

The Class Cleavage

Struggles over Comprehensive Schooling

This chapter explores the comprehensive school reforms of the 1950s to 1970s and examines how such reforms were legitimized or put into question ideologically. The analysis demonstrates how actors grouped into ideological camps along a political left-right axis in both cases, into protagonists, consenters, and antagonists of these reforms. The struggles around comprehensive school reforms should therefore be seen as an ideological expression of the class cleavage. However, political parties and teachers' organizations were not united, but most of the time divided internally into different wings that supported or opposed comprehensive schooling to different degrees. The most palpable difference between the cases is that the political right was ideologically comparatively more united in Germany, while the political left was more united in Norway. The ideological arguments that were used in debates about comprehensive schooling also differ markedly. Comparatively radical and leftist arguments became hegemonic in Norway, but not in Germany.

THE NORWEGIAN YOUTH SCHOOL REFORM

The introduction of a comprehensive lower-secondary school, the youth school, and the extension of obligatory schooling to nine years were first debated in Norway in the early 1950s. In 1954, a law on school experiments was passed unanimously. In 1959, parliament was split over the issue of whether the old school types, *realskole* and *framhaldsskole*, should be allowed to participate in experiments with nine-year obligatory schooling. The 1960s were characterized by debates about organizational differentiation. The two tracks of the youth school were replaced with

a system of ability grouping and elective subjects. In 1969, the law on primary schools regularized the youth school and finalized the abolition of the old school types but did not contain specific rules for differentiation. During the 1970s it was discussed whether grades in the youth school should be abolished. After a fierce public debate, the abolition of grading in the youth school was abandoned. With the curriculum of 1974, ability grouping was given up, and from 1979 the directives of the Ministry of Education stated that permanent ability grouping was unlawful until the ninth grade. Children were now taught in mixed-ability classes (*sammenholdte klasser*), based on the idea of pedagogical differentiation within the classroom. In the following, this development is examined chronologically in more detail.

Experiments with the First Youth Schools and Nine-Year Obligatory Schooling

The introduction of the youth school (*ungdomsskole*) was first suggested in 1952 by a commission (*Samordningsnemnda*) that had been put in place in 1947 to discuss the internal coordination of the education system (Telhaug, 1969, 24ff). In the spring of 1954, the Ministry of Education, led by the social democrat Birger Bergersen, proposed the law on experiments in the school (*lov om forsøk i skolen*), which was passed after little debate in June 1954. The law did not contain any details on the future school structure. It simply opened up the possibility for experiments. It instituted the Experimental Council (*Forskningsrådet*), which was intended to coordinate school experiments in line with the law (Mediås, 2010, 43). It was stipulated that the council should inform parliament about the experiments regularly. The law gave the ministry decision-making power as far as all school experiments were concerned. Far-reaching competencies were transferred from parliament to the ministry (Slagstad, 2001, 379ff; Telhaug, 1969, 32).

Conservative Party representatives made some minor suggestions for changes, but when these failed the law was passed unanimously (*Forhandlinger i Odelstinget*, June 17, 1954, 173f; *Forhandlinger i Lagtinget*, June 22, 1954, 75ff). At the time, the Conservative Party had no clear education-political profile but was internally split. One of its leading education politicians, Erling Fredriksfryd, consented to the youth school reform. Fredriksfryd was a primary schoolteacher and a parliamentary representative of the Conservative Party from 1945 to 1965. From 1958 to 1965, he was chair of the parliamentary education committee. In 1957, he

was chair of a commission within the Conservative Party that drafted the party's education-political manifesto. The program he stood for was summarized in the Conservative Party's electoral manifesto of 1957:

The Conservative Party wants to realize eight years of obligatory schooling for everyone as soon as possible. The organization of the school must be reorganized so that we obtain a six-year primary school and a three-year lower-secondary school. Obligatory schooling will comprise the primary school and the two first years of the lower-secondary school. The third lower-secondary school year shall be voluntary for the time being and give access to upper-secondary education [*gymnas*] (3-years). [...] Within the new lower-secondary school, it must be possible to differentiate based on predispositions, abilities, and future choice of profession through careful tracking which does not weaken the general education an obligatory school first and foremost must preserve. [...] In this way, the Conservative Party wants to actively advocate the creation of equal conditions of education for all youths, without regard to one's place of residence and economic living conditions.

Later, Fredriksfryd published two brochures that explained the details (Fredriksfryd, 1960, 1965). Notably, the lower-secondary school envisaged by Fredriksfryd was meant to replace the parallel school types of the *realskole* and the *framhaldsskole*. There was no consensus within the Conservative Party about this.

In 1955, the first three experimental youth schools with two internal tracks (*linjedelt ungdomsskole*) were founded in the municipalities of Malm (in the county of Nord-Trøndelag), Sykkylven, and Ørsta (in the county of Møre og Romsdal). In 1957, experiments began in seven more counties, in 1958 in another six, and in 1959 in the last twelve (Telhaug, 1969, 36). The ninth school year was not obligatory, so many students in the experimental schools dropped out. The Experimental Council therefore suggested to parliament that experiments should be started with nine years of obligatory schooling (Myhre, 1971, 113).

In the Labor Party's manifesto for 1958–61, it was stated,

The Labor Party is of the opinion that the future expansion of schooling shall aim at an expansion of the primary school to a nine-year general comprehensive school which will become obligatory for everyone. The nine-year comprehensive school must be organized in such a way that the upper grades of the primary school become a youth school which will replace *framhaldsskole* and *realskole*. [...] The Labor Party wants to erase the class division which is rooted in unequal educational opportunities.

In line with this, the Ministry of Education proposed a new *folkeskole* law in 1958 (*Ot. prp. nr. 30* [1958], *Lov om folkeskolen*). In contrast to the experimental law of 1954, this proposal caused a lot of debate and split

the educational parliamentary committee and parliament itself. The law made it possible for municipalities to introduce nine years of obligatory schooling, after consultation with the local school board and the ministry. The most highly contested point was whether the old school types, *realskole* and *framhaldsskole*, should be allowed to participate in the experiments with nine-year obligatory schooling (Telhaug, 1969, 55ff). The opposition parties, meaning the Conservative Party, the Christian Democrats, the Center Party, and the Liberal Party, wanted to include the old school types, but the Labor Party did not. The Labor Party had seven representatives on the parliamentary education committee, while the opposition parties had six. In the committee's statement on the proposition (*Innstilling fra kirke- og undervisningskomiteen om lov om folkeskolen*, 1959), the division was expressed clearly. The Labor Party majority advocated nine-year comprehensive schooling without any reservations and wished for a final decision to be made.

The oppositional minority suggested that the municipalities themselves should choose whether to introduce nine-year obligatory schooling through the new youth school or the old school types. The debates on March 13, 1959, in the two chambers of the Norwegian parliament were lively (*Forhandlinger i Lagtinget*, March 13, 1959; *Forhandlinger i Odelstinget*, March 5, 1959). Labor Party representatives pointed to the weaknesses of the *realskole*, which they considered to be overcrowded and lead to exclusion, and of the *framhaldsskole*, which they considered to be lacking quality. They saw parallel schooling as "costly, irrational, and unfortunate in many ways," especially in rural areas (Labor Party representative Anders Sæterøy, *Forhandlinger i Lagtinget*, March 13, 1959, 21). Trygve Bull, member of the parliamentary education committee for the Labor Party, expressed that, in the eyes of the Labor Party majority, the comprehensive principle itself was not to be subjected to experiments. Only the inner life of the school and its internal differentiation, pedagogy, and so forth should be developed further through experimental activity. Bull said,

What the majority wishes is to set a binding aim for the further development of the general children and youth school in our country. Without such a binding aim the development of the school system – and thereunder not least the building of schoolhouses all around in villages and cities – can come to pass under coincidental and shifting principles, and there will be a high degree of danger for significant false investments. The majority wants it to be asserted clearly and unambiguously that the social comprehensive school principle, which has been the basis of our seven-year *folkeskole* soon for 40 years, will in the future also be extended to the

two following years. (Trygve Bull, in *Forhandlinger i Lagtinget*, March 13, 1959, 3)

Clearly, the Labor Party cannot be accused of making a secret of its ambitions. The aim was to exclude any possibility of survival for the old school types. This was justified by the necessity to create equal educational opportunities, independent of economic, social, and geographical background. The ambition to overcome the parallel lower-secondary-school system was rooted in the conviction that it was necessary to achieve social levelling and break down educational middle- and upper-class and urban privileges. Such privileges had not been very exclusive in Norway to start with, but they were real (Aubert et al., 1960). The old school types were associated with different degrees of status and attended by students with different class backgrounds (Lindbekk, 1968, 1973, 88ff; *Innstilling frå Folkeskolekomitéen av 1963* [1965], 129). This inequality was unacceptable in the eyes of the Labor Party. In the words of the Labor Party politician Gudmund Hernes,

It was the underlying philosophy, that if you want tolerance and this type of mutual respect, [...] then they must learn to mix with one another. And you learn that at school. The school is the arena for this. So that was [...] an important part of the reason that one did not want to preserve the old class structure which came to expression through the school structure but change the school structure to create a different society. So you can say that it was an entirely different view of the school, [using] the school to preserve what is, with school types for different classes, now I'm saying it pointedly, to a situation where you are [...] using the school to create a more equal society. (expert interview)

Besides Fredriksfryd, there were two other conservative politicians on the parliamentary education committee at the time of the debates about the law of 1959: Per Lønning and Hartvig Caspar Christie. Christie was parliamentary representative of the Conservative Party from 1950 to 1959 and Lønning from 1958 to 1965. According to Lønning, Christie “represented the absolute oppositional extreme” compared to Fredriksfryd, and, as a result, “one noticed rather quickly that there developed a certain opposition within the conservative group of the committee” (expert interview). When the conservative parliamentary group prepared the parliamentary debate about the new *folkeskole* law, it was decided that Lønning should be the speaker for the party on this issue. Lønning described this in the following way:

