergesen put it in a newspaper article: 'We are not scrutinising the applicants' hearts and souls to find out their motives. We look for content and quality' (Bergesen in Aftenposten 2004). Also, when it turned out that actors such as John Bauer, Sonans, Noroff, and Akademiet constituted a significant number of those who wanted to establish freeschools, Bergesen rejected the repeated accusations that the law would cause a privatisation and commercialisation of lower education by pointing out that the law prohibited freeschool-owners from taking out profits. Bergesen also called the issue of whether the law could successfully prevent freeschool-owners from profiting as an 'artificial problem' (*oppkonstruert problemstilling*), and by reference to an incident in August 2002, when a private upper secondary school after being checked by the authorities had to pay

back 21 million NOK to the state because they had not conformed to the regulations (Dagsavisen 2002a; NTB 2002b), Bergesen claimed that the law and the control mechanisms were good enough (Bergesen in Dagsavisen 2003c). Hence, the government characterised accusations of the possibility of making profits as 'scaremongering' (*skremmselspropaganda*), as Prime Minister Bondevik put it in a newspaper report (Bondevik in Kommunal Rapport 2005b). In a newspaper comment co-authored by Voie (Conservative Party), Lyngstad (Christian Democratic Party) and Skei Grande (Liberal Party), the expression 'artificial problem' was again used to refute the claims about the commercialisation of lower Norwegian education:

> Many have claimed that the bill for a new law on free-standing schools opens up the possibility for school profiteers who want to make money off Norwegian pupils in compulsory schools. This is an artificial problem! It will not be an opportunity to take out profit and the department will carry out checks to make sure that the money will benefit the pupils. The schools can only take small tuition fees; they cannot obtain for themselves better finances than the public schools; they cannot be commercial; and they cannot filter out pupils. (Voie et al. 2003)

What these examples show is how the government deemed claims about the freeschool reform causing a commercialisation of Norwegian education as unwarranted by invoking a discourse of governability that emphasised that it should not be possible to make profits by running schools in Norway.

Above I have discussed the foregrounding of the prohibition against taking out profits as emanating from a welfarist discourse. I have also argued that the co-existence of elements from a welfarist discourse with elements from a neo-liberal discourse made the Conservative Party's discourse of the freeschool reform resemble a third-way discourse. This means that the government's discourse of the state's governability not only worked ideologically to 'iron out' the possibility that freeschools would 'sponge off', but also the possibility that freeschools owners could illegally take out profits. The result of these practices was that it became possible to, in a third way manner, co-articulate elements of a welfarist discourse and a neo-liberal competition-oriented discourse.

Despite the government's repeatedly foregrounding of elements of a welfarist discourse, and despite the invocation of a discourse of the state's governability, the opposition did not

accept the claim that the state could prevent a commercialisation of the schools. On some occasions the red-greens claimed that the law would not work according to its intentions by invoking an expert discourse. Consider Bekkemellem Orheim's appeal to expertise in a newspaper comment:

> The new law opens up the possibility for the commercial running of schools in Norway. The government has accordingly opened the possibility for private actors to earn money by running schools in Norway. This is supported by a professor at the Department of Finance and Management Science at the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, who in the Bergens Tidende on Thursday, 13 March stated, 'it is possible to get returns from the investments in ways other than through stock dividends to the owners', and he continued, 'those who have made the body of rules are, in a commercial perspective, amateurs'. Moreover, the ways in which the body of rules is formulated, limit the ability to conduct checks – especially if the private schools establish delivering companies that are located abroad.   (Bekkemellem Orheim 2005)

In other words, the Labour Party did not believe that the state could regulate private actors according to the law. Also in the recommendation from the Parliament Committee on Education and Research to the Parliament, the red-greens opposition referred to experts in order to legitimate their claim that it would be possible to make profits:

> The Committee's members from the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party noted the bill's intention that private schools entitled to subsidies will not be able to be run commercially. These members noted, further, the elaboration and sharpening of this limit in Ot.prp. nr. 80 (2002-2003). Nevertheless, these members want to direct attention to the fact that many economists and lawyers have raised doubts on whether the bill will have sufficient safeguards against the commercial running of schools. Even if the bill places a ban on normal shares dividends, there are many other ways to profit. These members want to point out the danger that the Government, by allowing for the private running of compulsory

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schools, is making it easier for Norwegian and foreign commercial actors to establish themselves in competition with the public-private schools. There will be a greater need for controls and supervision in order to ensure that the state subsidies are used as presumed in the law.   (Innst. O. nr. 80 (2002-2003))

In the parliamentary debate when the specification concerning profits was passed, Reikvam expressed his reservations in the following way: 'I don't feel completely secure, because we know what will happen afterwards when we begin to practise this. So, even if we now accept the bill, we must be vigilant against commercial schools, for that would be unfortunate' (Ot. 2003b). Later in a newspaper article Reikvam suggested that although 'theoretically, it is not possible to profit, but there are possibilities to establish several companies and to transfer money. One can also profit in the form of higher salaries' (Reikvam in Klassekampen 2004). Halvorsen and Stoltenberg also expressed similar concerns. Halvorsen called it 'naïve' not to think that actors such as John Bauer did not want to make money on establishing schools in Norway (Halvorsen in NTB 2005e). Stoltenberg in a similar vein pointed to what he saw as possible ways of making 'hidden' profits: 'There are many ways to profit. The owners can instruct their schools to buy expensive equipment and expensive services, and in this way earn money from the operation. Or they can draw value by selling shares. Or they can simply build good schools and then sell them' (Stoltenberg in Stavanger Aftenblad 2005b).

This discourse of the predicted actions of private schools has affinities with a discourse of human rationality as 'inherently sinful' and in perpetual need of being regulated. This view is in contrast to the discourse of human rationality that sees humans as 'originally innocent'. With respect to this view, it is worthwhile to give an example of how Sponheim of the Liberal Party commented on the dispute concerning the possibility of making profits: 'If the owners of the John Bauer schools believe they can profit from today's body of rules, then they are mistaken. I actually believe that capital can be invested according to the heart, and not only be run according the possibilities for returns' (Sponheim in Aftenposten 2005d).

In the following I will examine further how the Labour Party and the Socialist Left Party constructed the freeschool reform as a 'release' of commercial schools.

11.2.2.2.2.3. The freeschool reform as a 'release'
Above I have described how the metaphor of drainage was central in the destructive-release

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storyline. This argument about a drainage resulting from the introduction of the law rested on the claim that the law entailed a privatisation of lower Norwegian education. Although the government and the Progress Party did not use the term privatisation to describe the reform, this was a pervasive and frequently repeated claim made by the Labour Party and the Socialist Left Party throughout the whole period.

For instance, this was how Bekkemellem Orheim constructed the freeschool reform as a policy of privatisation in a newspaper comment entitled the '*Government's Eagerness to Privatise*':

> With the current Government, the public school is threatened on two sides, partly from tight municipal economies that lead to the disappearance of teaching positions, that hours for substitute teaching are being further limited, and that schools are being shut down. But also from steadily increasing privatisation. The new law on private schools, which the government and the Progress Party passed before Christmas, has led to an enormous increase in the number of applications for private schools in this country. The large number of applicants uncovers the following: § There is an excess of commercial school actors § They wish to establish themselves in large cities § They offer only 'cheap', popular studies that are found in public schools.   (Bekkemellem Orheim 2005)

Compared to the government's and Progress Party's necessary-supplement storyline, this extract demonstrates a different representation of agency in the social processes meant to occur as a result of the introduction of the law. In contrast to the-necessary-supplement storyline, 'commercial school actors' and not parents are the main active actors. As discussed above, it is they who are 'sponging off' and 'draining' the public schools of resources.

In addition to these metaphors, and as the naming of the storyline suggests, the metaphor of 'release' was central in the oppositions' discourse of privatisation. In the red-green's storyline the metaphor 'release' did not have a positive connotation; rather it referred to a situation characterised by loss of control and that involved a horrific discourse working to destabilise the government's and Progress Party's necessary-supplement storyline.

Consider Bjørnstad's depiction of the government's 'privatisation project' in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed in May 2003:

It is the common school that represents diversity, instead of splitting up and the release of private alternatives. The common school is the most important meeting place for children in a society marked by large changes and even larger cultural difference. It is this that should have been our agenda: how do we save the common school and make it even better? And the tasks are queuing-up, either it has to do with the content and quality of the school or it has to do with securing resources for compulsory school education. But the Government, with the Conservative Party in the driver's seat in the area of schooling, has an ideological project that has precedence, namely, privatisation. It means more market and less community.

(Ot. 2003a)

In addition to illustrating how a relation of equivalence was constructed between diversity and the common school, this extract also show the usage of the 'release' metaphor.

Also Stoltenberg and Halvorsen used the metaphor of 'release'. Firstly, consider how Stoltenberg represented the freeschool reform in a newspaper commentary published during the parliamentary election campaign in August 2005: 'The parties of the government and the Progress Party are preparing the way for the release of private schools. It will lead to increased differences and reduced quality and diversity in the public school, and thus the Labour Party says no to the privatisation of the school' (Stoltenberg 2005a). Then consider how Halvorsen used the metaphor in a similar way about two months before the law was passed: 'We do not want to have more than a very limited number of private schools. This release that the government is now carrying through, will lead to a school based on class, where children of rich parents receive a better offer of learning than other children' (Halvorsen in NTB 2003c).

Again, as these examples suggest, this metaphor of a 'release' constructs the social processes presumed to result from the freeschool reform in a significantly different manner than the government and the Progress Party did. In this destructive-release storyline it was not parents, but 'private alternatives' and 'commercial actors' (or some other similar term) that were the main active actors.

This does not mean, however, that this storyline did not give parents a role; rather, this role was constructed differently than it was in the necessary-supplement storyline adhered to by the government and the Progress Party. In this storyline one of the results of the alleged privatisation of lower education would be that parents, against their will, would choose private schools rather than public schools for their children. This discourse of parents acting against their will involves a fantasy with a horrific dimension. As discussed in Chapters Six and Seven fantasies may promise closure, and thereby conceal contingency, both by representing what Glynos and Howarth (2007: 147) refer to as 'beatific' and horrific' images. In this perspective the red-green's discourse of parents being forced to act against their will clearly has a fantasmatic dimension that allows for the concealment, or to be more precise, of omission, of the fact that some parents want to have this choice. As such this horrific discourse of parents as victims also works ideologically.

Bekkemellem Orheim (Ot. 2003b) suggested how this kind of 'forced choice' – as I suggest we can call it – works by saying that the freeschool reform 'creates a market for private establishment if the public offer is too poor'. Also Reikvam pointed at the same mechanism: 'The combination of the starving of the public school and a flowering of private alternatives will increase the demand for private offers, even among parents who wish primarily to let their children go to the common school' (Reikvam 2003). To the red-greens, such a development seemed to involve a resignation among parents who would finally choose private schools instead of public schools, although this choice may be against their principles. Halvorsen explained:

> What is worrying is the dissatisfaction with the public school that I experience with many parents, and the commotion about it in many places – not because the standard is poor, but because it does not match what we expect should be top in the Norwegian school in 2003. This dissatisfaction is not a call for being able to choose private schools. It is a call for being able to choose the nearest public school with a standard that is good – not a strong wish to move their children out of them.
>
> (Ot. 2003a)

Andersen, also of the Socialist Left Party, in the same debate represented parents in a similar way:

I have still not met parents who have asked about getting a private school because they wish for this freedom of choice: But some of them say that if it will not get better in the public school soon, and if the school does not receive the resources needed to acquire modern equipment, it will soon not have the resources to give children adapted teaching, and then they see no other possibility than letting their children enrol in private schools.   (Ot. 2003a)

Thus, the freedom of choice promised to parents (and older pupils) in the government and Progress Party's necessary-supplement storyline was, for the opposition, a forced choice. And in contrast to this storyline, parents were not represented as active actors who would benefit from the freeschool reform in the sense that they would get more freedom of choice, rather they were represented as victims. Furthermore, because this 'forced choice' could drain the public schools of resources even more, it would be hard to reverse this destructive development that would ultimately cause increased social segregation among social groups with different socio-economic status.

This segregation would express itself in the form of what was often referred to by using the sport metaphor 'A and B schools' where the rich, fortunate and competitive went to 'A schools' and the poor, unfortunate and uncompetitive went to 'B schools'. Bekkemellem Orheim used this metaphor in this manner: 'There is no doubt that the goal for all parties is a better school, but we disagree strongly about the road towards that goal. Would freedom of choice create a better school for children? Hardly, almost the contrary. We shall get a division of A and B schools. But it will take time before we notice the final results' (see Bekkemellem Orheim in Ot. 2003a). Stoltenberg provides another example of how the metaphor of 'A and B schools' was used:

If purely commercial actors get a foothold, it will lead to greater differences. The commercial actors will go straight for studies in secondary school that are inexpensive to run, while the public schools must take on the burden of financing the expensive vocational studies and the most demanding group of pupils. We shall get A and B schools. And they will go for larger cities and let the state take the responsibility for small district schools. It is not so that all pupils cost the same.

                                        (Stoltenberg in Stavanger Aftenblad 2005b)

In addition to an example of the usage of the A and B school metaphor, in this extract we also see how commercial actors are represented as 'sponging off' the public school system.

11.2.2.3. Conclusion

In this section I have examined how discourses that were part of the two competing storylines represent what I have called 'normative issues'.

In section 11.2.2.1 I showed how the government and the Progress Party positioned the parties supporting the old regime as unfair and elitist because it privileged freedom of choice only for three social groups: those affluent enough to enrol their children in private schools that did not get financial support from the state; those who wanted their children to enrol in schools based on alternative religious principles; and those who wanted their children to enrol in schools based on alternative pedagogical principles. One effect of this positioning was that important relations of equivalences were created in the coalition's and the Progress Party's discourse between 'parental rights', 'freedom of choice' and 'equality of opportunity', thus making these elements appear as part of the same category, in this case the freeschool reform which thereby was constructed as ensuring traditional welfarist aims about equal rights to education.