Fredriksfryd was good at hiding his disappointment. But he did consider himself to be the Conservative Party's number one education politician. And I had no

experience as a primary schoolteacher. [...] There were many in the Conservative Party's group at the time who thought it was very nice that they had me who represented [...] the young people and the future but who at the same time was critical of the social democratic Swedish education politics. [...] They thought that it was very good to have me on that committee to keep the committee's chair somewhat in check. And [...] he was of average intellectual ability. And he wasn't the kind who ... even if he also spoke a few times in this *folkeskole* debate ... he was not very skeptical of the law proposal [...]. So he learned very quickly that he shouldn't get into a discussion with me because he had nothing to win on that and above all he didn't have the support of the majority of the Conservative Party's group to stir up such a war on his own. They trusted that [...] I would represent faith in the individual and critical moderation. (expert interview)

In the debates of 1959, Lønning and especially Christie showed skepticism of the comprehensive principle. Christie stated that the term "comprehensive school" (*enhetsskole*) had become "a propagandistic buzzword which is therefore little suited for a school program" (*Forhandling i Odelstinget*, March 5, 1959, 46). In his opinion, the *realskole* had been a good school that could not be blamed for its overcrowding by people who did not belong there. Instead, the alternative schools – meaning the *framhaldsskole* – had not been good enough and needed to be improved, not abolished. Lønning suggested that there had to be room for future school structures that differed from the "dogmatic comprehensive school scheme" of the Labor Party and warned that the danger lay in "over-emphasizing unity and thereby elevating the holy general average to the main norm" (*Forhandling i Odelstinget*, March 5, 1959, 14f). Differentiation in the youth school was essential in his eyes. Nonetheless, Lønning stated,

Personally I expect [...] that the so-called comprehensive school will potentially offer us a more richly differentiated school type with greater possibilities to preserve the individual student's abilities and dispositions than the school types we have today. I expect this but I don't see a reason to turn an assumption into a norm for future development. (*Forhandling i Odelstinget*, March 5, 1959, 15)

In the expert interview, Lønning explained that he supported the tracked youth school because he believed that "tracking could point towards a type of differentiation where the intellectual, [...] theoretical track's advantage is underlined anew." Presumably for this reason, Lønning supported Fredriksfryd in adding a special remark to the parliamentary education committee's report regarding the law. Here, the two of them indicated that they expected the tracked comprehensive school to become "the school type on which it will [...] be advisable to build obligatory

primary education” in the future but that they thought that for the time being it should also be permissible to experiment based on the old school types (*lønnt. O. II.* (1959), 11). Christie did not support this remark. In contrast to Christie’s and Lønning’s antagonism, Fredriksfryd underlined the many agreements between all committee members in the parliamentary debate and pointed out that, in his view, disagreements were merely a matter of nuances (*Forhandlinger i Odelstinget*, March 5, 1959, 61).

The Center Party’s representatives, the Liberals, and the Christian Democrats voted with the Conservative Party against the *folkeskole* law of 1959, but the reasons for their skepticism were different from the Conservative Party’s. For example, the Center Party representative Inge Einarsen Bartnes stated in the parliamentary debate that the main reason for his “mixed feelings” was his worry about whether there would be sufficient financial means for rural municipalities to execute the provisions of the law (*Forhandlinger i Lagtinget*, March 13, 1959, 9). The Christian Democratic representative Erling Wikborg agreed that those municipalities with the worst financial conditions had to “come first in line” but also pointed out that one of the things about this reform that appealed to him most was that “we shall achieve greater equality at the outset.” In fact, he considered it “an unquestionable advantage that one, for so many years, will attend school with other youths who have completely different pre-conditions than oneself” (*Forhandlinger i Lagtinget*, March 13, 1959, 18).

The Liberal Party representative Sivert Todal specified that comprehensive schooling in grades eight and nine should be introduced more “gradually” so that the municipalities that had not even managed to comply with the *folkeskole* law of 1936 would have sufficient time and flexibility during a “transitional period” (*Forhandlinger i Lagtinget*, March 13, 1959, 16). His fellow party member Bert Røiseland warned against forcing municipalities to teach all tracks in the same building, as this could lead to “forced centralization” (*Forhandlinger i Lagtinget*, March 13, 1959, 26). According to the interviewed expert Hans Olav Tunesvik, there was a certain “nostalgia” within the center parties regarding the abolition of the *realskole*, since this school type had produced such good results in some places. However, many rural municipalities did not have *realskoler*. Even where they did exist, only a small percentage of rural age cohorts attended them. The main worry of the center parties was thus not the abolition of the *realskole*; rather, they worried whether rural municipalities would have sufficient means and flexibility to manage the transition to nine-year obligatory schooling.

The opposition was supported in its skepticism by the Association of Norwegian Secondary Schoolteachers. In 1956, the association's yearly convention passed a statement against the abolition of the *realskole* and warned against any lowering of the *realskole*'s standard (Hagemann, 1992, 265; Marmøy, 1968, 49ff). In 1959, the association complained about not having been heard during the preparation of the *folkeskole* law and asked for the law proposal to be withdrawn (Marmøy, 1968, 56ff; Telhaug, 1969, 53). The secondary schoolteachers argued that the law proposal was not well prepared, that it anticipated the results of unfinished experiments, and that the powers it gave the ministry were too extensive (Marmøy, 1968, 59). There had been no commission to prepare the law, as had been usual earlier (Telhaug, 1969, 53f). Within the organization, the reforms were also critically discussed on the local level, where antagonistic voices could be heard in many places (Marmøy, 1968, 54ff).

The Female Teachers' Association was also skeptical of the law of 1959, however for somewhat different reasons. Female teachers supported prolonged obligatory schooling but opposed the abolition of the *framhaldsskole*. They were worried that education in homemaking would lose ground. Many of them did not have the necessary educational qualifications to teach in more academic lower-secondary schools, so the reform potentially threatened their jobs (Hagemann, 1992, 270ff). The small association of *framhaldsskole* teachers opposed a merger of the old school types for similar reasons. However, many *framhaldsskole* teachers and female teachers were instead organized in the largest teachers' association, the Norwegian Teachers' Association. Representatives of the Norwegian Teachers' Association had been more involved in the preparation of the law than the other teachers' organizations, as they had good personal contacts with the leaders of the Experimental Council and the ministry. They agreed with the Labor Party's ideological justifications of the reform but also profited from it structurally since the youth school was to become a part of the obligatory primary school. This opened up job opportunities for primary schoolteachers. For these reasons, they supported the reform wholeheartedly (Hagemann, 1992, 251ff).

Despite the opposition's caveats, the law was passed by the Labor Party's majority. From this point on, any municipality that wanted to introduce nine-year obligatory schooling had to do so by introducing the youth school as a new school type. Usually, the youth school would last three years, and the *folkeskole* would therefore be shortened to six years, but a seven-year *folkeskole* and a two-year youth school were also

possible. Municipalities that already had *realskoler* could introduce a nonobligatory tenth school year.

Experiments with Reduced Organizational Differentiation

To begin with, the youth school was divided into vocational and academic tracks resembling the older school types. The tracks began in the second year of the youth school and were distinguished in the beginning mainly by whether learning a foreign language was obligatory. During the last year, the students following the practical track had fewer hours of mathematics, social sciences, and natural sciences and instead could choose from the subjects shop-floor work, homemaking, office work, agriculture, or fishing and seafaring (Telhaug, 1969, 68). The experimental curriculum from 1960 included ability grouping through *kursplaner* (course plans). There were three ability levels in Norwegian, mathematics, and English, while there were two in German and natural sciences. The curriculum designed by the Experimental Council suggested ability grouping from the first year of the youth school, the seventh grade – in other words, at an earlier point than had been usual in the old seven-year *folkeskole*. In a parliamentary debate on June 8, 1961, it became clear that the parliamentary majority did not want this. The Labor Party representatives, but also the representatives of the center parties, thought that there should be no ability grouping in the first year of the youth school and tracking should generally be more flexible.

Again, one of the arguments used by the center parties, for example by Center Party representative Einar Hovdhaugen, was that later differentiation in the new youth school would allow greater “elasticity” for rural municipalities (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, June 8, 1961, 3479). Hovdhaugen also warned that “it would be a disaster if one’s IQ should be a criterion for the choice of track” and suggested that experiments with ability grouping should be expanded to overcome the problems with current forms of differentiation. It was important to the Center Party that differentiation would not produce “losers” and lead to student apathy (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, June 8, 1961, 3480). The Christian Democrat Hans Karolus Ommedal expressed his concerns that ability grouping might lead to disorder in the school and pointed to the small rural schools as good examples of how the common teaching of all students in the classroom could be accomplished (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, June 8, 1961, 3487).

The Conservative Party alone had not taken a position for or against tracking and ability grouping in the seventh grade and wanted experiments with different models of tracking to continue, arguing that it was necessary to adapt schooling to individuals' abilities (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, June 8, 1961). For this, they were mocked by the Labor Party politician Håkon Johnsen, secretary of the parliamentary education committee. He complained that the Conservative Party's school manifesto of 1957 had not included tracking in the seventh school year. Johnsen pointed out that, in 1957, Fredriksfryd had been responsible for the development of the Conservative Party's education-political manifesto:

Since then, Mr. Fredriksfryd has been shoved aside and Mr. Lønning, who has a completely different view regarding these issues, acts now as the Conservative Party's speaker in these questions. I must therefore ask: is this just the result of an ambitious young man's sharp elbows, or is it so that the Conservative Party has changed its view on these issues since 1957? (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, June 8, 1961, 3475)

Over fifty years later, Lønning mentioned this remark in the expert interview as an example of how the Labor Party attempted to split the opposition parties. Fredriksfryd was not happy about the situation, nor did he give up his stand on the nine-year comprehensive school. But antagonistic voices were slowly becoming louder within the Conservative Party.