In this section I also examined how parental rights and freedom of choice were weighted against communitarian concerns the future autonomy of children. I showed how the necessary-supplement storyline contained a discourse of the state's governability and control. In this discourse the state's ability to control and prohibit unwanted behaviour of freeschools ensured that the reform did not pose any threat to the future autonomy of pupils. This means that this discourse managed the tension between the principle of parental right and the choice of parents to choose school for their children and the principle of protecting children from parents making choices that could harm their children later in life.

I also showed how the quality-enhancement storyline invoked a beatific discourse of parents as active actors. It was the parents who would experience a more expansive freedom of choice and it was they who would benefit from the reform of the financing system of private schools. Accordingly, in the necessary-supplement storyline opposition to the law was positioned as not only unfair and elitist as it privileged only a few social groups, but also as distrustful of the capacity of parents to choose for their children.

In these discourses of parents as beneficiaries and as the opposition as distrustful, the obstacles that need to be overcome in order for parents to be 'freed' are respectively the old regime and the opposition who favoured it. Both these beatific discourses work ideologically. The beatific discourse of parents as in the need of being freed seems to rule out the possibility that some parents do not want the increased freedom of choice allegedly accompanying the reform, and the discourse of trust seems to rule out the possibility that opposition to the reform can be explained by other factors than the individuals supporting the opposition being distrustful.

In section 11.2.2.2 I examined how the two opposing camps disagreed about how the law would affect social segregation. I discussed how two important claims made by the red-green opposition were rejected: first, the proponents used statistics that apparently showed that parents of pupils in private schools had lower incomes than parents of pupils in public schools to refute the claim that the new regime would worsen social inequality; and, secondly, they turned to research that indicated the presence of a systematic reproduction of social inequality in the public schools in order to dismiss the claim that the public school system worked to integrate pupils and thereby created a more egalitarian society. Together the rejection of these two claims worked to debunk a fantasmatic discourse of the Norwegian unitary school as egalitarian and as a multicultural meeting place. The result was a proliferation of a discourse of crises – that was further fuelled by the so-called PISA shock discussed in Chapter Ten – that had dislocatory effects and that paved the ground for the freeschool reform.

I also showed how the government invoked elements of a welfarist discourse by repeatedly emphasising that schools would not be allowed to select pupils freely, that tuition fees will be sufficiently low so that 'everybody' could afford to enrol, and that it will not be possible for school owners to profit from running schools. This welfarist discourse was articulated with a discourse of the state's governability and control that worked ideologically by concealing the potential flaws in the law.

In the destructive-release storyline, however, the freeschool reform was constructed as a threat to the unitary school system. It would increase social segregation by causing a development that in the end would lead to the establishment of so-called 'A and B schools' where the enrolment of pupils would be based on class. In this storyline the metaphors of 'drainage', 'sponging off' and 'release' were important.

In a fantasmatic discourse working to conceal the complexities of the reform, freeschools were represented as bent to 'sponge off' the public schools by leaving them with the

responsibilities of providing schooling in rural areas and of offering the more expensive programmes of study. In this way the reform, together with an alleged decrease in the government's allocation of municipalities that are the owners of public schools, would cause 'drainage' of the public school system. The result would be increased social segregation and the establishment of what was often represented as 'A and B schools'.

In this storyline it was therefore not the parents who were the active actors; rather it was the commercial actors who would be 'released' by the reform. Thus, rather than being beneficiaries, parents in this storyline were instead, in a discourse involving horrific fantasies, represented as victims who were forced against their will to enrol their children in private schools because the quality of public schools would deteriorate as a result of the law. I argued that representation of parents as victims worked ideologically as it ruled out the possibility that many parents preferred the policies of the government.

11.2.3. Pragmatic issues

The debate about freeschools involved more than qualitative and normative issues. It also involved what can be called 'pragmatic issues'. In the discourses revolving around pragmatic issues 'what counts is what works' and assumptions about 'what works and why' appears to be beyond contestation.

Obviously, pragmatic concerns are involved in most debates about regulatory issues. But they should not be understood as being 'beyond' ideology. When political actors invoke 'pragmatic' discourses, this does not mean that these cannot work ideologically. Freeden observes the following:

> Pragmatism, too, represents a point of view and conceals principled positions often unintelligible to their promoters. After all, the overused pragmatist injunction to judge something 'on its merits' implies preposterously that self-evident merits simply leap out of concrete cases for all to see, rather than that are read into those cases by the so-called pragmatists themselves. (Freeden 1996: 18)

In this section I therefore examine closer such discourses invoked in debates over the reform's pragmatic issues. There were three important pragmatic issues on which the different parties held competing claims: Firstly, there was the issue of predictability and the question of whether the

new law would ensure more or less predictability for the involved actors. Secondly, I analyse what can be called a 'Norwegian peculiarity', namely the broad political consensus about the importance of maintaining a dispersed settlement pattern. I show how this trait was present in pragmatic concerns about the consequences the law might have had for neighbourhood schools in rural areas. Finally, I also investigate the role of what can be called the Swedish experience played in the debate. The main reason of this focus is that in 1992 the Social Democrats, and not the Conservatives, as in Norway, implemented a similar law on freeschools in Sweden.

We could of course say that these concerns about predictability and neighbourhood schools involve quality enhancing and normative dimensions. But it seems more precise to understand discourses of the relationship between the freeschool reform and predictability and neighbourhood schools as revolving around what I have called pragmatic issues as the reform, according to the government, would make it *more predictable* to run schools in general and *easier* to maintain and establish rural neighbourhood schools. In other words, these are discourses that are concerned about the practicalities and technicalities of not only the new, but also the old regime.

In a similar way we could also say that debates on the Swedish experience concerned both quality and normative issues. That is, comparisons were made with Sweden in order to support claims about the reform's quality-enhancing and normative aspects. But as these comparisons were presented as evidence for 'what works', it seems more precise to treat discourse of the Swedish experience as concerned about pragmatic issues. More specifically, and as I show below, comparisons with the Swedish experience were, by invoking an expert discourse, represented as 'evidence-based'.

11.2.3.1. Predictability

When the law was passed in the Parliament in May 2003, Clemet gave four reasons for the necessity of the law. Three of them I have already discussed: quality enhancement in public and private schools, parental rights and freedom of choice. However, in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed, Clemet opened her speech by giving pragmatic reasons:

> The existing law has been quite difficult to practice, and it is not practiced in a good way. With the diversity that now characterises the public school, the concept 'alternative pedagogy' has become difficult to define. A Montessori school does

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not differ essentially from many public schools today. In addition the law contains so much room for political discretion that frequently changes of government create an uncertainty of rights and unpredictability for citizens, who often have to have a very long horizon of planning. (Ot. 2003a)

According to Clemet, then, the new regime would be more pragmatic because it would be easier to enforce and because it would remove the excess of power in the hands of politicians in the handling of applications. In this way the law would ensure more predictability for 'citizens' (note here that it is 'citizens' and not, for instance, 'private alternatives' or 'freeschool-owners', who needed predictability). This suggests that a relation of equivalence is constructed between the reform and increased predictability. Thus, in addition to signifying elements that are usually associated with quality-enhancing and normative aspects – most notably, competition, diversity, freedom of choice, parental rights and equality of opportunity – also predictability is constructed as a co-existing pragmatic element of the freeschool reform.

Earlier, in October 2002, Clemet gave another example of how the old law functioned in a newspaper article:

The present law on private schools is functioning poorly, with narrow criteria in order to be authorised. We had, for example, an occurrence here in the department where a person wished to start a school that offered more sports than normal. The law did not allow for this, but then this person rang back and asked whether he could start a Christian sports school, and we had to answer that he could.

(Clemet in Dagsavisen 2002a)

Here, we again see how it was not private alternatives or freeschool-owners, but individual 'persons' who in a beatific discourse were represented as the active actors who want to establish freeschools. It was them who would benefit from the reform, and it was them who would experience more freedom of choice, in this case the freedom to establish freeschools.

As suggested above in the above extract from Clemet's speech in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed, in the Conservative Party's discourse, the old law placed too much power in the hands of politicians. The result was that randomness rather than predictability prevailed in the processing of applications for the establishment of freeschools. According to the

government, the old regime dealt with the applications in a way that was dependent on the balance of political forces rather than more objective criteria. In order to achieve more objectivity, under the new regime decision-making power was transferred from the Department of Education and Research to the Directorate for Education and Research. Eriksen of the Conservative Party gives the following explanation for this move in the parliamentary debate in October 2004: 'The freeschool will be secured against the possibility of another political majority that does not wish for freeschools other than ones offering religious and pedagogic alternatives from giving authorisation based on political and not purely professional motives' (Ot. 2004). Also Clemet in a newspaper comment pointed to the alleged randomness that prevailed when approvals for the establishment of freeschools were given:

> The old law also involves a form of arbitrary exercise of judgement, because the minister can refuse a school authorisation, even if all the demands are met. According to the Socialist Left Party, a new government will 'prioritise freeschools that will enrich the Norwegian school'. This does not indicate that arbitrariness will lessen. (Clemet 2005)

Bergesen, in a newspaper comment entitled '*Giske and the law on freeschools*' gave a similar example of how it used to be under the old regime:

> A good example of this is how Trond Giske himself as Minister of Education rejected applications from some Christian schools and accepted others […] without one being able to see essential differences between them. With this kind of regime, the schools easily become game-balls in a purely political game. (Bergesen 2004b)

Thus, under the new regime it was no longer left-leaning politicians, such as Giske, that would define the limits of diversity by only providing financial support to schools based on alternative and religious principles. In this way a relationship was constructed between left-leaning politicians and an excessive limitation of diversity. More specifically we could say that while politicians favouring the old regime were positioned as actors who exercised their power in arbitrary and random manners, the politicians favouring the new regime were positioned as more predictable and more pragmatic.

The Christian Democratic Party also gave pragmatic reasons why the law was needed. Lyngstad presented the rationale behind the law in this manner:

> In the coalition-government's Sem-declaration, it states that we wish for a simplification of the law and of the treatment of the applications. One important goal is to give the parents greater predictability so that their rights will be ensured. The experiences have shown us that the different political regimes in the department have offered different possibilities for parents to start freeschools. This has especially limited freeschools with a religious basis. But it has also been difficult to gain acceptance for alternative pedagogical platforms. (Ot. 2003a)

Thus, also they wanted more predictability in the ways in which the state dealt with the applications for the establishment of freeschools. Moreover, in their discourse, it also was parents who were to have more predictability. This was a predictability that under the old regime had been thwarted, and that was assumed to be facilitated once the old regime was reformed by the new financing system.

According to Giske of the Labour Party the freeschool reform would not ensure more predictability. He argued that for private schools the result of the introduction of the law would be the opposite:

> It is said that the new law will lead to one being spared of the uncertainty that follows a change in the political majority in Norway. I believe it will be the opposite. While the previous law survived many different political regimes and governments and many political majorities, the new law is guaranteed to become an object of political battles and many changes in the years to come. (Ot. 2003a)

In the perspective of Glynos and Howarth, then, rather than invoking a beatific discourse characterised by predictability and control, a horrific discourse characterised by loss of predictability and control is invoked.

Another related critique concerned the implications the reform had for the predictability for municipalities. In contrast to the government and the Progress Party, the Labour Party and the

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Socialist Left Party seemed more concerned about the possibilities for a predictable process of planning for the municipalities than for parents. With the new law, the state would allocate financial support to the freeschools through earmarked funding. It would not, as it used to be under the old regime, be transferred to the municipalities as a part of the state's regular funding. According to Bekkemellem Orheim, this change entailed a reduction of the regular funding to municipalities, and it would make it even harder for municipalities to plan for the public schools (Ot. 2003b), and, later, in a newspaper report, she stated that this was 'problematic when one thinks about the large class years that are to come' (Bekkemellem Orheim in NTB 2004). Reikvam from the Socialist Left Party produced a similar argument when pointing out that in cases where private schools are shut down, it is the responsibility of municipalities to ensure that all pupils are offered schooling (Ot. 2003a).[45]

What the above discussion shows is that the two opposing camps invoked different discourses of predictability. On the one hand, the necessary-supplement storyline expressed concerns about the predictability for parents, or in more general terms, individuals. On the other hand, the destructive-release storyline expressed concerns about the predictability for municipalities, which owned the public schools. These different discourses of predictability have affinities with the different discourses of normative issues examined in section 11.2.2.1. More specifically, while concerns about the predictability of parents resonated with the government's prioritisation of parental rights over communitarian concerns, the opposition's concerns about the predictability of municipalities resonated with their communitarian concerns. Hence, what is represented as pragmatic concerns clearly have affinities with normative concerns.

11.2.3.2. The reform and neighbourhood schools

Another important aspect of the debate on the freeschool reform concerned so-called neighbourhood schools. The government insisted that the new law offered an opportunity for parents in rural areas where poor municipal economies had already forced the closing of public neighbourhood schools. The new regime, it was argued, would make it easier for parents to establish freeschools. They could thereby avoid sending of their children to nearby schools,

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[45] County politician Aksel Hagen of the Socialist Left Party put it this way: 'Just as quickly as Sonans [a freeschool not based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles, PCB] can sail into our school system, they can sail out again' (Hagen 2005).

which often lay farther away in more densely populated areas. Thus, again a beatific discourse, where parents were represented as the active and beneficiary actors in the assumed social processes assumed to occur as a result of the freeschool reform, was drawn on.

As early as March 2002 Bergesen claimed that: 'The freeschool reform will make it easier to uphold small local schools by means of private administration and initiative' (Bergesen in Aftenposten 2002b). The Christian Democrats also shared the view that the freeschool law was an opportunity for parents in rural areas. In the words of Lyngstad: 'The freeschool law has given the power back to the parents and is going to save the compulsory schools in rural Norway' (Lyngstad in Adresseavisen 2005). This implies a positioning of the old regime as thwarting development in rural Norway and the new regime as stimulating development.

However, among the parties in the Bondevik coalition, it was the Liberal Party that most frequently expressed its concerns for neighbourhood schools. According to Skei Grande this concern also distinguished the Liberal Party from the Conservative Party. When challenged by Bjørnstad of the Labour Party to make clear the Liberal Party's view on the Conservatives' alleged mantra of 'competition-as-quality-enhancement' in the parliamentary debate in May 2003, Skei Grande made the following claim:

> The Conservative Party and the Liberal Party are two different parties, and we have different arguments for our points of view. But to draw a line today, I can say, for example, that parents' right to start a freeschool when a rural school is shut down is one of the most important reasons for the Liberal Party's support of the new law on freeschools. (Ot. 2003a)

Hence, in this discourse parents could with the new law more easily establish freeschools that were not necessarily based on alternative pedagogical or religious principles. Skei Grande characterised this new freedom in a newspaper comment in June 2002:

> Parents who in the future wish to maintain their local school must be able to get permission to do that based on the content and quality at the school, and to be

spared from, as it is today, having to maintain a Montessori school based on alternative pedagogy in order to gain permission.   (Skei Grande 2002)

Also after the law had been passed, Skei Grande represented the relationship between the law and neighbourhood schools in similar terms. In a debate surrounding a proposal by the Progress Party to increase the state's funding to freeschools by 20 million NOK in order for them to be able to cover running costs, such as rent, electricity and water costs, Skei Grande stated that: 'We supported the freeschool law because it gave the parents a chance to have a secret weapon when the municipalities shut down the schools. We want to give them a chance to keep the school in their local environment' (Skei Grande in Adresseavisen 2004). Thus, again we see how parents in a beatific discourse were allocated an active role in the social processes assumed to occur as a result of the law.

However, the red-greens fiercely contested the claim that the law was an opportunity for neighbourhood schools in rural areas. They argued that this was to turn the argument on its head. As discussed above, for them the freeschools reform would cause 'drainage' of resources from the public school system. And because the Bondevik II coalition did not do enough to ameliorate the already weak municipal economies, the freeschool reform was yet another example of a 'forced choice' where actors, in this case parents and municipalities in rural areas, were forced to choose against their principles. For Labour, then, the argument that neighbourhood schools could be 'transformed' into freeschools was in a horrific discourse constructed as more a matter of inevitability than an expression of an increased freedom of choice. This is how Konglevoll of the Labour Party problematised the assumed consequences which the law would have on neighbourhood schools in rural areas:

One of the main points with the new law is, as said, is that it will introduce the right to approve the applicants who meet the requirements of the law. Those who establish a private school will get money directly from the state. This release, combined with poor municipal economies, can lead to even more municipalities choosing to shut down a neighbourhood school, and instead counting on that parents will start up a private compulsory school with support from the state. In the short term, this is a solution that the municipalities can save money on. But the community saves nothing by this, and in this regard it is unacceptable that it will be

up to the parents in a little village to keep the local neighbourhood school alive.

(Konglevoll 2003)

This interpretation of the law as involving a form of 'forced choice' was also central in the discourse of the Centre Party. In their discourse the law was far from being part of the solution to maintain neighbourhood schools in rural areas and thereby also a part of sustaining Norway's widely distributed settlement pattern; rather, it was a significant part of the problem. As Skjælaaen put it: 'This is not indeed about freedom of choice. The founding of a freeschool […] is something the parents themselves feel compelled to do in order to keep a school in the village' (Skjælaaen in VG 2004). Meltveit Kleppa in the parliamentary debate in May 2003 made the same point the following way:

> We cannot play down what is now happening with the shut-downs of neighbourhood schools and the establishment of alternative schools so far. It is not a strong wish among parents locally about the establishment of alternative schools – it is in reality the drainage of Norwegian municipalities that is occurring.

(Ot. 2003a)

Thus, for the Centre Party freedom of choice and the parental right to choose schools for their children was not at all 'real' in cases where public neighbourhood schools were replaced by freeschools.

What the above examination of pragmatic concerns of the law's consequences for neighbourhood schools demonstrates, is the prevalence of beatific and horrific discourses of the agency of parents. The ideological function of these discourses is to background the possibility that parents may or may not prefer the freeschool reform. That is, they may want the increased freedom of choice promised in the necessary-supplement storyline, or, as the competing destructive-release storyline suggests, they may not want this alleged freedom imposed on them against their will.

11.2.3.3. The Swedish experience

As Torfing (2004: 160) notes, the experiences of other countries may almost take the role of actors in debates where comparisons with other countries are central. Such a 'quasi-actor' role of

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other countries forces the other actors in the debates to relate to the experiences of other countries, which are often used as projections of what is to come. In the debate on freeschools Sweden played such a role, and discourses of the Swedish experience played a central role.

We can identify a number of reasons why, according to the government, the Swedish experience was important with respect to quality enhancement. To begin with, it is one of Norway's neighbouring countries and it also has a strong social democratic tradition. Further on, and more importantly, in Sweden a similar law on private schools had been implemented in 1992. Accordingly, Clemet in a newspaper comment entitled '*Still No Reason To Hate Conservatives*' rejected claims made by trade-union leader Ståle Dokken in a newspaper comment that the law's main source of inspiration can be found in the United States (Dokken 2003):[46]

> Countries that have a considerable element of commercial and privately financed schools are for that matter not terribly relevant as a basis for comparison with Norway. If one should gather experiences that may be relevant for Norway, one must look to its neighbouring countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, which have especially liberal arrangements for establishing freestanding schools.(Clemet 2003)

In contrast to the Norwegian law on freeschools of 2003, the Swedish law of 1992 has allowed actors to run schools commercially. In 1997 the Swedish government also increased public support from 85 to 100 percent, thus making tuition fees obsolete. Moreover, in contrast to in Norway, Sweden also offers so-called 'free school choice', that is, independently of where they live, pupils can choose where to enrol. Apart from these crucial differences, the Norwegian law was by and large modelled on the Swedish law.

In addition to previous experiences and similar history, there was yet another reason why the Swedish experience was relevant for the Norwegian context. Unlike in Norway where it was the Conservative Party that was the driving force behind the reform, in Sweden it was the Social Democratic Labour Party (usually called the Social Democratic Party) that introduced the law that permitted more private alternatives in the field of lower education.

In the following I examine how the Swedish experience was presented as a success by the government and the Progress Party, and as a failure by the red-greens. As I show below, what can

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[46] Dokken is a division leader (*avdelingsleder*) in the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions.

be called a comparison discourse of the Swedish experience were typically co-articulated with an expert discourse that lent its authority to the respective claims about success and failure.

I shall structure the examination according to the distinction between quality issues and normative issues. I start by examining competing claims about the quality-enhancement aspects of the Swedish reform.

11.2.3.3.1. The Swedish reform as a success

According to the Conservative Party, research showed that increased competition from private schools in Sweden had made public schools use their resources more effectively and in that way enabled them to improve the overall quality of schooling in Sweden. Thus, after a study-trip in Sweden in April 2002, Bergesen in a newspaper article seemed to warn Norwegian municipalities of what was to come by invoking a neo-liberal competition-oriented discourse of quality enhancement: 'In a few years you will get real competition for pupils, then you will have to have good schools so that you continue to have pupils' (Bergesen in Aftenposten 2002a).

Bergesen also emphasised the positive aspects of the Swedish experience in a newspaper article the day before the law was passed in the parliament in May 2003 by invoking an expert discourse: 'The freeschools in Sweden appear to maintain high quality, that is why they survive. The newest report from the Swedish National Agency for Education shows that the freeschools have had a positive effect on the public schools (Bergesen in Aftenposten 2003b). Clemet also used the Swedish experience to legitimate the law when it was passed in the parliament in May 2003 by invoking a neo-liberal competition-oriented discourse of quality enhancement: 'In Sweden, one has completed a similar reform with great success. It is worthwhile to note that it has increased diversity at the same time as competition from private schools has made the quality of teaching in the public school in Sweden become better' (Ot. 2003a).

In the parliamentary debate in October 2004 about the extension of the law to apply also for upper secondary education, Eriksen also made references to Sweden by invoking an expert discourse:

> When we debate the freestanding secondary schools in Norway, it can be useful to
> look at the development in Sweden. In the last large summary that was done by the
> Swedish National Agency for Education, published in the Nordic Journal of
> Administration, no. 2/2004, there is one very clear point: there is no doubt that the

freedom of choice has contributed to pedagogical renewal and to the development of professional and pedagogical profiles. The freedom of choice has stimulated the whole Swedish school system.   (Ot. 2004)

Together these kinds of references, supported by research, worked to differentiate Norway from Sweden. What this suggests is that national identification – like identification in general – is an ongoing relational process.

In the debate about freeschools in Norway, one significant discourse with respect to national identification, was of Norway as unmodern and Sweden (and to some extent also Denmark) as modern. Consider, firstly, how the Liberal Party's Skei Grande in the parliamentary debate in 2003 seemed to position Sweden as some kind of social democratic vanguard when answering a question from Labour's Bjørnstad if there had been 'any international pressure' on Norway to reform the financing system of lower education: 'The pressure we have from outside may be down to our having the most old-fashioned social democratic law, at least compared to our neighbouring countries in this area, how we lag very much behind with school development'. Thus, in such a perspective, compared to neighbouring countries Norway was 'lagging behind'.

This discourse of lagging behind has a horrific dimension and seems to illuminate a fear of being outpaced by other countries with respect to 'school development'. Thus, in order to 'keep up' with neighbouring countries something has to change – in this case by introducing the freeschool reform.

As the extract from Skei Grande suggests, a discourse of modernisation is related to this discourse of lagging behind. A good example of how this discourse was used is found in a newspaper comment by Lønning from the Conservative Party. Here he made comparisons with Sweden, as well as with Denmark, in order to suggest that the Labour Party's notion of social democracy in Norway was outdated. In the commentary Lønning rejected accusations about the law leading to an 'Americanisation' of lower Norwegian education by pointing out that in the neighbouring social democratic countries – Sweden and Denmark – similar 'freeschool regimes' have existed for some time, and that these countries can hardly be accused of being 'Americanised'. In the comment, which was written in a response to a comment by Reegård (2003), an economist employed by the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, Lønning depicted what he saw as a key difference between Sweden and Denmark, on the one hand, and Norway, on the other:

The truth is that the most important difference between our three countries is that the social democracies in Sweden and Denmark have for a long time liberated themselves from the obsession that the Labour Party of Norway continues to hang on to: that a healthy and solidaristic (in Reegård's world: a non-Americanised) society is characterised by having a public monopoly of schooling that everyone uses because that is the only offer to be found. (Lønning 2003)

In this extract we see an example of how the opposition, in a polemical fashion, is pathologised by representing it as prone to 'obsessions'. In the same comment the opposition's educational policies were also positioned as unmodern is the sense of being nostalgic and backward-looking:

Historically, there is a lot of good to say about the Norwegian tradition of the unitary school. Similarly, a historic perspective has a lot of good to say about the broadcasting monopoly that we all experienced in its time. Most have understood that it would hardly be a good idea to have a platform for reintroducing the broadcasting monopoly. How long will it take before Reegård and his fellow party and union members discover what their colleagues in Denmark and in Sweden have discovered a long time ago: that the nostalgia has also very little to offer in the area of educational policy? (Lønning 2003)

This quotation shows comparisons not only between Norway, Sweden and Denmark, but also between the upheaval of the monopoly NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation) and the Labour Party's defence of the unitary school in the debate on freeschools. In this way, the opposition to the law was made analogous to the opposition to the upheaval of the NRK monopoly, which was gradually dissolved from 1975 and onwards.

The result of these discursive practices discussed above is that while the government is positioned as modern and forward-looking, the red-green opposition is positioned as unmodern and backward-looking.

11.2.3.3.2. The Swedish reform as a failure
The Labour Party did not accept the comparison that positioned them as nostalgic 'laggards'. On the contrary, with respect to private schools, it was the Norwegian Labour Party, and not the

Swedish Democratic Party, who were on the right track – not only with respect to quality enhancement, but also with respect to the reform's normative implications, which I discuss further in the next section. In short, they positioned themselves as modern and their preferred policies, which left the financing system of private schools unchanged, as competitive in the knowledge-based economy. Moreover, they also invoked a discourse of the Swedish experience as a failure.

Consider firstly how Bekkemellem Orheim invoked a discourse of Sweden in a newspaper comment:

> A recent and large Swedish examination has investigated the relationship between the freedom of choice which private school represent and social differences. The main conclusion are: § Private schools have reinforced regional differences in Sweden – the free choice has become a choice for the upper stratas in larger cities § The increased number of private schools has not lead to more efficiency and better uses of resources § One cannot say that the flourishing of private schools has caused a general quality enhancement of the Swedish school system.
>
> Because of the development in Sweden, the Swedish government now wishes to change the law about private schools. Kristin Clemet has earlier used Sweden as an example in her argumentation for the privatisation. The hope must now be that she is humble enough to see the shortcomings of the law the Bondevik government has passed.
>
> Unfortunately I doubt it. Either way a new red-green government will put a stop to the commercial running of schools and instead use the resources in strengthening the public common school.   (Bekkemellem Orheim 2005)

In addition to illustrating a discourse of the Swedish reform as a failure with respect to quality enhancement, we see yet another example of how an expert discourse is used in order to augment claims about the disadvantages of the new regime.