Experiments with different curricula, tracking, the introduction of a tenth grade, and ability grouping continued (Seidenfaden, 1977, 18ff). From 1962, students were assessed in relation to their ability group. This meant that the same grades from different ability groups were not worth the same. In 1963, the *folkeskole* committee was set up to work on a law proposal that would end the experimental phase of the introduction of the youth school (Telhaug, 1969, 122). In June 1965, the committee presented a report in which it had drafted reasons for and against various forms of differentiation and evaluation (*Innstilling frå Folkeskolekomitéen av 1963* [1965]; Telhaug, 1969, 122ff). One aspect was the question of which combinations of tracks, course plans, and subjects would be necessary to qualify for upper-secondary schooling at the *gymnas*. These schools had introduced the requirement that students had to have attended the highest ability groups in Norwegian, English, German, and mathematics (Telhaug, 1969, 87ff).

The Experimental Council published several revised versions of the experimental curriculum from 1960. These were known as the blue plan (1963), the red plan (1964), and the green plan (1965). In these plans, organizational differentiation was decreased. In the blue plan, tracking

was abolished. The number of obligatory, common subjects for all students rose. Differentiation was now more flexible and based on different choices of elective subjects. It was made possible for all students, no matter what their elective subjects, to choose the highest ability groups in mathematics, English, and Norwegian (Myhre, 1971, 119; Telhaug, 1969, 91ff). In the red plan and the green plan, the number of obligatory subjects was increased further (Myhre, 1971, 120f). In 1965, the Experimental Council started experimenting with mixed-ability classes (*sammenholdte klasser*, literally “kept-together classes”) in Norwegian and, from 1968, in mathematics. This was justified by studies showing that students in different ability groups did not always differ much in ability. The best students in the lowest ability groups were often better than the worst students in the highest group. The groups were not homogeneous (Dokka, 1986, 119ff; Telhaug, 1969, 118). The trend was one toward diminishing organizational differentiation and instead using pedagogical differentiation within the classroom.

The Labor Party, the Socialist People’s Party, and the center parties supported this development, as became clear in the parliamentary debates of 1963, 1965, and 1969 (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 21, 1963; *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, June 8, 1965; *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, April 21, 1969; Telhaug 1969, 101ff). In the eyes of the Labor Party and the Socialist People’s Party, the problem with ability grouping was that it reproduced the social inequalities that had characterized the old school types. Children from the upper and middle classes were overrepresented in the higher ability groups (Lindbekk, 1968, 1973; Telhaug, 1969, 143f). The fear was that ability grouping led to a stigmatization of the students in the lowest ability groups. For example, the Socialist People’s Party stated in its manifesto of 1965,

Children and youth schools should be organized so that they serve to equalize social class divisions. The school classes must be kept together most of the time, with the highest possible amount of differentiation within the class.

For the Labor Party, the abolition of organizational differentiation in the youth school was also connected to the aim of increasing the status of practical and vocational education. In its manifesto for 1966–9, the Labor Party stated for example that “practical and theoretical education must be deemed to be of equal value” and that “[t]he school system must not create social divisions as a result of differences in education.”

The center parties did not include any remarks on tracking or ability grouping in their manifestos. The details of differentiation

within the school were not a priority for these parties. Most small rural schools did not have enough students to implement ability grouping anyway (Telhaug, 1969, 143). However, in parliamentary debates the center parties voiced criticism. The Liberal Party representative Torkell Tende pointed out that tracking had meant “only the choice of *framhaldsskole-realskole* in a new version”; to him it seemed advisable to keep classes together, even after the seventh school year, with the help of an individual “differentiation in pace” (*Forhandling i Stortinget*, May 21, 1963, 3350). The center parties’ representatives disliked the fact that grades in the different ability groups were not worth the same and that this created unfairness with respect to upper-secondary schooling. They also considered ability groups to have a stigmatizing effect. As Center Party representative Einar Hovdhaugen put it,

I’d like to underline that the nine-year school should be a comprehensive school. We are creating divisions here which in my opinion are unfortunate. Those who choose a lower ability group almost have a duty to be a little stupid. (*Forhandling i Stortinget*, June 8, 1965, 3703)

However, the representatives of the center parties used most of their speaking time during the various parliamentary debates on education during the 1960s to address other issues closer to their hearts (see Chapter 5). They had accepted the fact that the new school type would replace the old parallel school types and rarely referred to earlier disagreements on this issue.

By 1963, the Conservative Party had given up its adherence to tracking, which was now considered to be out of date. Instead, the conservatives suggested expanding experiments with ability grouping. As Per Lønning stated in the parliamentary debate of May 1963, the abolition of tracking should not lead to the abolition of all differentiation (*Forhandling i Stortinget*, May 21, 1963, 3312ff; Telhaug, 1969, 101ff). In its manifestos, the Conservative Party made more detailed suggestions than the center parties regarding the development of schooling and differentiation. In 1965, the manifesto stated that the great pressure on schools “must not lead to a lowering of standards.” The manifesto also warned that some duties could only be fulfilled by the home and that one must avoid “creating ideas about society taking over the home’s responsibilities.” It stated that differentiation was necessary and that experiments with various forms of differentiation should be expanded to overcome problems with the current system. In

1969, similar formulations, including a reference to the *realskole*, were included:

The problem of differentiation must be solved through systematic and widespread experiments. Curricula must not be determined before the results of experiments have been thoroughly analyzed. [...] Those students who aim at upper-secondary theoretical education must receive schooling on the same level as in the former *realskole*.

The Regularization of the Youth School

From 1965 to 1971, the four “nonsocialist parties” – the Conservative Party, the Center Party, the Liberal Party, and the Christian Democrats – governed, with Per Borten from the Center Party as prime minister. The youth school reform proposal, which the *folkeskole* committee had been preparing since 1963, was followed up. In the spring of 1967, the minister of education, Kjell Bondevik, a Christian democrat, presented the law proposal on the nine-year comprehensive school (*Ot. prp. nr. 59* [1966–7] *Lov om grunnskolen*). The minister himself was of the opinion that “one would not have received a strongly differing proposal from another government” (quoted in Telhaug, 1969, 129). The law ended the experimental phase and regularized the new school type, the youth school. The term *folkeskole* (people’s school) was replaced by the more modern term *grunnskole* (primary school), which comprised both the *barneskole* (children’s school) and the *ungdomsskole* (youth school). The law obligated all municipalities to introduce the youth school by 1975 (Mediås, 2010, 45).

In April 1969, the law was passed. The only two representatives who voted against the law were from the Socialist People’s Party. Spokesperson Finn Gustavsen considered the Norwegian school to be too centralized, not democratic enough, and too strongly based on exams. In his view, schools supported a “competition and career mentality” (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, April 21, 1969, 288). He also did not support the strong focus on Christian education. The first paragraph of the law (*formålsparagrafen*) had been a source of massive conflict revolving around the relations between church, parents, and the school. In the end, a compromise was reached that was supported by all parties, except the socialists (Tønnessen, 2011, 72f; see Chapter 5).

This outcome was not what the Association of Norwegian Secondary Schoolteachers had wished for. As indicated by a survey among 1153 *gymnas* teachers in 1969, the introduction of the youth school was hard to

accept for many of them. Over 40 percent of the interviewed teachers agreed fully or mostly with the statement that “the decision to introduce the nine-year school was taken because the many people who disagreed, mostly did not dare to publicly oppose the political buzzwords which were used” (Lauglo, 1972, 9). Almost 70 percent of the interviewed *gymnas* teachers agreed fully or mostly that nine years of obligatory schooling were too much, and 57 percent agreed fully or mostly that the old school forms of the *framhaldsskole* and *realskole* should have been expanded instead of introducing the youth school (Lauglo, 1972, 10). However, the secondary schoolteachers adapted to the conditions and did not organize opposition when the law of 1969 was passed.

The law did not offer any solution to the problems of differentiation, ability grouping, and evaluation. The question of differentiation was avoided. The ministry was hesitant (Telhaug, 1969, 129). Kjeld Langeland, representative of the Conservative Party, explained in the parliamentary debate that it was still too early to make a decision. Experiments had not come far enough (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, April 21, 1969, 256).

There are a few indications that the center parties were more open to the abolition of ability grouping than the Conservative Party. For example, the Liberal Party representative Olav Kortner criticized the Conservative Party’s representative Kjeld Langeland for his choice of words. Langeland had spoken of “so-called social reasons” in relation to parents’ choice of ability group. Kortner did not like the tone of this. His opinion was that ability grouping was creating “considerable social problems” and that it was necessary to “intensify experiments [...] to find more socially beneficial forms [of differentiation], for example forms of mixed-ability classes” (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, April 21, 1969, 262).

In the interviews, the experts who had been active in the center parties at the time were asked why their parties did not attempt to reverse the comprehensive school reforms when in government but instead continued on the path that had been laid out by the Labor Party. To this, Hans Olav Tunesvik – then a member of the Liberal Party and later a member of the Christian Democrats – replied,

My impression is that the whole thinking about expanded obligatory schooling [...], this idea of equality, the idea to give equal choices to all, it wasn’t just social democrats and the Labor Party that supported this. It was an idea which had broad support, to contribute to greater equality and greater opportunities for all. So I think there was a consensus in Norwegian politics that we should give better choices to our young people and equal choices. But we were somewhat divided

with respect to the degree to which one should offer specialized choices. And the Conservative Party [...], how should I put this? They have always gone further than the others in individualization. [...] They have always been most concerned about giving choices which fit and not least giving choices to the most able. So there's somewhat more of an elitist line of thought there than in the other parties. On this issue I believe that all the center parties, the Christian Democrats, Center Party, and Liberal Party, have a line of thought which is more closely related to the line of thought of the Labor Party. (expert interview)

Other experts, such as the Christian Democrat Jakob Aano agreed that the conservative/center parties' government of 1965–71 was mostly a time of continuity in education politics. The Christian Democratic minister of education Kjell Bondevik supported the introduction of the youth school. Apart from the law on private schooling that was passed under his leadership (see Chapter 5), he had no interest in any far-reaching changes of the school structure.