The discourse of the Swedish experience as a failure was also evident at the annual congress of the Labour Party in April 2005. Invited to this congress was the party secretary of the Swedish Social Democratic Labour Party, Marita Ulvskog. At this congress she said that Swedish Social Democratic Party regretted the reform of 1992. According to her, the reform had not

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worked as planned. Instead of private schools becoming a supplement to the public school, it had undermined it. Furthermore, she signalled that the Social Democratic Party in Sweden wanted to reverse the negative developments facilitated by the law (Ulvskog in Dagsavisen 2005a). Obviously, these statements provided Labour with ammunition, and at the annual congress, party leader Stoltenberg launched a fierce attack on the government's supposed eagerness to privatise lower education. In order to illustrate the importance of the Labour Party's references to the Swedish experience in the debate on freeschools, it is worthwhile to quote a rather long extract from Stoltenberg's speech at the annual congress, which was held in Trondheim:[47]

> Look at Sweden. Some years ago they completed a liberalisation of the law on private schools that is similar to what was done in Norway. It takes some years before the results can be registered, but recently the University of Uppsala published a report on the experiences with the Swedish relaxation of regulations for private schools. According to the Swedish researchers, the results are clear: Social inequalities have increased. Children of rich and poor parents go to the same school to a lesser degree. Ethnic differences have increased. Children with a different religion and ethnic background increasingly attend different schools. Children of parents with a high level of education are those who choose the private schools to the greatest degree. The conclusion is unambiguous: More private schools in Sweden make the school reproduce inequality to an even greater degree.

> In Sør-Trøndelag, I read that the numerous plans for private secondary schools now threaten the future running of Trondheim Cathedral School. Trondheim Cathedral School with its long traditions, which are just as old at the Nidaros Cathedral itself! The school has survived the Black Death, Danish rule, Charles XII's occupation of Trondheim, union with Sweden, the First and Second World Wars. But it is very uncertain whether it will survive Kristin Clemet and Kjell Magne Bondevik.

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[47] Extracts from this speech were also reprinted in news reports (see NTB 2005b).

In the above extract, Stoltenberg is clear about the normative implications of the reform in Sweden. It has caused more social inequality. In the same speech he also defines what is modern and what is not in the knowledge economy:

> Early in the 1990s, some claimed that the Nordic countries – with the high taxes and the large welfare states – would not manage to renew themselves and to maintain both economic growth and their welfare programmes. Today the tone is different: It is these societies that are best able to manage the readjustments demanded by the knowledge economy. Economists and researchers find that a strong welfare state and a well-developed collective responsibility are the conditions for economic growth in the private sector as well. We have known this for a long time. These are our values of creating and sharing – realised in practical policy.
>
> This is what a modern society looks like. It is modern to strive for community. The policies of the Conservative Party are not modern.
>
> (Stoltenberg 2005b)

In this way, the Conservative Party's policies, including the attempt to reform the financing system of lower education, was positioned as 'not modern'. Instead welfarist solutions, and, it can be inferred the political parties favouring these, are positioned as modern and as 'best able to manage the readjustments demanded by the knowledge economy'.

What this suggests is that also the red-greens invoked a horrific discourse of Norway lagging behind in the global competitive knowledge-based economy. And part of the reason why was the freeschool reform that threatened the welfare system that 'economists and researchers' have found to be crucial for economic growth also in the private sector and 'that are best able to mange readjustments demanded by the knowledge economy'.

Later in 2005, only two weeks before the parliamentary election, the Norwegian Labour Party again got help from their social democratic sister party in Sweden. This time it was the Minister of Education, Ibrahim Baylan, who was offering support. Baylan could tell that in Sweden there is 'little to suggest that the quality has become better, or that the resources are used more effectively' and that 'in the last 5-6 years we have seen almost no new schools based on

different pedagogies, which has add-value to the other schools, but instead purely for-profit schools' (Baylan in NTB 2005d).

However, according to an editorial in the conservative newspaper, *Dagens Næringsliv*, Baylan also expressed another concern with respect to freeschools. He emphasised that the Social Democratic Party would work to make sure that freeschools would not be allowed to be run commercially (Dagens Næringsliv 2005a). Thus, in a newspaper article in the same newspaper the same day, Clemet interpreted Baylan's statement as a support for the Norwegian law on freeschools, because it did not allow freeschools to be run commercially. The signalled changes in the Swedish regime would make it more similar to the Norwegian freeschool regime. Clemet put it this way: 'the Social Democrats are, in other words, followers of the Bondevik government's freeschool law and they copy us' (Clemet in Dagens Næringsliv 2005b).

11.2.3.3.3. Sweden as a social democratic vanguard?

While I above examined disagreement about the quality enhancing effects of the Swedish reform, the focus here is on how the opposing camps disagreed about the normative aspects of the Swedish experience. The pattern in this disagreement was similar as the pattern in the disagreement about the quality-enhancing aspects of the Swedish reform. As I show in the following, again backed up by references to research, one camp seemed to depict the Swedish case as evidence of a 'breakthrough' in attempts to re-develop the social democratic tradition, while the other painted a picture of 'breakdown'.

Consider firstly, how the report '*The School knows best*' published in November 2002 by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Research highlighted the positive effects of the Swedish law (UFD 2002). Backed up by references to 'central research', as it was put in the introduction, the report contained several arguments that the government later repeated in the debate. These arguments were primarily supported by references to other Swedish reports produced and published between 2001 and 2003. Together, these reports, as well as other, less cited reports, lent their aura of scientific authority to claims made not only by the government but also the red-greens. And as I show below, the two opposing camps interpreted the research findings from these reports differently.

In '*The School knows best*' report it was stated that in Sweden there had been a significant increase in the number of freeschools (UFD 2002: 51 ff.). Whereas in 1992 there was about 130 freeschools, in 2002 the number was about 650. This accounted for about 4 percent of primary

schools and 5.6 percent of upper secondary schools. Thus, the total percentage of freeschools in Sweden was, despite this significant increase, still small compared to other European countries. The proponents of the freeschool law in Norway, therefore, made references to Sweden in order to fend off accusations that the law on freeschools would result in a 'release' of private schools. In a newspaper report in November 2001, Clemet made use of this point:

> I don't think it is set for a release of private schools. There are 1.7 percent of Norwegian pupils who go to private schools. The proportion is maybe 3-4 percent in Sweden, which has a much more liberal legislation than we do. If we get somewhat more liberal legislation in Norway, we shall still be far behind what the social democrats find suitable in Sweden.   (Clemet in NTB 2001)

The suggestion here, it seems, is that the social democrats in Norway are 'lagging behind' the social democrats in Sweden, who have achieved a 'breakthrough' with respect to changing the public school system.

In the debate references were also made to Sweden in order to fend off criticism about the law about freeschools leading to increased social segregation. Bergesen, for example, made such a reference in a newspaper comment entitled '*Deliberate disinformation from Stoltenberg*':

> It is not true that freeschools are favoured. Nor is it true that parents with children in freeschools are especially wealthy. There are actually more from the lowest income groups among freeschool parents than in the public school here in this country. And in Sweden, where the freeschool legislation was liberalised ten years ago, there is no significant differences in income between the two groups.
>
>   (Bergesen 2003)

Thus, according to the proponents of the law, the Swedish experience indicated that freeschools was not restricted to the rich and successful. In the necessary-supplement storyline, the Swedish law implemented by the Social Democrats had therefore been successful.

Nevertheless, the red-green used Sweden as a warning of the negative effects that would emerge as a result of the law. In the destructive-release storyline the results from the Swedish experience were equally as unambiguous as they were for the government. According to the

Labour Party, did research show that social segregation had increased as a result of the law since its implementation in 1992. According to Giske the results from a report produced by Sweden's National Agency for Education (*Skoleverket*) in April 2003 were directly transferable to Norway:

> This shows what we have said for years is correct. Increased competition in the school creates greater differences, both between pupils and between schools. When there is competition to get into the best schools, the pupils must be filtered out in one way or another and the schools themselves decide who will be admitted.
>
> (Giske in Dagsavisen 2003d)

Then consider how Bekkemellem Orheim made a reference to Sweden in the parliamentary debate when the law was passed in May 2003:

> The majority's eagerness to privatise overshadows the work of dealing with the major challenges in educational policy. In the last instance, we shall get a Norwegian school that is divided in two, depending on the pupil's social background, residence and religion. This is also the experience in Sweden, the government's chief example of private schooling.   (Ot. 2003)

Reikvam from the Socialist Left Party in a newspaper comment entitled '*The School for everybody*' also referred to Sweden in order to bolster his claims about the negative effects of the law: 'The experiences from Sweden indicate a clear tendency to the increased dividing of students after the number of private schools has gone up. The private schools have substantially more pupils with parents who have a high level of education and income' (Reikvam 2003).

The examples above show how the Labour Party and the Socialist Left Party, also by referring to research on the Swedish experience, rejected the government's claim that the Swedish experience did not indicate an increase in social segregation. As the research seemingly produced findings that could support both views, this is unsurprising. As discussed in Chapter Seven it should also be remembered that reduction of complexity and production of certitude where no one exists among the scientific community, can be regarded as key function of shared storylines that manage to structure debates and controversies. Moreover, it should also be noted

that in the mass media there is an institutional pressure to claim certitude where none may exists among the scientific community (on this see, Allen, Adam and Carter 2000).

11.2.3.4. Conclusion

In this section I have described and discussed discourses of what I have called pragmatic issues. I have also examined how these were part of the two competing storylines.

In section 11.2.3.1 I showed how the opposing camps invoked different discourses of predictability. On the one hand, I showed how the Conservative Party and the Christian Democratic Party were concerned about the predictability for parents. This resonates with their discourse of parents as the main active actors and beneficiaries discussed in previous sections. On the other hand, I showed how the Labour Party and Socialist Left Party were more concerned about the predictability for the municipalities, which owned public schools. This concern again resonates with their communitarian concerns.

In section 11.2.3.2 I examined different discourses of the implications the law was assumed to have for neighbourhood schools in rural areas. This examination showed how the different camps positioned themselves and their preferred policies as facilitating a positive development for neighbourhood schools in rural areas. Central in the respective storylines was again different representations of parents. On the one hand, I showed how the Conservative Party, and especially the Liberal Party, in a beatific discourse constructed the law as a golden opportunity for parents in rural areas. On the other hand, I showed how the red-greens rejected this claim and instead, in a horrific discourse, constructed the law as entailing a forced choice for parents, as well as for municipalities, in rural areas.

In section 11.2.3.3 I showed how discourses of the Swedish experience as a success or failure was used to legitimate and delegitimate the reform and its quality-enhancing and normative aspects. I identified a horrific discourse of 'lagging behind' that was invoked by politicians from the Conservative Party. I also showed how the Labour Party responded to claims about being unmodern and 'lagging behind' by invoking an oppositional discourse that represented them and their favoured policies as forward-looking and modern. This discourse of lagging behind works ideologically in two ways: firstly, it works ideologically to naturalise a competition-oriented master discourse of the knowledge-based economy, and secondly, it works ideologically by ruling out the possibility that competing prescriptions of how to become competitive in the knowledge-based economy actually may work.

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Part Four: Discussion and conclusion

12. Discussion

12. 1. Introduction

This chapter discusses how the dissertation responds to the research aims presented in the introduction. These were as follows: *One, to describe and explain what and how discourses were used by the government and the Progress Party in order to sustain the freeschool reform, and by the red-greens in order to challenge it; and, two, to thereby contribute to research on how privatisations as public sector reform are sustained and challenged by demonstrating the added-value of using a 'modified' logics approach.*

I proceed in two steps. Firstly, I discuss the findings of the case study. Then, secondly, I reflect on the added-value of the modified logics approach in light of these findings and in light of the claims I have made about the advantages of this approach vis-à-vis the approach of Ball's study of privatisation as public education reform in England and vis-à-vis the logics approach of Glynos and Howarth.

12.2. Discussion of findings

Before I present the findings of the case study, the first of the research aims and the research questions of the dissertation can be re-called. Firstly, and with respect to research aim, in the introduction I stated that I aimed to describe and explain how the freeschool reform was attempted sustained by the government and the Progress Party, and how the red-green parties challenged it. Secondly, and with respect to research questions, in Chapter Seven on research strategy I formulated two sets of research questions that enabled me to achieve this research aim: One, how can the reform be contextualised and what forms of social logics characterises the reform; and two, what storylines and discourses were employed by the opposing constellations in attempts to sustain or challenge the reform and its associated social logics, and what political and fantasmatic logics were operational in them? The following discussion is structured according to these research questions.

I will make two key arguments. Firstly, I argue that the reform can be seen as a third way project of an emerging competition state. Secondly, I argue that we can identify seven discourses that each work *to demarcate* the opposing constellations and their storylines from each other and *to produce closure* about the truth about the freeschool reform.

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12.2.1. A third way project of an emerging competition state

In Chapter Ten, and by way of retroductive method, I provided a contextualisation and characterisation of the social logics of the reform. I invoked two different theoretical perspectives in order to provide more theoretical substance to the claims I made about the context of the reform and the social logics characterising it.

Firstly, I used elements of Jessop's cultural political economy approach to contextualise the freeschool reform as part of an attempt by the Bondevik II coalition government to become competitive in the knowledge-based economy. Further on, and according to Ball's Jessop-inspired analysis, this attempt by the government and the Progress Party to make Norwegian schools competitive can also be seen as a part of a wider on-going shift from a welfare to a competition state that involves that the role of the state being changed from being a *deliverer* of public services such as education, to becoming a *controller*, *monitor* and *commissioner* of public services. More specifically, and as discussed in Chapter Five, the freeschool reform can be understood as a form of 're-investment' of the state's resources, and freeschools can be understood as 'quasi-public' organisations whose introduction in the field of education is accompanied by increased competition between potential deliverers.

As evident in the analysis of the party manifestos discussed in Chapter Ten, it is important to recognise that such attempts to enhance competitiveness is not only facilitated and instituted by the parties usually situated right-of-the-centre in the political landscape, but also by parties left-of-the-centre. However, in this particular case the red-green opposition did not endorse the government's and the Progress Party's prescription for how to enhance competitiveness. In a regulationist perspective (see Chapter Five), which also Ball (2007) is influenced by and which also is an integral part of the cultural political economy approach (see section 10.2), we can say that while the assumption that the current accumulation regime is knowledge-based is hegemonic, the current modes of regulation can be seen as a mixture of different strategies that all can be geared towards achieving competitiveness in the global knowledge-based economy.