A new committee was appointed, *Normalplanutvalget*, with the pedagogue Hans-Jørgen Dokka as chair. This committee had to discuss the question of differentiation again and found itself in a "painful dilemma" (Telhaug/Mediås, 2003, 234). In its reports from 1970, the abolition of ability groups was suggested. It was said that the focus had to lie more on the individual student and that group homogenization would not solve the problem. However, mixed-ability classes depended on smaller class sizes, new teaching material, and the possibility of dividing students up in groups more flexibly (Dokka, 1986, 119ff).

In 1971, the non-leftist government collapsed because of internal disagreement about membership of the European Community. While the Conservative Party supported membership, the Center Party was against, and the Liberal Party and the Christian Democrats were split. The Labor Party again took over government. In April 1972, the Labor Party's Congress and the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions decided to support membership. However, 53.5 percent of the voters voted against membership in a referendum in September 1972. The Labor Party government left office. From 1972 to 1973, the center parties created a short-lived government, followed by new Labor Party governments from 1973 to 1981.

The Grading Debate

During the 1970s, the opposition between the social democrats and conservatives became more pronounced. Lars Roar Langslet, chair of

the parliamentary education committee from 1973 to 1980 and parliamentary representative of the Conservative Party from 1969 to 1989, described the development over time:

I would say that within the Conservative Party there was a steadily growing feeling that our people who were working with school policy were too evasive and nice and just following along. And that it was important to set in place a corrective to this pedagogy of reform that was a victorious current across the board. [...] But [...] I believe that it was an area of consensus in many ways, the politics of schooling, in this phase. And this probably also had something to do with there not being any consciousness among education politicians on the top level within the Conservative Party that it was necessary to develop oppositional politics, it was just easier to follow along and “strew sand” over what was coming from the so-called experts. [...] It became much more intensified when Lønning came in and since ... when I came in, this gradually became an area of confrontation within politics during the 70s. And there were a few primary concerns over which the Conservative Party gained a strong profile, and which gave us the feeling that the Labor Party’s education politics were on the retreat. (expert interview)

One of the issues Langslet refers to here was the debate on grading. Grades in the first three years of the *folkeskole* had been abolished already in the curriculum of 1939, and from 1962, grades in the fourth grade were abolished (Tønnessen/Telhaug, 1996, 23; *St. meld. nr. 42* [1964–5], 15f). In the Labor Party’s manifestos, it was stated on several occasions from 1969 onward that the nine-year comprehensive school should be “free of exams.” In September 1972, the Ministry of Education appointed an Evaluation Committee (*Evalueringsutvalget for skoleverket*) to examine all questions related to the evaluation of students. A united parliamentary education committee agreed to the appointment of the Evaluation Committee, stating that “today’s regulation with final exams and grades based on the achieved results has inherent weaknesses” (*Innst. S. nr. 287* [1971–2], 548). It was said that grading provided little motivation for the weakest students and that it could lead to an overly strong focus on achieving good exam results. In the same year, grades were abolished throughout the six-year children’s school (Mediås, 2010, 46; Myhre, 1971, 140). This did not lead to much debate. Many supporters of the reforms, such as the members of the Primary School Committee, the Experimental Council, and education politicians within the Labor Party, anticipated that the next step would be to abolish grades in the youth school.

On February 26, 1974, the ministry, led by the Labor politician Bjartmar Gjerde, issued regulations that restricted grades in the youth school to Norwegian, English, and mathematics. This led to protests.

Many parents, students, and teachers were against the regulations. In April, the Conservative Party, the Christian Democrats, the Center Party, and even the Socialist Electoral Alliance issued statements asserting that the regulations should be withdrawn and that no regulations should be issued before the reports of the Evaluation Committee had been published (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 8, 1974, 3126).

On May 8, 1974, the regulations were debated in parliament. In this debate, several of the Labor Party's representatives attacked the grading system (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 8, 1974, 312off). It was pointed out that grading destroyed students' motivation for learning and that it was unfair to judge students not based on their effort but based on their varying preconditions. Grades did not convey a nuanced picture of students' abilities and effort but led to an overly high focus on simple and inadequate measurements. The same performance could be graded differently depending on the composition of the class, since the students' performances were compared with each other, not with their earlier personal achievements. This meant to these Labor representatives that whether a student would be admitted to upper-secondary schooling was to a high degree the result of luck, with major repercussions for students' lives. Grading was harmful with respect to the aim that students should feel safe and respected at school. The Labor Party politician Einar Førde summarized his position the following way:

[A] grading system and competition socialize [people] into the status quo. To all the radical people who now defend the grading system, I'd like to say: haven't they considered that one of the most important conditions for the capitalist competition society to work is that one manages to convey this to the school in the form of grades? The grading system splits the students, and they can then be catalogued as good and bad. [...] It produces losers. The grading system is the currency of the capitalist education system. (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 8, 1974, 3133)

The conservative speakers made it clear that their party was opposed to any reductions in grading. On this issue, they were more united than in the debate about the structural reforms. Lars Roar Langslet expressed the conservative position:

The Conservative Party disagrees in principle with the abolition of grades and exams in the primary school. The old system was far from perfect but there have also been made great exaggerations in referring to the hunt for grades and exam pressure. A mentality of unhealthy competition must of course be dealt with, but it is not unhealthy that the school stimulates students to achieve something, to reach towards a goal. [...] I think this answers a human need. The "loser" problem at

school has to be tackled in a positive way. [...] We won't solve this by taking away the measuring scales. (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 8, 1974, 3126)

Like Lønning, who had argued against the abolition of grading in the *folkeskole* in the 1960s (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, June 8, 1961, 3474; *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, June 8, 1965, 3697f), Langslet argued that written evaluations could lead to more arbitrariness than grades (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 8, 1974, 3126).

The center parties consented to the abolition of grading in the children's school but stood closer to the Conservative Party than to the Labor Party regarding the question of grading in the youth school. The Center Party representative Ola O. Røssum declared that "the school must not needlessly contribute to and strengthen career chasing and demands for achievement" and that it was therefore sensible to have abolished grades in the children's school (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 8, 1974, 3120ff). But he deemed it impossible to abolish grades in the youth school as long as upper-secondary schooling had not been expanded sufficiently to grant access to everyone. The Christian democrat Kjell Magne Bondevik agreed that while the intention might have been good, the regulations were "a pedagogical and political mistake." Like Røssum, he thought that the abolition of grades in the children's school had been sensible but that selection for upper-secondary schooling necessitated grading in the youth school. "Nuanced evaluations" could possibly be added to or replace grades at some future point, "when there is a basis for it." He reacted strongly to the accusations of the Labor Party that had been calling opposition to the reduction of grading an expression of "conservative currents in the population." He did not want to be identified with the label "conservative" and thought that the Labor Party was flattering itself by labeling the reduction of grading "a radical reform" (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 8, 1974, 3128f). The Liberal Party representative Hans Hammond Rossbach, a secondary schoolteacher, agreed that abolishing grades in the youth school was a bad idea since the necessary conditions for such a step were not met. He pointed out that both the students' and the teachers' associations were opposed to the new regulations (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 8, 1974, 3134).

He thus pointed to a difficulty for the Labor Party. Not surprisingly, the Association of Norwegian Secondary Schoolteachers was critical of the abolition of grades. However, as was lamented by several of the Labor Party's speakers, the Norwegian Teachers' Association could also not be depended on regarding this question.

In earlier statements, the organization had suggested that grading in the youth school should be reduced to the subjects of Norwegian, mathematics, and English and had supported the reduction of grades to a minimum. But in March 1974, the primary schoolteachers sent a letter to the ministry complaining that they had not been heard and stating that they opposed the reduction of grading (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 8, 1974, 3135). Internally, they were split on the issue. As Kari Lie, at this point secretary of the Norwegian Teachers' Association and formerly active in the Female Teachers' Association, stated, "There were several people on the national board who thought I was hopeless for wanting to keep grades in the system" (expert interview). According to Lie, one reason for this disagreement was that many primary schoolteachers were not as radical as the progressive pedagogues who supported the abolition of grading. Like herself, some found it difficult to produce written evaluations of students' achievements and thought that such evaluations could be more harmful than a bad grade.

Furthermore, even the Labor Party itself was internally split on the issue, as was confirmed by several of the interviewed experts. In his book, Langslet (1977, 47) quotes a Gallup poll, according to which 89 percent of Labor Party members supported grades in the youth school, against only 9 percent who wanted them abolished. In the expert interview, he added that during this phase he had met "central people in the Labor Party who were quite crestfallen about how these school reformers had harried [them]" (expert interview).

Despite all this, the majority of the Evaluation Committee concluded in its first report in 1974 that grades should be abolished in the youth school (*NOU 1974: 42 (1974) Karakterer, eksamen, kompetanse m.v. i skoleverket, Eva I*). The minority agreed with abolishing grades in the children's school but thought that youth school students should be given grades if they wanted them. Another minority even wanted to abolish grades in upper-secondary schools (*NOU 1974: 42 [1974] Karakterer, eksamen, kompetanse m.v. i skoleverket, Eva I*). In its second report from 1978, the committee suggested that entry to the *gymnas* should become independent of grades (*NOU 1978: 2 [1978] Vurdering, kompetanse og inntak i skoleverket, Eva II*). These reports created much debate. Over 2600 comments were sent in during the hearing. Two-thirds of those were negative about abolishing grades in the youth school (Tønnessen, 2011, 79ff; Tønnessen/Telhaug, 1996, 26). The Norwegian Teachers' Association disagreed with the committee's proposals, even though they

showed a willingness to discuss the grading system based on further research (Tønnessen/Telhaug, 1996, 28).

As a result of the massive opposition even within the Labor Party's own ranks, the Labor Party minister Bjartmar Gjerde decided to backpedal. After the debate of May 9, 1974, he had already repealed the regulations on the reduction of grading. The socialist school reformer and primary schoolteacher Kjell Horn described the change of course as follows:

There had been put in place this Evaluation Committee which concluded that grading should not be used in an obligatory primary school. And I was sent around the country as consultant of the Primary School Committee to argue for this system on behalf of the [...] ministry. I thought that I was doing a rather good job but apparently not good enough because this reform had no enthusiasm among the Norwegian people. Then one day, Gjerde comes to my office and stares at something. He is not looking at me but past me. And then he asks me what I am doing, and I tell him and he says "Yes, but grading, that is not a topic for the Labor Party any longer," he said. Oh dear! (expert interview)

The Final Debate on Differentiation

The debates on differentiation in the youth school also became more polarized during the 1970s. The Conservative Party became more clearly antagonistic, but on this matter the Labor Party asserted itself. In 1972, the entire parliamentary committee had agreed with the suggestion of the *Normalplanutvalget*, of the Primary School Committee, and of the Labor Party-led ministry to abolish the current ability-group system, which was producing inequality of opportunity in the eyes of almost everyone (*Innst. S. nr. 287* [1971–2]). This decision came into effect in 1975 with the new curriculum (*Mønsterplanen for grunnskolen, M74*). The parliamentary committee's statement of 1972 also contained the following sentences:

The committee would, however, like to assert that the primary school will need various forms of organizational differentiation also in the years to come. In the long term, it should be a goal that the individual school can develop the form of differentiation which fits best to local conditions. (*Innst. S. nr. 287* [1971–2], 547)

In 1973, the manifesto of the Conservative Party asserted that the individual school should have responsibility for choosing the best form of differentiation. The conservative manifesto of 1977 opposed mixed-ability classes:

With today's scarce resources, a rigorous implementation of the principle of classes that are "kept together" means that one shoves a regard for students'

needs into the background. The Conservative Party thinks that it is necessary to develop satisfying forms of organizational differentiation, while keeping the class as a social unit.

Lars Roar Langslet's (1977) book serves to illustrate the growing conservative antagonism. In the book, Langslet did not question the nine-year comprehensive school as such and showed some sympathy for the aim of developing a spirit of community between all youths, independent of social background. But he also wrote,

I myself supported the "farewell" to the ability-group system [in 1972] and don't want to deny my responsibility for this. But I must admit that I have become doubtful whether this was right. I think the ability-group system was, pedagogically, a good solution for the question of differentiation and presumably better than the new regulation with mixed-ability classes [...] is likely to become. (Langslet, 1977, 56)

He did not support special schools for especially able children, which could "justly be branded as an attempt to create 'apartheid' in the school" (Langslet, 1977, 62). Nonetheless, he claimed that the ablest students had been neglected by social democratic school reforms and that social democrats had no respect for inequalities but instead aimed exclusively at erasing or hiding them (Langslet, 1977, 34ff, 61f). He also pointed out that, while much could be done to give disadvantaged children better chances, political measures "can under no circumstances go so far that all important inequalities disappear" (Langslet, 1977, 39). This "pessimistic insight" was hard for socialist education politicians to accept (Langslet, 1977, 39). He made the further accusation that to the socialists, "competition in itself [was] an evil which mirrors the basic inhumanity of the capitalist system" (Langslet, 1977, 40).

In the interview, Langslet dubbed social democratic education politics "a sentimental school ideology," aimed at turning the school into a counterpart of the "abominable capitalist society outside, where demands for performance at work are made and where there is competition and all kinds of ugliness" (expert interview). By way of comparison, the socialist politician Theo Koritzinsky pointed out that competition and hierarchies were important mechanisms for conservatives. Even though they would never have said that they supported differentiation with the aim of reproducing class differences, "they know full well that this is what can happen ... and for them it's not a problem; that's how it is; that's life; that's how we are made" (expert interview).

In May 1979, these oppositions became visible in the final parliamentary debate on permanent ability grouping. The exact rules regarding organizational differentiation had been unclear since 1972 (*Stortingstidende* [1976–7], 2100 f; *Stortingstidende* [1977–8], 2694ff). For this reason, the Ministry of Education issued new regulations stating more clearly that permanent ability grouping throughout the course of a whole year was not allowed. Grouping students was only allowed on a short-term basis (*St. meld. nr. 34* [1978–9], 11).

In the debate on these regulations, the Conservative Party's representatives criticized the Labor Party's "equality ideology" in harsh words. The conservative politician Håkon Randal, a member of the parliamentary education committee, thought that the abolition of ability grouping would lead to a "lowering of standards" and that it violated the school law (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 11, 1979, 3360). His fellow party member Tore Austad considered it a "great and very deplorable step backwards" to make ability grouping throughout a school year unlawful (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 11, 1979, 3367). Another conservative member of the parliamentary education committee, Karen Sogn, complained about the Labor Party's "hysterical reaction" to the Conservative Party's support for more far-reaching organizational differentiation. She quoted the Labor Party politician Reulf Steen, who had accused the conservatives of supporting "apartheid in the school" and of working for an "elite school." This, to her, was proof that the Labor Party was elevating "ideological considerations" above what was best for the individual student (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 11, 1979, 3373f). The conservatives also demanded that the Experimental Council be abolished, that structural reforms end, and that the focus should now be on improving the quality of teaching by introducing stricter demands regarding the content of schooling (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, April 17, 1975; *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, April 20, 1978; *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 11, 1979; Langslet, 1977).

The Christian Democrats and the Center Party sided with the Conservative Party against the new regulations (*Innst. S. nr. 215* [1978–9]). Even though the Center Party and Christian Democrats had agreed in the 1960s and early 1970s that the ability-group system was unfair, they now defended local schools' freedom with respect to organizational differentiation, including ability grouping. The Christian Democrat Olav Djupvik attacked the Labor Party for turning pedagogical questions into

“ideological questions” in accordance with its “misunderstood equality ideology”:

If forms of instruction can no longer, without ideological concerns, vary based on what schools and the home at any time consider best for the individual student, we cannot, in my opinion, claim for ourselves to be fighting for equality. We have then accepted that certain forms of instruction are discriminatory. And that is an expression of a discriminatory attitude. (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 11, 1979, 3364)

To this, the Labor Party representative Kirsti Grøndahl replied,

Mr. Djupvik talked much about the Labor Party’s “misunderstood equality ideology.” The mistake is not that the Labor Party has a misunderstood equality ideology. The mistake is that Djupvik has misunderstood the Labor Party’s equality ideology. My speech also included a very negative remark about homogenous ability groups, Mr. Djupvik said, and that is indeed true. [. . .] We want to do something about this and it is of course nice that Mr. Djupvik has also understood that what we are against is something negative. (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 11, 1979, 3382)

Clearly, there was little sympathy between the Christian Democrats and the Labor Party at this point. However, the debate was dominated primarily by the antagonism between the Labor Party and the Conservative Party, whereas most representatives of the center parties did not choose equally strong words. The Center Party representative Leiv Blakset pointed out that he would like to “strongly underline” that it was right to focus on creating the best conditions, especially “for the weakest students,” though this should not mean neglecting the most able (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 11, 1979, 3368). His fellow party member Johan Syrstad regretted that the debate had been dominated by “buzzwords” and that the participants had “gone into the trenches.” He also thought that the Labor Party’s position was not so far removed from his own, since they agreed on the most important point: to give “considerable local freedom to the individual school.” He thought that it was a better idea to “let those who deal with the problems of daily life” make the decisions, instead of introducing “new, centrally issued regulations” (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 11, 1979, 3381). In other words, for the Center Party it was mostly a matter of principle to oppose central regulations.

The Liberal Party was weak at the time and not represented on the parliamentary education committee. The Liberal Party representative Odd Einar Dørum made it clear that his party sympathized more with

the point of view of the Labor Party, even though he thought it difficult to detect “great oppositions” in the parliamentary committee’s report:

Both groups agree, and the Liberal Party supports this view, that grouping shall be based on local conditions and that one should use common sense in this regard. Furthermore, the Labor Party says that one wants to avoid long-term grouping. This is a view I share. [...] We supported the abolition of the ability-group system, and we want to assert that this is a definite position. We are happy to state that we cannot see – if we base ourselves on the words which have been chosen here – that there is anyone who wants to return to the ability-group system. (*Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, May 11, 1979, 3376)

Dørum thus pointed to a difficulty faced by the opponents of the new regulations. It was hard to argue for organizational differentiation against the accusations of the Labor Party and the Socialist Left Party that one wanted to reintroduce the ability-group system through the back door. This system had become utterly unpopular. The directives were eventually passed by the parliamentary majority of the Labor Party and the Socialist Left Party. Due to this decision, a long-term development from parallel school types to tracked lower-secondary schooling, to ability grouping, and finally to the abolition of all organizational differentiation came to an end.

When the conservatives regained power in 1981, they abolished the Experimental Council and changed curricula. However, they did not attempt any far-reaching reversal of the structural reforms. According to Langslet, the main reason for this was “that one was fed up with reforms” and that the school now deserved “a quieter period where one should instead make the best out of the existing system.” Furthermore, he pointed out that “we weren’t a majority government, so we had to take into consideration whether this could receive support in parliament and such a total reversal would presumably have been a utopian project” (expert interview).