Secondly, I used elements of Rose's governmentality approach to make two related arguments. One, I argued that the freeschool reform can be seen as an attempt to introduce a form of advanced liberal government which shares many, but importantly not all, premises of neo-liberal and welfarist forms of government. This form of government has been, and still is, embraced by government's attempting to pursue a third way beyond the neo-liberalism of the

New Right and beyond the socialism of the old Left. By tracing the emergence of welfarist and neo-liberal forms of government, and how they have been hybridised into a third way mix, I argued that the reform is characterised by its dual operation of neo-liberal and welfarist social logics. Two, I also argued that the government's, and then in particular the Conservative Party's, discourse resembles a third way discourse that consists of elements neo-liberal and welfarist discourses. I also emphasised that this third way discourse consist of elements of other discourses that cannot be termed neo-liberal or welfarist. As discussed in Chapter Five, other Norwegian researchers have also identified such a third way policy mix in Norway.

The next section discusses in more detail how the parties in the Bondevik II coalition, the Progress Party, and the red-green opposition attempted to sustain and challenge the reform.

12.2.2. Freeschools: necessary-supplement or destructive-release?

First of all, I identified two competing storylines that I named the necessary-supplement storyline adhered to by the government and the Progress Party; and the destructive-release storyline adhered to by the red-greens. These storylines worked as 'short-hands' in the debate. They also allowed actors to 'fill in gaps' in their understanding of the reform just by the invocation of one of the elements of the respective storylines and they gave the debate a ritual and more permanent character. I also showed how these two competing storylines revolved around three key issues: *Will the reform lead to enhanced quality – and in that case, how? Is the reform fair and was the old regime unfair? Is the reform pragmatic in the sense that it would lead to more predictability, positive development of schools in rural areas, and keep Norway in pace with the rest of the world, and then in particular Sweden?*

The identification of these three key issues concerning the reforms quality, normative and pragmatic dimensions, enabled me to construct the debate on freeschools as consisting of three sub-debates that each had their own issues and aspects that were important. By proceeding in this manner I identified discourses that were frequently invoked and how they were combined to form the two competing storylines. Table 2 illustrates the antagonistic format of the debate in which these storylines and discourses were invoked.

Table 2. Storylines and discourses in the debate about freeschools 2001-2005

The necessary-supplement storyline	The destructive-release storyline
Quality issues	
- the reform will enhance the overall quality of Norwegian schools	- the reform will not enhance the overall quality of Norwegian schools
- opposition to the reform entails distrust in public schools	- opposition to the reform is based on 'hard economic realities' involving a 'drainage' of municipal economies and the subsequent deterioration of public schools
Normative issues	
- the reform will expanded freedom of choice and parental rights for all social groups, and does not pose a threat to future autonomy of pupils	- the reform involves a limited and 'forced' freedom of choice
- the reform does not increase social segregation because of welfarist safeguards present in the law	- the reform increases social segregation because of 'release' of private school who would 'sponge off' and 'drain' the public school system
Pragmatic issues	
- the reform will lead to that parents (and pupils) will have more predictability	- the reform will lead to that the municipalities who run the public schools will have less predictability
- the reform makes it easier for parents and municipalities in rural areas to maintain or establish neighbourhood schools	- the reform involves a 'forced' freedom of choice for parents and municipalities in rural areas
- comparisons between a similar freeschool regime in Sweden and the old regime in Norway indicates that Norway is a social democratic 'laggard'	- comparisons between a similar freeschool regime in Sweden and the old regime in Norway indicates that Norway is a social democratic 'vanguard'

As the case study demonstrates the key issues that I identified were contested. Here I will not reiterate *all* the identifications of discourses and their political and fantasmatic logics that I made in the case study. Instead I shall conclude the dissertation by presenting seven discourses that were most frequently invoked and that each work to demarcate and to produce closure, some more than others and to various degrees.

The reason why I conclude in this manner is that it responds to the two research aims of the dissertation. On the one hand, these are discourses that were central in the necessary-supplement storyline which attempted to sustain the reform and that were challenged by the destructive-release storyline. On the other hand, as these discourses also are characteristic of related negotiations of privatisation as public sector reform, they allow for the demonstration of the added-value of using a 'modified' logics approach to describe and explain what and how discourses are used to sustain or challenge such reforms.

I have given these discourses the following names: '*an expert discourse*', '*a comparison discourse*', '*a discourse of quality enhancement*', '*a welfarist discourse*', '*a discourse of trust*', '*a discourse of agency*' and '*a discourse of governability*'.

12.2.2.1. An expert discourse

My analysis confirms the importance of expert knowledge in policy-making and in political debates. This importance is widely recognised in the literature on policy-making and politics. Rose (1999: 74 ff.), for example, explains how the success and efficiency of 'technologies of governance' are dependent on the degree to which individuals inculcate a 'private responsibility' that operates according to a 'public ethic' and how this relationship between a public ethic and private responsibility assigns a key role to 'experts' of various sorts that define what is ethically correct and incorrect and, consequently, what should be done. These 'experts', for example, scientists, economists, political analysts, legal experts and so on, are those who hold an official or semi-official position in society and who claim authority to make judgements about matters of public concern.

In my analysis, I identified four issues on which competing actors invoked an expert discourse: Firstly, with respect to the red-greens claim about 'drainage' I have showed how some politicians drew upon statistical expertise in order to legitimate opposing claims about reduced state funding to public schools and to municipalities; secondly, and with respect to the red-greens claims about increased social segregation I have showed how the government invoked statistics

to refute claims about increased social segregation as a result of the law and how they invoked an expert discourse that showed a systematic reproduction of social inequality in Norwegian public schools; thirdly, I have showed how the red-greens invoked an expert discourse that rejected claims that the law could prevent freeschool-owners from 'sponging off' by taking out profits illegally; and finally, I have showed how both sides invoked expert authority in their claims about what I have called the Swedish experience.

What unites these usages of an expert discourse is that they work to conceal complexity and to create certitude about the reform. This means that the usage of expert discourses in the debate on freeschools worked ideologically.[48] In this case, this entailed that expert discourses worked to sustain *or* challenge discourses of 'drainage', increased social segregation, freeschools 'sponging-off' and of the Swedish experience as a failure.

12.2.2.2. A comparison discourse

Another important finding of the dissertation was the presence and usage of a comparison discourse. In this discourse comparisons with other countries, and then especially Sweden, were made. To some extent, this finding is unsurprising. Also in other debates about national policies, references and comparisons are made to practices and regimes in other countries. My dissertation, therefore, confirms the importance of 'best-practice examples' in processes of policy transfer between states. Examples of debates where 'best-practice examples' appear influential are debates over the regulation of artificial ingredients in foodstuffs, systems of taxation, the organisation of health care, policies of immigration and so on. It is, briefly put, pragmatic do to what works in other similar places and situations.

With respect to such comparisons, it is clear that the low percentage of freeschools (or government-dependent private schools) in Norway (4.2 percent in 2002) is low compared to the EU average (17.4 percent in 2002) (Eurydice 2005: 74). It is not surprising therefore; that the necessary-supplement storyline sometimes constructed the old regime as an outdated residue of welfarist and social democratic politics of previous eras, and that opposition to the new regime sometimes was represented as dated, nostalgic and backward-looking. Thus, in the debate about freeschools, legitimation by references to other countries, and then in particular to Sweden, was

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[48] The usage of expert discourses in so-called 'evidence-based' policy-making should therefore be understood in an analytical framework that allows for explanations of their ideological function. For a review and interpretation of the evidence-based policy-making of England's New Labour government between 1997 and 2007; see Wells (2007).

important. If we, for a moment, accept the claim that the Swedish experience in fact showed negative effects with respect to social segregation and no signs of quality enhancement, then it becomes harder to accept the claim that the implementation of a similar law in Norway would have positive effects. This effect, of course, also applies to the converse: if we accept the opposite claim that the Swedish experience indicates positive effects, then it would be harder to accept the claim that the law would have negative effects in Norway.

The comparison discourse illustrates the salience of the global competitive knowledge-based economy discourse discussed in Chapter Ten. According to this discourse competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy is seen as crucial for the welfare, or even future survival of states (or other economic spaces and actors). In this perspective school development is a crucial element in overall attempts to improve a nation's competitiveness in the global knowledge-based economy. Comparison discourses in the debate on freeschools can therefore be seen to reveal a fear of 'lagging behind'. In the perspective of Glynos and Howarth this means that the comparison discourse has a horrific dimension that involves fears of not being competitive in the knowledge-based economy.

12.2.2.3. A discourse of quality enhancement

In common with Ball's (2007) study of privatisation of education in England, also this study identified a discourse of quality enhancement as central in attempts to sustain the freeschool reform. As demonstrated in the case study also the necessary-supplement storyline promises quality enhancement in both public and private schools and international competitiveness if the prescriptions part of it – in this case the freeschool reform – are followed. An important part of the prescription was the introduction of private actors. In the government's and Progress Party's discourse of quality enhancement the freeschools were in different ways represented as potential 'drivers' that together with the accompanying increase in freedom of choice and parental rights would facilitate a desirable dynamism and creativity in the whole school sector (I discuss this particular discourse of the agency of parents further below). This kind of idealisation of private actors is typical for a competition-oriented neo-liberal discourse. Such discourses containing idealisations can work ideologically in the sense that they can, in different ways, conceal potential negative attributes of the object they represent. Indeed, as I discuss further below, the necessary-supplement storyline's idealisation of freeschools was contested by the red-greens who invoked a particular discourse of the agency of private actors.

As I showed in the case study (section 11.2.1), the parties part of the Bondevik II coalition and the Progress Party invoked the discourse of quality enhancement in different ways. For the Christian Democratic Party the association with a competition-oriented neo-liberal discourse of quality enhancement seemed to have caused an internal struggle in the party. They also seemed to have attempted to distance themselves from neo-liberal discourses by using terms such as 'putting more focus on' and 'reciprocal development' to describe the expected process of quality enhancement. Also the Liberal Party seemed to attempt to distance themselves from neo-liberal discourse by using terms such 'enrichment' and by representing the freeschool reform as a 'release' of human potential (this in contrast to how 'release' metaphor was used in the destructive-release storyline). The Progress Party's discourse of quality enhancement, on the other hand, was clear and explicit about competition being the key quality-enhancing mechanism.

With respect to these differences it must be remembered that education is a main source for human development, emancipation and empowerment, and that the parties that were part of the coalition government had different reasons for endorsing the law.[49] For example, while the Conservative Party was explicit about their dual commitment to quality enhancement and increased freedom of choice, the Christian Democrats were more explicit about their commitment to freedom of choice and parental rights than they were to quality enhancement. These differences can be said to reflect the different nodal points (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112) in their respective overall political discourses.

Despite these differences, however, the government parties and the Progress Party invoked a discourse of quality enhancement that can be seen as emanating from a hegemonic discourse of the global knowledge-based economy that work to sustain a competition state. As demonstrated in Chapter Ten, also the red-greens adhere to this discourse, but as I discuss further below, this does not mean that they accepted the claim that the reform would enhance quality in both private and public schools.

By contributing to sustain this hegemonic discourse of the knowledge-based economy, the government's and Progress Party's discourse of quality enhancement can work to sustain a culture of competitiveness that is more or less naturalised as 'simply the way things are'. This culture of competitiveness resides not only in relations between institutions, but also in the orientation of institutions (Ball 2007: 10). The government's and Progress Party's discourses of

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[49] See Inglis (1997) for discussion of difference between emancipation and empowerment.

quality enhancement can also be seen 'to encourage competitive individualism and instrumentality' (Ball 2007: 188) and to nurture competitive mind-sets and identities, rather than mind-sets and identities that can be characterised as, for instance, solidaristic, caring and generous. In this perspective the freeschool reform is not simply a reform of the financing system of lower education, rather it 'involves changes in the meaning and experience of education, what it means to be a teacher and a learner' (Ball 2007: 186) and it can also be understood as an indication of wider and more profound social changes that involves changes in the way we understand and govern ourselves and the way in which we govern others and relate to them.

12.2.2.4. A welfarist discourse

Despite the naturalisation of a culture of competiveness, the necessary-supplement storyline is, as also Ball's study suggests, morally complex and the freeschool reform cannot be written off as a fully-fledged neo-liberal reform. As can be re-called from Chapter Five, Ball emphasises how the 'language of the public sector' is used by private actors within the field of education and how these are committed to both 'to improving education and social justice and to the interest of their business' (Ball 2007: 100). In a similar way the case study demonstrates that elements of a welfarist discourse were recurrently invoked by both camps, and not only by the red-greens. This confirms arguments discussed above about the Bondevik II government invoking a third way discourse of the freeschool reform consisting of both the elements of a neo-liberal competition-oriented discourse, as discussed above, and elements of a welfarist discourse. The welfarist discourse invoked by the government had two key features:

First of all, it constructed the old regime as elitist and unfair as it privileged only particular social groups (those who could afford private schools not subsidised by the state and those wanting to enrol their children in schools based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles). In other words, according to the necessary-supplement storyline it was not the Norwegian 'people' as such, but particular groups that were to have freedom of choice under the old regime preferred by the red-greens.

Secondly, the welfarist discourse that was part of the necessary-supplement storyline, repeatedly emphasised that schools would not be allowed to select pupils freely, that tuition fees would be so low that 'everybody' could afford to enrol, and that it was not possible for school owners to profit from running schools. As I continue to discuss below, a discourse of the state's

governability was crucial for this latter claim, and hence also for the credibility of the welfarist discourse used by the government.

In this way the welfarist discourse constructed the reform as ensuring, and hence not abandoning as the red-greens claimed, welfarist aims about equal right to education. Then, on the other hand, the positioning of the red-green opposition as unfair and elitist and not endorsing equality of opportunity to choose schools for 'everybody' could also be seen as populist discourse working ideologically to disguise the economic imperatives underpinning the freeschool reform. By that I mean that concerns about quality enhancement and competitiveness could be seen as being more important for the government, than concerns about equal rights to education. Such subordination can be linked to the third way project of installing a competition state. In any case, the claim that the reform would facilitate more, instead of less, social equality in terms of more freedom of choice for everybody to choose schools, was fiercely contested by the red-greens.