It would be wrong to say that changes came to a complete halt at this point. The regulations of the 1980s focused on the content of schooling more than on the outer structure of the system. During the 1990s, the comprehensive reform ideas were taken up again by the Labor Party’s minister of education, Gudmund Hernes. Under Hernes’ leadership, the age of school enrolment was lowered from seven to six years, thereby extending the children’s school to seven years again and comprehensive education to ten years. Upper-secondary education was also reformed further. However, at this point, the historical narrative of this chapter comes to a close. The final words shall be given to the Labor Party

representative Einar Førde, minister of education from October 1979 to October 1981, who pointed out the following in the final parliamentary debate on organizational differentiation in May 1979:

This demand for “peace in the school” apparently has a totally debilitating effect on the ability for thinking of the conservatives. If it is so that they are unhappy with the situation of today, they must of course reform themselves out of it – unless they are so naive as to believe that there is a way back to what was, back to the *framhaldsskole* and the *realskole*. [...] But they can hardly be so naive. This way back is of course as closed as the way back to the Garden of Eden. The social unrest and the unrest in the school which would arise if one attempted to turn back to the systems we have left behind would be unrest of a wholly different character and of a wholly different seriousness than the unrest which is now used as an excuse for not doing anything about what one doesn’t like. (Einar Førde, in *Forhandlinget i Stortinget*, May 11, 1979, 3378)

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORMS IN NORTH RHINE–WESTPHALIA

In 1959, the “framework plan for the remodeling and standardization of the general school system” sparked off new reform discussions. During the second half of the 1960s the integrated comprehensive school became a topic of debate. In 1966, the last Christian democratic government of NRW introduced the *Hauptschule* and nine years of obligatory schooling. In 1969, the first seven integrated comprehensive schools were founded and by 1975, another sixteen such schools followed. Within these schools, organizational differentiation by ability grouping was the rule. In the early 1970s, even the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) was open to the introduction of so-called cooperative comprehensive schools. During the 1970s, the opposition to comprehensive schooling grew and reformers’ aim that the integrated comprehensive school should replace all parallel school types was gradually given up. In the second half of the 1970s, the NRW government attempted to introduce the cooperative school as an additional school type that was a combination of the *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*, with comprehensive schooling in grades five and six followed by three tracks. This led to the collection of 3.6 million signatures against the reform. The government withdrew the law. The integrated comprehensive school became an additional school type beside the older ones and lost its experimental status in 1981. In the following, these reforms are discussed chronologically.

Early Debates on Comprehensive and Nine-Year Obligatory Schooling

In NRW, the initial postwar years were a time of restoration. In education politics, the main conflict was about denominational schooling (see Chapter 5). In 1959, the German Committee for the Education and School System (*Deutscher Ausschuss für das Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen*) published its “framework plan for the remodeling and standardization of the general school system” (*Rahmenplan zur Umgestaltung und Vereinheitlichung des allgemeinbildenden Schulwesens*). This document suggested the upgrading of the upper grades of the *Volksschule*, termed *Hauptschule* in the document, by introducing a ninth and later tenth school year, an obligatory foreign language, and ability grouping in important subjects. It also suggested the introduction of a two-year transition or orientation stage after the first four years of schooling in the lower *Volksschule*, termed *Grundschule*. Grades five and six should serve to prolong the period of decision-making for one of the secondary school types. The SPD, the FDP, and the different organizations of *Volksschule* teachers supported these suggestions, while the CDU was hesitant (Herrlitz et al., 2009, 168).

The Godesberg manifesto of the SPD from 1959 stated that “all privileges in access to educational institutions must be eliminated” and that “for any able person the way to secondary schools and educational institutions must be open.” It also demanded ten years of obligatory schooling. In its manifesto for the federal state elections in NRW in 1962, the SPD stated,

To pave all ways for all children so that they can let their strengths unfold and develop their dispositions without restrictions, for the good and for the use of humanity and for their happiness – is this not a task which would be worth the strongest commitment? [...] Neither the father’s wallet nor the social standing of the family, neither the large or small number of children nor the denomination or the belonging to a group of the people – nothing should stand debilitatingly in the way, when the aim is to let unfold and develop the gifts and abilities of the young person.

The manifesto informed voters that the NRW SPD had passed a motion in 1959 in response to the “framework plan.” They had suggested the introduction of an “orientation stage” for all children in grades five and six that would prepare them for the school type they would attend from grade seven. It was argued that this could prevent a “draining” of the *Volksschule* and an overcrowding of secondary schools “with students who are unfit for scientific work.” Extending comprehensive schooling by

two years was thus presented as a measure that would strengthen selection at a later point.

In 1960, the Education and Science Workers' Union published its "Bremen Plan" (*Bremer Plan*), in which it suggested an extension of comprehensive schooling by two years. From grades seven to ten, schooling should be organized in three tracks. This was justified as follows:

The school of a modern society as a society of free and equal people should be realized through a dynamic, unified ladder system of schooling. [...] The school of the modern society should be a school of social justice, in which there is equality for all at the start, in which all normal children, by staying together until the end of the sixth grade, gain real experiences of companionship, before differences in ability and diligence have a separating effect. (Bremen Plan of 1960, quoted in Kopitzsch, 1983, 172)

The Bremen Plan led to fierce reactions from the CDU and the Catholic Church because it also envisaged a secularization of the school system. The plan was said to be indistinguishable from the communist school program of the German Democratic Republic (Kopitzsch, 1983, 190). It led to controversial debates within the union and soon disappeared from the agenda. In the following years, the union's national chair, Heinrich Rodenstein, preferred to speak of "educational centers" in which traditional school types should be combined to increase permeability (Kopitzsch, 1983, 230).

In the early 1960s, education debates accelerated, and Georg Picht (1964) coined the phrase "the German educational catastrophe," referring to the low number of secondary school graduates and the large urban-rural and class inequalities. From 1962 to 1966, Paul Mikat from the CDU became minister of education in the last CDU-FDP coalition in NRW. He was young, more inclined to reforms than his predecessor, Werner Schütz, and supported experiments with tracked comprehensive schools (Mikat, 1966, 38; Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs of NRW, 1965). He did not always have the support of more conservative CDU representatives. The former CDU politician Wilhelm Lenz mentioned that Mikat "would have been willing to do more" if the minister of finance had not restrained him (expert interview). During the first half of the 1960s, the CDU-FDP government created new paths to the *Abitur* exam by extending evening schooling and upper-secondary schooling for *Realschule* graduates and by increasing the number of *Realschulen* and *Gymnasien*, especially in

rural areas (Düding, 2008, 488ff; Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs of NRW, 1965; Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs of NRW, 1967). This was not subject to much debate, as there was consensus that the number of *Abitur* graduates needed to be increased (Fälker, 1984, 101f).

In July 1964, the party executive committee of the SPD passed the “Educational-Political Guidelines” (*Bildungspolitische Leitsätze*), which more boldly than before suggested replacing parallel schooling with a ladder system of education and employed the term “comprehensive school” (*Gesamtschule*) for the first time. The social democrats now suggested a six-year primary level of schooling followed by a four-year lower-secondary level and a three-year upper-secondary level. For the lower-secondary level, they envisaged a common core of teaching in addition to differentiated teaching in courses and ability groups. They considered the introduction of a two-year orientation stage in grades five and six and increased permeability between the traditional school types to be steps in the right direction. In the long term, all school types should be integrated into one organizational unit (Vorstand der SPD, 1964, 12ff). The NRW chapter of the Education and Science Workers’ Union (GEW) also included the integrated comprehensive school (*integrierte Gesamtschule*) in its program in 1965.

The Association of Philologists, on the other hand, opposed comprehensive schooling in its Göttingen Resolutions published in 1964:

The differentiation of modern working life demands a richly structured school system. [...] A leveling comprehensive school [*nivellierende Einheitsschule*] cannot do justice to the state of society today or in the future. Just as those who are endowed below average need special support, those who are endowed above average are also eligible to be supported as early and as much as possible. Support which starts too late impedes the development of endowments and sentences those who are endowed above average to boredom and thus to the degeneration of their innate possibilities. At the same time, the human development and educational support of the more weakly endowed are impeded. [...] For this reason, a pillared general and vocational school system is indispensable. (*Göttinger Beschlüsse*, quoted in Fluck, 2003, 207)

In the same document, the Association of Philologists supported an educational expansion based on preparatory forms of the *Gymnasium* and *Realschule* [*Aufbauschulen /Aufbauklassen*]. It also emphasized parents’ rights to decide about the education of their children. Permeability between the school types was supported to a certain degree but not “at any time point” since this would lead to “a lowering of achievements.”

The philologists viewed the *Gymnasium* as the school of the future elites and therefore as particularly important. It was stated,

The *Gymnasium* needs to stick to the principle of achievement; because for every nation the endowments are its most valuable property. An efficient economy is not [...] imaginable without a great number of personalities who are scientifically qualified and qualified in character. (*Göttinger Beschlüsse*, quoted in Fluck, 2003, 209f)

In October 1964, the Düsseldorf Agreement of 1955 between the federal states was renegotiated. The result was the Hamburg Agreement. This agreement stipulated nine years of obligatory schooling and allowed ten years of obligatory schooling. It suggested the introduction of the *Hauptschule* – meaning the upper stage of the *Volksschule* – as a secondary school type in addition to the *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*, and a two-year transition stage in grades five and six, which should be common for all schools. These were discretionary clauses. Upper-secondary courses, preparing *Realschule* and *Hauptschule* graduates for the *Abitur*, were regulated. A foreign language, usually English, was introduced to the curriculum of the *Volksschule*. Experiments with new school structures were allowed (Friedeburg, 1992, 349). The *Ministerpräsidenten* of the federal states governed by the CDU also signed this document, which is an indication of the drive toward reform.

In November 1964, the CDU organized a political congress in Hamburg, at which new guidelines for “education in the modern world” were passed. Here, the CDU stated, “the German education system must be shaped so that everyone, who is [...] capable, is offered his chance.” It supported increased “permeability” of the school system through the introduction of preparatory forms of the *Gymnasium* and *Realschule* [*Aufbauschulen*], which should recruit able students from the *Volksschule*. “In our education system, there must be no ‘one-way streets,’” the guidelines said. Nevertheless, the guidelines emphasized that a shortening of the *Gymnasium* would endanger academic standards. A comprehensive school was considered unsuitable for the aim of supporting all talents in the population. The paper also opposed an obligatory orientation stage in grades five and six.

Educational planning was intensified. In 1965, the German Educational Council (*Deutscher Bildungsrat*) was founded as the successor of the above-mentioned German Committee. It was comprised of an educational commission consisting of scientists and an administrative commission, which included school administrators and

educational politicians. The council published reports, studies, and recommendations for experiments and reforms (see e.g. Deutscher Bildungsrat, 2003 [1969]; Deutscher Bildungsrat, 1973; Deutscher Bildungsrat, 1975).

In June 1966, the CDU-FDP government of NRW passed a law on obligatory schooling (*Schulpflichtgesetz*) that regulated the introduction of nine years of obligatory schooling. The law introduced the institutional distinction between the four-year primary school (*Grundschule*) and the five-year upper stage of the *Volksschule*, now called *Hauptschule* (Fälker, 1984, 75, 114). However, the *Hauptschule* remained attached to the *Grundschule*. This was opposed by the SPD. Social democrats voted against the law because they did not find it far-reaching enough (*Landtag NRW*, May 11, 1966; *Landtag NRW*, May 25, 1966).

On June 14, 1966, the NRW section of the Association of Philologists organized a rally in Essen to protest the new trends in education politics. The chair of the NRW section, Clemens Christians, argued at the rally that it was wrong to assign the *Gymnasium* the achievement of equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity could only be achieved through additional support in preschool (quoted in Fluck, 2003, 215). Fluck (2003, 216) also quotes vice-chair Hanna-Renate Laurien, who later became minister of education in the Rhineland-Palatinate for the CDU. She said,

The modern society is democratically structured and structured by achievement. In it, everyone shall receive their optimal chance; in it, citizens' rights are in principle equal, but it is not for this reason a society of people with equal status. What holds true in general for society must also hold true in the pedagogical area: special achievements, special requirements must be valued; egalitarian, leveling conceptions are not democratic – as they are sometimes presented – but are ideologies.

The Introduction of the Integrated Comprehensive School

In July 1966, the SPD won the NRW elections. The new *Ministerpräsident*, Heinz Kühn, preferred a coalition with the CDU, but the parliamentary group insisted on forming a government with the FDP (Düding, 2008, 520ff). In education politics, the most pressing issue was still denominational schooling. Through negotiations with the CDU, a compromise was reached in June 1967 and new school laws were passed in February 1968. The *Hauptschule* was decoupled from the primary school and became nondenominational (see Chapter 5).

In 1968, the national Education and Science Workers' Union passed a motion for the integrated comprehensive school. It was not the first union to do so – the Industrial Union of Metalworkers (IG Metall) and the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) had passed motions in support of the integrated comprehensive school earlier on (Kopitzsch, 1983, 221, 269). There had been internal debates in the Education and Science Workers' Union (Kopitzsch, 1983, 228). Ilse Brusis, active in the union from 1960 and chair of the NRW chapter from 1975 to 1981, described how the union's young teachers decided to struggle for comprehensive schools in the late 1960s:

The Federal Committee of Young Teachers of the Education and Science Workers' Union organized a national conference each year. [...] So we sat together once again to plan this conference. [...] Then someone said: the students must be taught together for longer than four years. [...] They don't have it in Great Britain, they don't have it in France, they don't have it in the Scandinavian countries, why do they have it here? [...] The development has become stuck! This inspired us all that we should now demand and discuss this. And we did. Of course, word got round in the union; they want to discuss the *Einheitsschule* [comprehensive school]. So we said deliberately, "We don't call it *Einheitsschule*, *Einheitsschule* sounds too much like the GDR, we call it *Gesamtschule*." There was restlessness among the old, what are the young doing here? We organized our national conference and the chair, Professor Rodenstein, came [...] to give us a piece of his mind. If we passed this, the entire Education and Science Workers' Union would fall apart. The philologists could not be kept in the union, [...] and the *Realschule* teachers probably would [leave] as well and then the vocational teachers and then the entire union would be ruined. (expert interview)

The expert Anne Ratzki, who has also been active in the union for decades, confirmed that, in some cases, even the union's *Hauptschule* teachers were against integrated comprehensive schools on the local level, if the introduction of such a school implied that their own school would be shut. Internal divisions between teachers at different school types persisted after the integrated comprehensive school had been included in the union's official program. In other words, the Education and Science Workers' Union was not entirely united.

In January 1969, the German Educational Council published a recommendation for school experiments with integrated comprehensive schools, which should integrate the parallel school system with the help of internal ability grouping (Deutscher Bildungsrat, 2003 [1969]). Around the same time, the Kühn government decreed the establishment of the first seven such experimental schools in NRW. These were located in

Dortmund, Fröndenberg, Gelsenkirchen, Kamen, Kierspe, Oberhausen, and Münster. In November 1969, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the federal states agreed on an experimental program with forty such schools throughout the Federal Republic (Düding, 1998, 113).

Not all leading social democrats supported the integrated comprehensive school experiments wholeheartedly. In NRW, neither the *Ministerpräsident*, Heinz Kühn, nor the minister of education from 1966 to 1970, Fritz Holthoff, were particularly enthusiastic. According to several interviewed experts, Kühn did not prioritize comprehensive schooling because he wanted to avoid conflict and thought that it would be sufficient to open the *Gymnasium* up to children from the working class. Holthoff was a *Volksschule* teacher and cared about working-class children's access to good-quality education. However, he belonged to the older generation and did not like the rhetoric of the party's younger, more anticapitalistic wing. Much of Holthoff's writing was dedicated to his conflict with the "New Left," whom he accused of turning the comprehensive school into a school "which institutionalizes class struggle and class hate" (Holthoff, 1975, 16). Holthoff (1975, 16) did support a "convergence of school types" into a "general school" with the aim of achieving "social integration" but thought that such a development should be conducted "patiently and with convincing words."

The social democratic school reformer and social scientist H.-G. Rolff, who belonged to the SPD's leftist wing, believes that lack of support from Holthoff was crucial, since Holthoff was minister of education in the largest federal state at an important time:

We wanted the integrated comprehensive school as the nationwide regular school, my senator [Carl-Heinz Evers, school senator of Berlin] and the minister. [...] That was Ernst Schütte, minister of education in Hessen before Friedeburg. We also had quite good influence within the SPD. [...] All of us wanted the comprehensive school with blanket coverage [*flächendeckend*, meaning without any parallel schools]. And this chap Holthoff, minister of education in NRW, was our biggest opponent. It wasn't the CDU, it wasn't the FDP, they also wanted experimental programs and all kinds of things but the *Volksschule* teacher, Holthoff, who became minister of education here and who in our opinion had an inferiority complex because he hadn't studied properly but only gone to a Pedagogical Academy and didn't have [an academic] title. He wanted to defend and preserve the three-tiered school system. (expert interview)

After the elections of 1970, conditions became more favorable for reform. The reform supporter Jürgen Girgensohn became minister of education in

NRW. In the coalition agreement of the SPD and the FDP, the intended intensification of comprehensive school experiments was stated. The elections had brought several reform-oriented, young people into the NRW parliament, replacing older SPD politicians (Düding, 2008, 631).

One of them was the interviewed expert Reinhard Grätz, who confirmed that the SPD was far from united on comprehensive schooling. He replaced an SPD politician from his hometown of Wuppertal, Walter Jahnke. Jahnke had been chair of the SPD parliamentary group's working group for cultural issues. He was a *Realschule* teacher and was not supportive of the integrated comprehensive school. Two other SPD education politicians, Hans-Joachim Bargmann and Hans-Günther Toetemeyer, opposed Jahnke in this group. They were reform-oriented representatives of the teachers' organization within the SPD (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft sozialdemokratischer Lehrer*). As Grätz described it in the interview,

When I shyly appeared for the first time there [in the SPD parliamentary group's working group for cultural issues], [...] I was received by these two, Bargmann, Toetemeyer, like a demi-God. This is that boy who made it against that Walter Jahnke [laughs]. That was such a relief to them that Walter wasn't there anymore as a delayer of education politics. (expert interview)

Another young, reform-oriented SPD politician, who was voted into parliament in 1970, was Anke Brunn. She summarized the justification for comprehensive schooling as follows:

The most important argument for the integrated comprehensive school was that the children were separated too early on to different educational paths and that permeability was necessary which simply wasn't sufficiently given in the earlier, pillared school system. And that one could thus support children more individually. That was the idea, while the classical pillared German education system [...] was a system of exclusion and allocation of social chances, or the rejection of social chances. [...] And this idea of ascent through education and qualification through education and a future through education, [...] had to correspond with an education system which supports and doesn't exclude. (expert interview)

This idea increasingly gained ground. In 1970, the German Educational Council published the Structural Plan for the Education System (Deutscher Bildungsrat, 1973; Herrlitz et al., 2009, 175ff), where it suggested a ladder system of education. The system should start with pre-school education and continue with a four-year primary school, followed by a lower- and upper-secondary stage. The fifth and sixth grades should

be an orientation stage. Differentiation based on interests and abilities should start at the lower-secondary stage with elective courses.

Within the FDP, there had also been changes around 1970, and the social-liberal wing of the party was strengthened. In the early manifestos of the FDP, such as the one of 1961, there were only general formulations stating that access to higher education should be opened to “talented people from the employed population” and should not be prevented by “economic reasons.” During the 1960s, the social-liberal wing began to advocate school reforms more explicitly (see e.g. Dahrendorf, 1965; Heinz, 1970). In 1969–70, the FDP introduced its concept of the “Open School” (*Offene Schule*). The Open School was the liberal version of the integrated comprehensive school and differed from the social democratic concept in its more pronounced focus on internal differentiation. The NRW FDP stated in its manifesto for the NRW elections of 1970,

A state is only democratic if it offers its citizens actual equality of opportunity. [...] Until a thorough educational reform in the form of the Open School has been realized, the life chances of our children will not be equal. Each child must have the opportunity to receive an education appropriate to their abilities, independent of social background.