12.2.2.5. A discourse of trust

One important way that the government and the Progress Party responded to the red-green opposition to the reform was by invoking a discourse of trust. The usage of such a discourse is not something new. Nor is it special for the freeschool case. At the annual congress of the Conservative Party in 2011, the party attempted to re-launch what they termed 'politics of trust' (*tilitspolitikk*). Originally termed by Sjur Lindebrække (influential party leader during the 1960s), 'politics of trust' was defined the following way by party leader Solberg in her speech at the congress:

> Dear congress,
> A basic divide between the Right and the Left concerns the answer to the following question:
> Shall we build our society on trust, or on distrust? Shall we give people more freedom to choose how they solve tasks, or shall we detail-regulate more? Shall we take as many choices on behalf of others, or shall we let them choose for themselves?

For the Conservatives the answer is clear: The Conservatives have trust, we will give them freedom, and we will let the people choose for themselves!

(Solberg 2011)

And this is how Clemet, now (November 2011) heading Conservative think-thank Civita, in an article entitled '*Trust, control and welfare*' defines 'politics of trust':

In the freeschool case, in the view on sharing of parental leave, in the debate on private child care, in the view on private and civil provision of welfare or in the view on freedom of choice, we see again and again that it is the Right who represents trust. In these and other social fields especially the Left's politicians want to pursue a policy that is more influenced by governance and control.

This is also one of my major reservations against the red-green parties: They demonstrate too much distrust in citizens, to businesses and to the civil society. They demonstrate a lack of respect of that people is different and chose differently, and they appear not to have adequate understanding of the significance of the diversity and dispersion of power. Often they act as if they always know what is best and have better moral than ours. Step by step they therefore leave bits and pieces to the public sector, to politicians and to bureaucrats.   (Clemet 2011)

A similar discourse of trust was central in the necessary-supplement storyline. The main reason was that trust was central for making the freeschool reform work as desired with respect to its normative and quality dimensions.

First of all, trust in the capacity of parents to make the right choices for their children legitimated the claim that freedom of choice and parental right should be expanded. Secondly, trust in the capacity of public schools to compete with freeschools was essential for the claim that the freeschool reform would not cause a 'mass-escape' from public to private schools. Accordingly, in the necessary-supplement storyline opposition to the freeschool reform was positioned as distrustful to both parents and the capacity and ability of public schools.

The positioning of the red-green opposition as distrustful can be understood as a matter of categorisation, meaning that individuals and social groups who oppose the freeschool regime are

classified as distrustful. An accompanying aspect of this categorisation is a psychologisation of a political debate that reduces political matters into matters of human attributes. One potential effect of the psychologisation of a political debate is that the matter in question becomes depoliticised. A successful depoliticisation, in this case, would have entailed that the necessary-supplement storyline would become naturalised and perceived to be 'common-sense' or 'taken-for-granted-knowledge'. This means that the government's and the Progress Party's discourse of the red-greens being distrustful can be seen as working ideologically. More specifically, and in the perspective of the research strategy of this dissertation, the government's and the Progress Party's discourse of trust can be seen as having a beatific aspect that involves that they are positioned as rational and trustful and that red-greens are positioned as irrational and distrustful and that they need to be 'overcome' in order for their regime, which is based on the desirable attribute of trust, to become instituted.

In my analysis I did not find any direct responses by the red-greens to these accusations of being distrustful to parents and public schools. One reason why can be that the empirical material that I analysed was too limited. But in any case, as I continue to discuss below, compared to the government and the Progress Party, the red-greens did invoke a significantly different discourse of the agency of freeschools that involved expressions of distrust in private actors.

12.2.2.6. A discourse of agency

A particularly conflictual discourse of agency was frequently invoked in the debate. As demonstrated in the case study, in the necessary-supplement storyline, parents were the main active actors and the reform would be to their benefit. It was they who would need more freedom of choice to choose a school for their children, and it was their parental right, which had been inhibited by the old regime. As discussed above, the old regime, the proponents claimed, was unfair and elitist as it privileged only those who could afford enrolling their children in private school not receiving state support and those who wanted their children to attend in schools based on alternative religious or pedagogical principles. It also worked to inhibit predictability for parents wanting plan schooling for their children, and to limit the freedom of choice for parents in rural areas who wanted to maintain or establish neighbourhood schools.

This representation of parents as active and agentive actors who needs to be 'freed' has fantasmatic aspects in the sense discussed by Glynos and Howarth (2007). It suggests that once a particular obstacle, in this case the 'old' private school regime supported by the red-greens, is

overcome, or, as in this case, reformed, then parental right will become 'real' and parents will become 'free'. Parents are thereby presented as 'victims' in the need of being 'saved' by reforming the financing system of private schools. Thus, subjects enjoying this fantasy may believe that some kind of closure will be obtained once the reform is implemented. The government's discourse of parental right can therefore be said to be a beatific discourse: once the obstacle (the old regime) has been overcome (in this case, reformed), parents will enjoy freedom of choice and be allowed to exercise their parental rights.

In the destructive-release storyline parents were also allocated a role. However, instead of being represented as beneficiaries, they were in a horrific discourse represented as victims who would lose predictability and who were forced to choose to enrol their children in private schools as a result of the shortcomings of the public school system.

Both these discourses as parents as beneficiaries and as victims allow for the concealment, or to be more precise, the omission, of the fact that some parents may want or may not want to have the freedom of choice promised in the government's and the Progress Party's discourse of agency. As such, these discourses of parents as beneficiaries or victims also work ideologically.

In the destructive-release storyline it was not parents who were the active agents. Rather it was 'commercial actors', or some other similar terms, for instance, 'private alternatives'. Their role in the freeschool reform was often represented metaphorically. They would be 'released' as a result of the freeschool reform, and by 'sponging off' the public schools system by offering cheap study programs and only establishing themselves in larger cities, they would contribute to 'drain' the public school system. The result, it was claimed, would be what often referred to as 'A and B schools' and increased social segregation.

This means that instead of idealising the role of private players in the field of education, in this storyline they were instead represented as 'villains' that cannot be trusted. In the perspective of Glynos and Howarth (2007), this horrific discourse of commercially run freeschools can, similar as the government's and Progress Party's discourse of parents as beneficiaries, also be seen as having a beatific dimension. In this discourse the removal of commercial actors in the field of lower education, together with the implementation of other preferred policies, seem to promise some kind of closure for those subjects adhering to the destructive-release storyline. It does so by working ideologically to conceal the complexities of the reform and its welfarist safeguards.

Both these discourses of parents and commercial actors are familiar from other debates.

On the one hand, parents are, like 'consumers', 'customers', 'users' or 'clients', often represented as beneficiaries as they would experience more freedom of choice and have a greater diversity among the different 'entities' or 'commodities' they choose from. In such a discourse, competition between private actors, and also between public and private actors, is central for this freedom of choice and diversity to be realised. As discussed above, this discourse of the agency of parents was co-articulated with a discourse of quality enhancement. Thus, in the necessary-supplement storyline the agency of parents together with the introduction of more private alternatives would ensure quality enhancement in the whole school system.

On the other hand, private actors also tended to be represented as actors that should and cannot be trusted as they are ultimately guided by the bottom line of making profit. This perspective also entails that in the competition between deliverers of these 'entities' and 'commodities', there are 'winners' and 'losers'. A potential consequence of this competition, is that those 'entities' and 'commodities' that are perceived as the most attractive ones become to be reserved for those 'consumers', 'customers', 'users' or 'clients' that have most resources, either in the form of economic or cultural capital. With respect to education this may involve the creation of 'A and B schools' that are characterised by the different qualities of both the 'hardware' (buildings, equipment and other facilities) and 'software' (administrative staff, teachers and pupils) of education.

12.2.2.7. A discourse of governability

A discourse of the state's governability was important for the government and the Progress Party's attempt to respond to such accusations of the reform causing increased social segregation. The identification of this discourse of governability also supports the notion of an emerging competition state characterised by the move from a role of public service deliverer to a control and monitor role.

This discourse was invoked on two key moments in the debate: Firstly, with respect to the tension between parental right and communitarian concerns, a discourse of the state's control and governability allowed parental right to be exercised without posing any threat to the future autonomy of children enrolled in private schools perceived to offer schooling that could potentially damage their future prospects. Secondly, and as a response to the red-green's claims about the reform being a destructive release of market forces embodied in freeschools, a

discourse of the state's governability and control was frequently invoked by emphasising the welfarist safeguards in the law discussed above.

As discussed above, this discourse of governability was contested by the red-greens discourse of agency discussed above. This means that this discourse of governability worked ideologically by excluding the possibility that there may be flaws in the law and that there may be some truth in the red-greens claims about the reform being a destructive release of private actors bent on 'sponging off' the state and thereby draining the public school system of resources, and then, in the end, facilitating a development towards a more competition-oriented society and more social segregation. In the perspective of Glynos and Howarth we can see this discourse of the state's governability as a beatific discourse as it represents the state as govern-able, omnipotent and in control. In so far as this ideological practice was successful, we can say that the government and the Progress Party were able to co-articulate elements of a neo-liberal competition-oriented discourse of quality enhancement and a welfarist discourse in a third way manner.

12.3. Reflections on research approach

In this dissertation I have employed a particular research approach in order to describe and explain what and how discourses were used by the government and the Progress Party in order to sustain the freeschool reform, and by the red-greens in order to challenge it. I have thereby contributed to knowledge about a wider research theme by demonstrating the added-value of using a 'modified' logics approach to describe and explain what and how discourses are used to sustain or challenge privatisation as public sector reform.

In this section I reflect on this research approach in light of the claims that I have made about the advantages of this approach vis-à-vis the approach of Ball's study of privatisation as public education reform in England and vis-à-vis the logics approach of Glynos and Howarth.

12.3.1. The logics approach versus Ball's approach

In Norwegian research there is a lack of discourse analytical research on educational policies in particular, and on public administration and policies in general (Karlsen 2006: 28; NFR 2002: 80). As such, this dissertation therefore contributes to a neglected area in Norwegian research. Because of this lack, however, and as discussed in Chapter Five, I chose to compare the approach of this dissertation to the approach taken in Ball's study of privatisations of education in England.

As already discussed, this study is similar both in terms of focus and in approach. But there are also differences, and it is to these differences that I now direct the attention.

Before I do that, however, it is important to emphasise that the following critique of Ball's study only concerns aspects of his discourse analytical approach, and not the whole study, which, as already discussed in Chapter Five, has a more extensive research design than the one applied in this dissertation.

I shall argue that that the lack in Ball's study of a theoretical model allowing for the understanding and explanation of the relationship between discourse and social change reduces its explanatory power. I also made this argument in Chapter Five, but in the following I discuss this further in light of the presentation and demonstration of my research approach.

I proceed in three steps: Firstly, I relate the above argument to Glynos and Howarth's critique of interpretivist and hermeneutic research they label 'contextualised self-interpretations' and argue that Ball's study is prone to criticism of being more descriptive than explanatory; secondly, I argue that in order to apply a theoretical model allowing for the understanding and explanation of the relationship between discourse and social change, it is fruitful to categorise the discourses used by the social actors that are involved, and if this is done, an explicit discussion of how this is done is required in order to make the research practice transparent and replicable; and thirdly, I argue that it is in particular the psychoanalytical notion of the split subject, and the role of fantasies to suture this split, that gives the logics approach, or model, its critical and explanatory edge compared to Ball's Foucault-inspired approach. I shall present these arguments in turn.

To begin with, the criticism of failing to sufficiently explain the relationship between discourse and social change is a criticism that can be raised against a great deal of social and political research employing discourse analytical approaches. My position is that although this can be seen a limitation, it cannot be expected that *every* analysis using discourse analytical perspectives should include a discussion of all the elements of the 'package' Phillips and Jørgensen (2002: 3-4, 174; see also Chapter Five) write about. Still, the lack of such explanations in an analysis limits its capacity to explain.

My critique of Ball, who is not presenting a coherent perspective allowing for the understanding and explanation of the relationship between discourse and social change, is similar to Glynos and Howarth's critique of interpretivist and hermeneutic research they label 'contextualised self-interpretations'. Glynos and Howarth's key argument is that while it is

necessary to provide detailed and nuanced 'thick-descriptions' of discourses (or what they refer to as social actors' 'self-interpretations') used by the social actors whose practices are studied, this is not enough. While 'a social science explanation must pass through and take seriously the self-interpretations of the actors engaged in the practice under study [...] we cannot rely *exclusively* on what people say, or on their self-understandings' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 13, italics in original). Thus, as Glynos and Howarth say, 'the question then becomes one of fleshing out this 'beyond' of self-interpretations' (2007: 13).

By not putting forward a theoretical model of the relationship between discourse and social change, Ball's study – despite the fact that it provides a comprehensive, detailed and nuanced account of how social actors part of the 'education industry services' actors understands their own role and the processes of social change they are part of – is prone to criticism of 'precluding the development of critical explanations that somehow transcend the particularity of a given situation both explanatorily and critically' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 213). That is, it is not enough to recognise and identify the complexity and particularity in terms of discourses that are used by social actors also a model enabling the understanding and critical explanation of how discourses can generate social change is needed.

In Chapter Five I have argued that one such potential model is to be found in Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, which also Jessop incorporates in his approach to cultural political economy. Ball could have used this model. However, he could also have used Glynos and Howarth's logics approach. But he could only do this after having discussed *if* and *how* his usage of elements of Jessop's approach has implications for the selected research strategy. In this dissertation I have preferred Glynos and Howarth's logics approach to Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, and I have also discussed how my usage of elements of Jessop's approach have implications for my research strategy (see Chapter Nine).

In order to apply a model allowing for understanding and explanation of the relationship between discourse and social change – regardless if it is Glynos and Howarth's or Fairclough's or another one – it is fruitful to categorise the discourses used by the social actors that are involved. Further on, if this is done an explicit discussion of how this is done is required in order to make the research practice transparent and replicable. Such categorisation is something that Ball does not do, and this makes his descriptions of discourses appear as fragmented and unsystematic.

My view is that in order to, as Ball puts it, 'to understand the situation we are currently in with respect to the phenomenon of privatisations and to develop an appropriate and effective

language and set of concepts for thinking about what is happening and about possible alternatives' (Ball 2007: 191), it is useful to describe and explain how discourses are ordered, or articulated, together in order to achieve and to sustain their hegemonic status and also how this status is challenged. This would makes it necessary to, one, categorise the discourses used by the social actors that are involved; and, two, to explain, by using a theoretical model, how these categories of discourses are articulated together in attempts to make a bid for a hegemonic status. Again, this is something that Ball does not do.

In this dissertation, however, I have provided a presentation of the analytical procedures I have followed in the empirical analysis, and I have identified seven discourses that I found to be prevalent in the debate on freeschools. By applying a modified logics approach I have also provided a critical explanation of how these discourses, and their attendant political and fantasmatic logics, can either sustain or challenge the freeschool reform and its social logics.

As demonstrated in the case study these discourses were invoked in the contestation over the meaning of three key issues concerning the reform's quality, normative and pragmatic dimensions. By identifying and revealing the differences, ambiguities and complexities in the different parties' discourses of these issues, the case study can enable a better understanding of the social logics that these competing storylines and discourses work to sustain and challenge. Ball's study also contributes to the understanding of the privatisations of education. But because he does not present a coherent model allowing for the explanation of relationship between discourse and social change, it can be argued that its explanatory capacity is reduced. One main reason for this is that Ball does not present an explanation of why and how certain discourses 'grip' subjects who through their practices also can sustain or challenge particular social practices. I will elaborate on this claim by presenting three different perspectives on differences, ambiguities and complexities *in* and *between* the competing discourses. I will prefer the latter perspective and then compare it with the approach taken in Ball's study.

One perspective is to see differences and ambiguities (and not complexities) in and between competing discourses *as the result of strategic considerations* of different actors. In this perspective, for example, the discourses of the Christian Democratic Party, and to a lesser extent also the Liberal Party, lost their particularity and distinctiveness in negotiations with the Conservatives and these negotiations resulted in differences and ambiguities in the government's discourse of quality enhancement. One can, for instance, ask if the assumed quality enhancement is the result of 'reciprocal development', as Lyngstad of the Christian Democrats insisted. Or one

can ask if the assumed quality enhancement is the result of 'competition', as for instance Aarset from the Conservative Party, and also Clemet on certain occasions, asserted (see section 11.2.1.1). This is, as I have demonstrated, also what was claimed in the destructive-release storyline (see section 11.2.2.2.2).

A second perspective is to see differences and ambiguities in and between competing discourses *as more the result of complexity than of strategic considerations* of different actors. To pursue the above example*,* in such a perspective quality enhancement is a multi-faceted process involving a variety of factors including reciprocal development and competition, but also learning, enrichment and more visibility and so on. Moreover, the reform is, in a third way manner, seen as able to both stimulate quality enhancement through a variety of different mechanisms and also as able to curb the potential destructive practices of too un-regulated private actors. Freeschools are, in short, necessary supplements. Although they are not many, and although the intention is not that they should replace public schools, they enhance quality in the whole school system to benefit of the whole nation and they increase freedom of choice for everybody. In this perspective, which also is shared by the necessary-supplement storyline, claims about the reform being market-oriented are seen as too simple, or as outright wrong.

Another perspective, which also is preferred in this dissertation, is to see differences and ambiguities in and between competing discourses *as both the result of strategic considerations of actors and parties and as a result of complexity*. Also Ball would subscribe to this latter perspective on discourse and social change. But what Ball does not take into account is how certain discourses can work ideologically to 'iron out' and to conceal differences, ambiguities and complexities.[50] More specifically, he does not examine how ideological discourses can deny that privatisations can negative effects on the society caused by the destructive practices of too un-regulated private actors, or positive effects in terms of quality enhancement and more freedom of choice.

This means that in contrast to the Foucault-inspired approach in Ball's study (2007)*,* this dissertation is also able to explain how the involved discourses worked ideologically. While

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[50] This reminds us again that in explanations of the relationship between discourses and social change, the use of discourses cannot be explained only by reference to strategic considerations and practices. One also needs to take into account how strategic interests and practices are being constituted through discourses that change over time. This means that although it is recognised that strategic action of political actors and simplification and complexity reduction (and hence also ideological practices) are seen as necessary in order to create any meaningful political practices, one should be aware that the coherency and order that are created in discourses making a bid for a hegemonic status is socially constructed.

Ball's study gives a nuanced and detailed account of the prevailing discourse of privatisations as public education reform in England and thereby sensitizes us to the complexities involved, the approach taken in this dissertation can also, by using the psychoanalytical concept of fantasmatic logics, help understand and explain *why* and *how* subjects are 'gripped' by certain discourses that work ideologically to produce closure. In other words, the psychoanalytical import is crucial in giving the logics approach its critical and explanatory bite, and the concept of fantasmatic logics *does*, as Glynos and Howarth put it, 'add a further explanatory and critical layer to the process of accounting for change and continuity' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 145). This suggests that the critique of Ball's approach not being able to explain how discourses can work ideologically, is a critique that can be directed towards several Foucault-inspired forms of discourse analysis that do not incorporate psychoanalytical notions of the subject into their approach.

In the following I demonstrate how this neglect of the ideological properties of discourses reduces the explanatory power of Ball's study. I will do this by comparing two of the findings of his study with the findings of this dissertation. These two findings are not selected in a random manner. Rather, they concern some of Ball's, and also this dissertation's, key arguments.

On the one hand, Ball argues that the prevailing educational policies in England can be characterised as a third way policy mix consisting of neo-liberal as well as welfarist elements, and that the reforms and changing boundaries between the public and private in England must be understood in the context of international competitiveness as presented in Jessop's approach. On the other hand, and in a similar vein, I argue, and demonstrate, that the freeschool reform is a third way project of an emerging competition state. A crucial question with respect to this argument about third way policies of privatisation, concerns how they are sustained and challenged. As discussed in Chapter Five, Ball only examines how these are sustained, but not how they are challenged. More specifically, he makes two important arguments about their sustainment that I shall examine closer here.

Firstly, Ball argues that the private actors are idealised as potential 'drivers' facilitating creativity and dynamism that is held to be lacking in the public sector. The idea that the introduction of private actors and market-relations into previously non-market public spheres will enhance quality is an important neo-liberal element of the hybrid third way discourse. In this dissertation I have examined this neo-liberal discourse of quality enhancement. One of the things that I have demonstrated, is how this discourse is articulated together with a beatific discourse of agency that involves a fantasy of a reformed financing system where parents will be 'freed' and

allowed to exercise their parental rights in ways that will stimulate quality enhancement in the whole school sector. I have also showed how a horrific discourse of the old regime as thwarting parental rights and choice, and hence also stifling creativity and dynamism, was co-present and co-articulated with this beatific discourse of the agency of parents. These beatific and horrific discourses of parents and the old regime, that are part of the necessary-supplement storyline, work ideologically to produce closure by promising subjects a form of fulfilment once their preferred regime has been installed. In this case this was a matter of concealing and 'keeping at bay' alternative interpretations: Firstly, that the quality in public schools could be deteriorating as a result of private actors 'sponging off' the public sector and thereby contributing to a 'drainage' of financial resources of municipalities; secondly, that a 'release' of freeschools working to 'sponge off' and 'drain' the public schools would facilitate the development of 'A and B schools' and more social segregation; and thirdly, the possibility that the reform could reduce rather than increase parental rights for social groups who would become 'victims' that were 'forced' to choose private schools rather than becoming beneficiaries of the reform. Ball does not examine such ideological properties of the idealising discourse of private actors in a systematic manner.

The second key finding in Ball's study is that also what he refers to as 'education industry service actors' invoke a welfarist discourse. It is the co-existence of this discourse with a neo-liberal market-oriented discourse that makes it possible to argue that the prevailing discourse of education reform in England is a third way discourse, and, in a similar way, that the Bondevik II coalition's, and then in particular the Conservative Party's, discourse of the freeschool reform resembles such a third way discourse. However, in contrast to Ball's study, my dissertation also explicitly identifies other additional discourses that were articulated together with elements of a welfarist discourse. One of these discourses is a beatific discourse of the state's governability. This discourse is crucial in attempts to reconcile neo-liberal and welfarist elements in a third way manner. It presents a fantasmatic picture of the state as omnipotent and in control that works to produce closure by promising that the state has the ability to cope with the red-greens fears about the reform being a destructive release of market forces that in the end will cause more social segregation. As such this discourse also works to exclude the possibility of potential flaws in the law and of tendencies of private actors to 'sponge off' the state and thereby drain the public schools for resources. Again, these are ideological properties of a welfarist discourse that Ball's study does not address in a systematic way.

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So to sum up, while Ball provides nuanced descriptions of what discourses that are used in order to sustain privatisation as public education reform, he does not say much about *why* and *how* subjects are 'gripped' by these discourses. This does not, however, mean that an understanding of these why and how questions is absent in Ball's study. Rather, also Ball, from a Foucaultian perspective, indicates a similar understanding of the relationship between discourse and social change, by, for instance, saying that discourses produce 'an obviousness, a common sense' and 'often an inevitability of reform', and that 'the prevailing discourses of education and public sector reform generates, as discourses do, subject positions, social relations and opportunities within policy' (Ball 2007: 1, 2). But he does not explain and address in a systematic fashion these relationships by putting forward a coherent model allowing for an understanding and explanation of *why* and *how* discourses have 'generative' effects. This makes his account prone to criticism of being more descriptive than explanatory.

The logics approach of Glynos and Howarth, on the other hand, offers both description and explanation. Yet, I have modified this approach in particular ways. In the next section I therefore reflect on the selected research strategy in light of the claims I have made about the advantages of my modified logics approach vis-à-vis the logics approach of Glynos and Howarth.

12.3.2. My 'modified' versus Glynos and Howarth's 'original' logics approach

While it is most common for discourses analyses to apply one single discourse analytical approach and supplement it with other approaches that cannot be labelled 'discourse analytical' and that contribute to knowledge about the social phenomena under study (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 153), this dissertation has attempted to combine different discourse analytical approaches. Broadly speaking, I have done this in two steps: Firstly, I have preferred Glynos and Howarth's logics approach to Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. This means that the logics approach is to be considered as the point of departure, or nodal point, in the research strategy of this dissertation. Secondly, I have, as part of the discussion of the research strategy of the dissertation, presented my understanding of social logics and how it is related to the concept of retroduction, and I have described and discussed how I define two concepts that I combine with the logics approach: storylines and discourses.

The added-value of my modified approach can, as Glynos and Howarth (2007: 180) suggest, be viewed in terms of re-articulations of the logics approach. As can be re-called from Chapter Six, articulation involves that the identity of each element that is articulated is 'modified

as a result of the articulatory practice' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105). In this case I have re-articulated – and hence also modified the logics approach – in two important ways:

One, I have integrated Hajer's concept of storylines into the logics approach; and two, I have preferred to approach the constituent parts of storylines by using Fairclough's concept of discourse as representations, rather than treating them as 'elements' or some other similar term. I shall clarify the added value of these re-articulations in more detail.

The reason why I have integrated the concept of storylines in the logics approach is that it contributes – and hence add-value – to the understanding and explanation of how both political and fantasmatic logics can sustain or challenge social logics. I have done this by showing how a storyline involves both political logics working to demarcate and fantasmatic logics working ideologically to produce closure. More specifically, I have directed the attention to three sorts of textual practices that allows us to identify political and fantasmatic logics operational in discourses: the construction of relations of equivalences, the positioning of actors and their projects and representations of social actors part of the reform. With respect to this, I also argued that Glynos and Howarth also could have benefitted from specifying how political and fantasmatic logics are operational in discourses. This critique is similar to the often repeated critique of Laclau and Mouffe's approach as not offering many suggestions of how to use their approach in empirical analysis (Hansen 2005; Howarth 2000, 2005; Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 49; Torfing 2005).

The argument that the concept of storylines, which as can be re-called is defined by Hajer (1995: 56) as a generative sort of narrative, contributes to the understanding of the relationship between social, political and fantasmatic logics seems to be *implicitly* acknowledged by Glynos and Howarth. Firstly, in their example of the apartheid discourse in South Africa they suggest that this discourse involves a '*fantasmatic narrative*' that works to hook the subject to a given practice or order by promising fullness, wholeness or harmony (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 130, emphasis added), and, secondly, in their example of the audit regime reform in UK universities, they emphasise that 'political and fantasmatic logics helps us to furnish an account of how and why' the audit regime was instituted, because 'they make visible and enable us to construct *a narrative* that typically comprises a threat, an obstacle, and the formulation of the problem which sets the terms of the debate and the range of possible policy solutions' (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 174, emphasis added). This means that my modification of the logics approach and the

value it adds, is not only a matter of *re-articulation*, it is also a matter of a *further clarification* of the already discussed relationship between social, political and fantasmatic logics.

The second modification of the logics approach is that I have used Fairclough's definition of discourse as a representation to account for the constituent parts of storylines that can sustain or challenge social logics, instead of using terms like 'discursive elements', 'categories' or 'components'. This entailed that in my approach the concept of storyline was given a similar theoretical status as the concept of discourse has in Glynos and Howarth's Laclau and Mouffe inspired logics approach. Put in other words, *in my modified logics approach it is not hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses that articulate together elements, rather it is hegemonic and counter-hegemonic storylines that articulate together several different discourses*.

I gave two interrelated reason why I preferred this approach: Firstly, it enables a more precise and more tangible form of description and explanation than does the usage of elements or some other similar term to describe the parts of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic projects, and secondly, this makes it easier for other scholars to engage with and potentially contest the validity of my claims about how to delimit and how to describe the seven discourses that I have discussed above.

This does not, however, mean that the form of elements that are articulated together in hegemonic struggles should be predetermined once and for all. Although this would have pedagogical advantages, this would at the same time inhibit the development of new perspectives. Yet, in order to capture historical and contextual specificity of particular struggles, it is fruitful to provide such specifications of the form and content of 'elements' (for a similar critique of Laclau and Mouffe, see Howarth 2000: 118). So while the first modification is much a matter of *clarification*, this latter modification is also a matter of *precision* and of using terms that are familiar to a wider community of scholars.

13. Conclusion

13.1. Introduction

This final chapter concludes the dissertation. It starts with a summary. Then I present the general conclusions that can be drawn from it. Finally, as I see conclusions both as *arrival* and *departure* points, I outline what could be avenues for further research on how forms of privatisation as public sector reform are attempted sustained and challenged.

13.2. Summary

In Part One I provided a background against which the analysis of the sustainment and challenge of the freeschool reform could be understood. I did this by presenting the political parties whose storylines and discourses I analysed, and by giving a chronological account of the debate on private schools; not only between 2001 and 2005, but also between 1945 and 2001. I then continued to discuss the case study method, and the freeschool case as a paradigmatic and critical case that allows for the demonstration of what and how discourses are used to sustain or challenge privatisation as public sector reform. In this part of the dissertation I also discussed related research and their similarities and differences with the approach of this dissertation. I did this by identifying an underdeveloped area in Norwegian research that this dissertation can contribute to, and by comparing my approach with the approach taken by Ball (2007) in a related study of the privatisations of education in England since the late 1990s.

In Part Two I presented the theoretical foundations of the dissertation. I proceeded by following a three-fold distinction between '*meta theory*', '*research strategy*' and '*analytical procedure*'. With respect to meta theory, I presented two influential approaches to discourse analysis: Glynos and Howarth's poststructuralist approach and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. After presenting these two approaches and discussing their different ontologies, I chose to restrict the scope of the study to the discursive dimension by preferring Glynos and Howarth's logics approach to Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. The main reason was not that I saw the critical realist underpinning of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis as inevitably leading to a too structuralist and too 'causal law-like', as Glynos and Howarth put it, form of explanation; rather it was informed by pragmatic concerns about the difficulty in operationalising the non-discursive/discursive distinction in actual analysis. After having clarified this, I continued to

present the key concepts in my research strategy for understanding and explaining how the freeschool reform was sustained and challenged. In order to do so, I presented a modified version of the logics approach of Glynos and Howarth. I did this by constructing the practice of contextualising and characterising the freeschool reform, and its attendant social logics, as a part of a 'retroductive' form of social science explanation. I also incorporated elements of the approaches of Hajer and Fairclough. In my modified logics approach Hajer's concept of storylines was given similar theoretical status as the concept of discourse has in the Laclau and Mouffe inspired logics approach of Glynos and Howarth. More specifically, in this perspective storylines, consisting of discourses and elements of discourses that are articulated together, could potentially sustain or challenge the social logics associated with the reform. Finally, in this part of the dissertation, and with respect to analytical procedures, I specified how I proceeded in the empirical analysis. I did this by discussing how I operationalised the concepts of political and fantasmatic logics by directing the attention to three sorts of practices: the construction of relations of equivalence, the positionings of social actors and their projects and the representations of social actors part of the reform.

This presentation of the dissertation's '*meta theory*', '*research strategy*' and '*analytical procedure*' enabled me to formulate two sets of research questions: One, how can the reform be contextualised and what forms of social logics characterised the reform; and two, what storylines and discourses were employed by the opposing constellations in attempts to sustain or challenge the reform, and what political and fantasmatic logics were operational in them?

In Part Three I presented the case study, which examined these questions. I proceeded by following a distinction between '*contextualisation and characterisation*' and '*sustainment and challenge*' that corresponded to the two sets of research questions that I posed.

In this final part of the dissertation I have discussed the findings of the case study and reflected on the selected research strategy. The next section concludes the dissertation.

13.3. Conclusion

In this dissertation I have described and explained what and how discourses were used by the government and the Progress Party in order to sustain the freeschool reform, and by the red-greens in order to challenge it. I have also demonstrated the added-value of using a 'modified' logics approach to describe and explain what and how discourses are used to sustain or challenge privatisation as public sector reform.

I have argued that the reform can be contextualised and characterised as *a third way project of an emerging competition state*. I have also shown how the reform was attempted to be sustained and challenged by showing how the two opposing constellations were different to each other with respect to the reform's quality, normative and pragmatic dimensions, and how they invoked two opposing storylines I called the *necessary-supplement storyline* and *destructive-release storyline*. These storylines consisted of discourses, and elements of discourses, that were articulated together in order to sustain and challenge the social logics of the reform. I identified seven discourses that were central in the necessary-supplement storyline and that the destructive-release stoyline in different ways challenged: '*an expert discourse*', '*a comparison discourse*', '*a discourse of quality enhancement*', '*a welfarist discourse*', '*a discourse of trust*', '*a discourse of agency*' and '*a discourse of governability*'.

Together these discourses, worked ideologically to produce 'truths' about the social reality – in this case the 'reality' of the freeschool reform and private sector participation in public sector education – by concealing differences, ambiguities and complexities. My hope is that the analysis put forward in this dissertation can help us understand and explain better what this 'reality' is and what it could be.

The significance of the identifications of these discourses and storylines can be better appreciated if we re-call what the critical attitude of the discourse analytical research approach of this dissertation entails. Most importantly, this attitude insists on that the social reality is socially constructed and that there is nothing inevitable, or law-like, with social changes. In this dissertation I have argued that the freeschool reform was part of a wider third way project of an emerging Norwegian competition state. By putting forward a modified logics approach I also described and explained how the reform was sustained and challenged. I argued that in order to do so, a theoretical model allowing for the understanding and explanation of the relationship between discourse and social change is needed. I provided such a model in this dissertation, and I discussed how Ball's (2007) similar analysis of privatisation as education reform in England since the late 1990s can be criticised for being more descriptive than explanatory as it does not include such a model. The model I applied was Glynos and Howarth's logics approach that I modified in order to further clarify and make more precise the relationship between discourse and social change.

This attempt to contribute to the development of discourse analytical research approaches in general, and the logics approach in particular, can be further developed in future research on

how forms of privatisation as public sector reform are sustained and challenged. It is to such questions that the final section of the dissertation directs the attention to.

13.4. Avenues for further research

In my view conclusions should not be intellectual end-points. As research should be seen as a continuously on-going collective effort to make things better, individual research should also be departure points and be seen as invitations to further engagement between different approaches and perspectives. I will therefore end this dissertation by outlining two avenues for further research. Both these avenues concerns key sectors of the welfare state.

The first one is related to the establishment and running of private child care institutions in the wake of the so-called child care-settlement in 2003. Then the red-green parties (the Labour Party, Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party) and the Progress Party agreed about the goal of 100 percent coverage of child care places in all the municipalities. One important part of the strategy to achieve this was the facilitation of private child care by promising these institutions the same financial support as public child care institutions. With the settlement also private child care institutions could receive 80 percent in financial support from the state, and as an additional incentive the state also offered establishment-funding. Although private child care had been present before, the settlement spurred an increase, and at the present (June 2012) private child care accounts for well over 50 percent of all the child care places in Norway. Another accompanying effect of this strategy was that opportunities were opened for private actors running child care to make profits. Unlike the freeschool law it was – and still is – allowed for these actors to take out profits, and it has been revealed in the press that some of the largest actors have done this to such large extents that even foreign investment funds have bought some of these previously Norwegian owned companies. The current red-green Stoltenberg II government (2005-) has responded to these events by signalling a change, and more restrictive line, in the child care law regulating the possibilities of taking out profits for these private actors. At the time of writing (June 2012) these amendments to the law had not been presented to the parliament.

Although the motivation for the child-care settlement was significantly different for the motivation behind the freeschool reform (to ensure 100 percent coverage), there appears to be some similar features in the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of the child care settlement. Future research applying discourse analytical perspectives could therefore contribute to a better understanding of privatisations as public sector reform by examining the discourses

that were – and still are –used in order to sustain or challenge these practices. Parallel arguments could also be made about commercially, in contrast to non-profit, run children protection services, child care for unaccompanied minor-aged refugees and privately run refugee reception centres.

Another avenue for further research concerns the running of private nursery homes for elderly. In these private homes it has become rather common to hire staff from private recruiting agencies on short-term contracts that, among other, help owners to be more flexible with respect to ensuring that staff-costs are kept at a minimum. In February 2011 the so-called 'Adecco-scandal' (after the multinational provider of human resource solutions Adecco) exposed some negative aspects with this practice. Then it was revealed that nurses, often from low-cost countries in Eastern Europe, were exploited and forced to work an illegally amount of over-time at a illegally low salary making it necessary for many of them to spend their nights and rest-hours in bunk-beds in the basement of these institutions. Despite the low percentage of commercially run nursing homes in Norway (less than five percent), for critics this was a serious incident of social-dumping and it also unmasked, as it was claimed, what happens to the quality of the nursing services when the Right parties in Norway get it as they want. Again, a discourse analytical examination of this controversy could reveal important similarities and differences in terms of the discourses and storylines that were used in order to sustain and challenge this form of privatisation as public sector reform.

Abstrakt (Danish)

Friskoleloven blev vedtaget af Stortinget i maj 2003 efter forslag fra Bondevik II regeringen (2001-2005, Højre, Kristelig Folkeparti og Venstre). Loven forandrede grundvilkåret for at kunne modtage offentlig støtte til privat skoledrift. Tidligere var det kun private skoler baseret på alternative religiøse eller pædagogiske principper som modtog offentlig støtte. Med den nye lov fik alle privatejede skoler som opfyldte gældende kvalitetskriterier for offentlige skoler mulighed for at få 85 procent av udgifterne dækket af staten. Der blev ikke længere lagt vægt på om skolen var baseret på alternative religiøse eller pædagogiske principper. Private aktører kunne dermed spille en større rolle i den norske skoleverden.

Reformen var stærkt omdiskuteret. Mens regeringen og Fremskridtspartiet så loven som et skridt mod bedre kvalitet i skolen, mere valgfrihed og også enklere at praktisere end den tidligere loven, var den i følge den rød-grønne opposition (Arbejderpartiet, Socialistisk Venstreparti og Senterpartiet) et angreb på det offentlige skolesystem. Etter stortingsvalget i 2005, hvor de rød-grønne (Stoltenberg II regeringen 2005-) vandt en marginal sejr, blev loven ophævet og erstattet med en lov som lignede den tidligere lov.

Baseret på analyser af stortingsdebatter, partiprogrammer, aviskommentarer og andre avistekster publiceret i tidsrummet 2001-2005, giver denne afhandling en analyse af denne reform. Målet for afhandlingen er todelt:

For det første at beskrive og forklare hvilke diskurser og hvordan disse blev brugt af regeringen og Fremskridtspartiet for å opretholde friskolereformen og af de rød-grønne for at utforde den. For det andre vil den bidrage til forskning om hvordan privatisering som reform af offentlig sektor bliver opretholdt og udfordret ved at demonstrere merværdien ved at anvende en modificeret poststrukturalistisk logik tilgang .

Den poststrukturalistiske logik-tilgang, som er udviklet af Jason Glynos og David Howarth, er et tre-dimensionalt rammeværk. I dette rammeværk karakteriserer *sociale logikker* praksisserne forbundet med reformen, mens *politiske logikker* og *fantasmatiske logikker* beskriver og forklarer hvordan reformen blev opretholdt og udfordret.

For at give påstande om sociale logikker teoretisk substans benytter afhandlingen elementer fra "cultural political economy" tilgangen, udviklet af Bob Jessop til at kontekstualisere friskolereformen som en del af Bondevik II regerings forsøg på at gøre Norge konkurrencedygtig i den globale kundskabsbaserede økonomi. Videre så anvendes elementer fra

en "governmentality" tilgang udviklet af Nikolas Rose til at karakterisere reformens sociale logikker som nyliberale og velfærdsstatslige. Ved at anvende disse tilgange hævdes det at reformen er *et "tredje vej"-projekt til en konkurrencestat, som er under udvikling.*

Ved at modificere Glynos og Howarth's logik-tilgang viser afhandlingen også hvordan forskellige politiske og fantasmatiske logikker udfordrede og opretholdt reformens sociale logikker. Dette gøres ved at inkorporere Maarten Hajers begreb om storylines og Norman Faircloughs begreb om diskurser. I denne modificerede logik tilgang kan storylines, og diskurserne de består af, opretholde eller udfordre de social logikker som karakteriserer reformen.

Ved at anvende denne tilgang identificeres to konkurrerende storylines. Disse kaldes *necessary-supplement* storylinen, som partierne i Bondevik II regering og Fremskridtspartiet brugte, og *destructive-release* storylinen, som den rød-grønne opposition brugte. Afhandlingen identificerer også syv diskurser som var centrale i necessary-supplenment storylinen, og som i forskellig grad og på forskellige måder ble udfordret af destructive-release storylinen. Disse identifikationer demonstrerer hvilke diskurser og hvordan disse bliver brugt for at opretholde og udfordre privatisering som reform af offentlig sektor.

De syv diskurserne som identificeres er som følgende: (1) en *ekspert-diskurs* som legitimerede forskellige påstande om blandt andet ressourceforbrug, social segregering og om loven i tilstrækkelig grad kunne regulere uønskede praksisser til friskolerne; (2) en *sammenlignings-diskurs* om andre lande, og da specielt Sverige; (3) en *diskurs om kvalitetsforøgelse* som lovet bedre kvalitet i både offentlige og private skoler, bedre international konkurrencedygtighed og som tenderede til at idealisere friskolernes rolle; (4) en *velfærdsstatslig diskurs* som fremhævede at reformen ville føre til at princippet om lige ret til utdannelse blev mere reel og at reformen ikke ville føre til mere social segregering; (5) en *diskurs om tillid* til forældre og til offentlige skoler; (6) en *diskurs om agens* som gav forældre og friskoler ulige roller i de sociale processer som blev antaget at blive faciliteret som resultat af reformen; og (7) en *diskurs om statens styringsdygtighed* som gjorde det muligt at imødegå påstande om at reformen var et destruktivt frisættelse af markedskræfterne.

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