In the same manifesto, the NRW FDP supported the expansion of experiments with comprehensive schools. The manifesto stated that all former school types should be combined in the Open School, which should be divided into a kindergarten level, a primary school level, a lower-secondary level, and an upper-secondary level. The manifesto advocated a “flexible course system” within the Open School and individual support for all students. In 1972, the FDP published its Stuttgart Guidelines for Liberal Education Politics (*Stuttgarter Leitlinien*), in which it confirmed its support for far-reaching comprehensive school reforms.

In 1970, the Kühn government published a manifesto for NRW, which listed the reforms it intended to implement from 1971 to 1975 (*Nordrhein-Westfalen-Programm 1975*). This document stated that “the general idea of the comprehensive school [...] is hardly contested today” and suggested the establishment of thirty integrated comprehensive schools. This aim was not reached, but by 1975 sixteen more such schools had been founded. For the long term, the document announced that comprehensive education would be introduced on a general level, if experiments were favorable. It mentioned the reduction of educational inequality between urban and rural areas as an argument for comprehensive schools. Children from different social strata should learn to

cooperate and students' achievements should be increased through an increased "joy in learning."

The manifesto also included suggestions to increase the number of *Gymnasium* schools and to expand the *Hauptschule* with a tenth school year. This was not considered as standing in the way of a more far-reaching structural reform in the future. The upgrading of the *Hauptschule* was important for social democrats. In 1969, the education policy committee of the SPD (*Bildungspolitischer Ausschuss*) warned that the *Hauptschule* was about to become a "rest school" with low social standing and argued that the *Hauptschulen* would have to be of good enough quality to ensure that they could be transformed into comprehensive schools later (*ENTWURF: Modell für ein demokratisches Bildungswesen*, 1969, 47; see also Dowe, 1968; Hippenstiel, 1968).

Reforms Suggested by the Christian Democratic Union

The reformers among the interviewed experts were, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, convinced that a general introduction of the comprehensive school was possible. It seemed as though, with thorough planning, most political goals would be achievable. When I interviewed the former leading CDU politician Wilhelm Lenz, I asked him whether this reform spirit had to a certain degree affected the CDU in NRW. He replied,

Yes. The reason for that was that the old generation of parliamentary representatives was gone. The successors were young people. [...] They were more open to such thoughts. And to some extent there was also the opinion; we must not eternally keep saying "no" in questions of schooling. (expert interview)

In other words, the CDU now showed cautious willingness for reform, for strategic reasons and because of the conviction of a few reform-oriented CDU politicians. In its Deidesheimer Guidelines of 1969 (*Deidesheimer Leitsätze*), the CDU again outlined its education policy. Education was termed a "basic right." "Equality of opportunity in the access to educational institutions" was considered "a condition for a democratic social order, in which achievement decides the social standing of the individual." The manifesto demanded a "tracked achievement school" (*gegliederte Leistungsschule*) with "differentiated, permeable" educational paths, namely, for the secondary level, the five-year *Hauptschule*, the six-year *Realschule*, and the eight- or nine-year *Gymnasium*. The tracked structure was justified by differing "abilities and inclinations of the individual" and by the "varied educational requirements of society." The manifesto

suggested that curricula in grades five and six should be similar in all school types so that it would be possible to correct the choice of educational path during this time. In other words, the CDU now supported a weakened version of the orientation stage. The manifesto supported the introduction of ten years of obligatory schooling “in the medium term.”

From 1970 until 1972, the CDU published a range of more reform-oriented documents. In 1970, the NRW CDU published its manifesto for the federal state elections. Here, the NRW CDU demanded a “sensible integration of all educational institutions” and that principles of “permeability and differentiation” should be equally ranked. It also demanded ten years of obligatory education and teacher training oriented toward levels of schooling rather than school types. However, as the manifesto stated, “intellectually gifted [students] need to be particularly supported.” The manifesto emphasized that “objectively equal educational chances” should become “subjectively” accessible through better educational counseling.

In 1971 the national CDU published a manifesto for schooling and university education (*Schul- und Hochschulreformprogramm der CDU*), and in 1972 CDU politicians, including several ministers of education, published a paper entitled “Education Politics on Clear Paths – a Program of CDU/CSU Priorities.” In the 1971 manifesto, the CDU demanded the introduction of organizational differentiation within all school types and a reform of curricula so all schools would teach “common core obligatory subjects” and permeability would be increased. It even stated that “the new secondary level overcomes the three-pillared structure through a clearly arranged, permeable combination of schools [*Schulverbund*].” The documents from 1971 and 1972 also supported a reform of teacher training oriented toward levels of schooling rather than school types and the introduction of an orientation stage in grades five and six.

In NRW, the CDU parliamentary group prepared a motion in 1971 that suggested experiments with “cooperative comprehensive schools”; this was meant as a more strictly tracked alternative to the integrated comprehensive school. It was emphasized that this school type should be “more than an additive combination of the *Hauptschule*, *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*,” that it should have a shared headship and enable students to switch between the tracks (*Landtag NRW*, November 15, 1971).

In 1973 the CDU representative Karl Nagel, a *Hauptschule* teacher, even suggested in the parliamentary education committee that the cooperative comprehensive school, as designed by the CDU, could be introduced with blanket coverage from August 1, 1974, without further

experiments. He stated that while the school experiments with integrated comprehensive schools only encompassed a small percentage of students, the CDU proposal of 1971 had been intended to “initiate a reform of the entire lower secondary level” (*Landtag NRW*, September 13, 1973, 9). This is remarkable, for if the SPD and the FDP had gone along with this suggestion, the *Gymnasium* would have been abolished as a separate school type. The SPD’s education politicians, however, favored the more far-reaching integrated comprehensive school. They considered the CDU proposal a continuation of the traditional school system with “the fig leaf of so-called cooperation,” since the CDU proposal envisaged a differentiated, not an integrated, orientation stage (Hans Schwier, SPD representative, *Landtag NRW*, September 13, 1973, 11).

Remarks by CDU politicians during the parliamentary education committee’s meeting in September 1973 indicate that their support for cooperative schooling was motivated by several worries. When the CDU motion for cooperative comprehensive schools was debated, the crisis of the *Hauptschule* was discussed. A speaker for the Ministry of Education remarked, “with respect to the question whether the cooperative school could reduce the increasing popularity of the *Gymnasium*,” one needed to consider that parents had the constitutional right to choose the school type for their children (*Landtag NRW*, September 13, 1973, 11). CDU representative Nagel responded that it was necessary to channel the “streams of students,” or else one would have to restrict parental rights of choice or introduce admission exams at the universities (*Landtag NRW*, September 13, 1973, 12). One motivation of the CDU in the early 1970s thus seems to have been to re-channel a greater number of students back to the *Hauptschule* school type (or – in this concept – track) and away from the prestigious *Abitur* exam and university entry. As Nagel later explained in parliament, the other motivation was to undermine the more far-reaching idea of integrated comprehensive schooling (Blumenthal, 1988, 105f):

When you [...] in practice wanted to introduce the integrated comprehensive school, we would rather have been willing to introduce our model “cooperative school.” (*Landtag NRW*, November 25, 1976, 1812)

During the early 1970s, the CDU was not perceived as a stable ally by the Association of Philologists but considered “very unsettled and split into different political directions in education politics,” as the philologists’ representative, Fluck (2003, 228), points out. The CDU could not be depended upon. The Association of Philologists had no such periods of

insecurity but opposed any reform that endangered the *Gymnasium* as a nine-year secondary school.

Continued Struggles over the Integrated Comprehensive School

After several years of negotiations, the Commission for Educational Planning published the General Education Plan in 1973. The national government and the six SPD-led federal states wanted to introduce comprehensive education until the tenth grade. The five CDU-led federal states expressed dissenting opinions with respect to the introduction of integrated comprehensive schools and the orientation stage in grades five and six (Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung, 1973, 16; Friedeburg, 1992, 404ff; Herrlitz et al., 2009, 177f). Toward the NRW elections of 1975, comprehensive schooling increasingly turned into an “apple of discord” (Düding, 1998, 116). The atmosphere changed.

In May 1974, the NRW government proposed a motion according to which the integrated comprehensive school would become a regular school type (*Regelschule*). The motion suggested that the parallel structure should be abolished in favor of a horizontal ladder system. The two-year orientation stage in grades five and six should become the rule and be independent of school type, so that comprehensive schooling would be prolonged by two years (*Landtag NRW*, May 7, 1974). When the proposal was debated, minister of education Girgensohn specified that the proposal was not meant to abolish the old school types straightaway but should merely lay the ground for a long-term reform. In his view, it was probable that the introduction of fully comprehensive schooling would first be accomplished in the course of one generation (*Landtag NRW*, July 11, 1974, 4436). “I don’t want integration at any price!” he declared (*Landtag NRW*, July 11, 1974, 4466).

But even this modest proposal soon seemed too radical. The comprehensive school experiment was now perceived to be “in crisis,” as discussed in a publication of the Association of Education and Upbringing (*Verband Bildung und Erziehung*, VBE) (VBE, 1974). In this publication, the association stated that it neither supported nor opposed the experiments in principle, but it did not approve of radical reformers’ attempts to use comprehensive schooling as a tool for social change. The experiments should focus on pedagogical questions, with the aim to create a school more attuned to students’ needs than the current system, but should not be used for anticapitalistic propaganda. Even though the chair of the NRW chapter of the Association of Education and Upbringing at the time,

Albert Balduin, supported the comprehensive school, the association did not want to be associated with socialist ideas. It was already losing some of its Catholic members, while increasing numbers of moderate social democrats were joining (Bongard, 2012, 11f). Still, many of the CDU's municipal politicians and some CDU parliamentary representatives were members of the association. It had to balance its positions carefully. As Uwe Franke, a representative of the Association of Education and Upbringing NRW, explained,

I think that [...] the term comprehensive school was socio-politically overburdened in the early 1970s. There were too many very different opinions about what the comprehensive school was. At least in this class struggle which was declared by big intellectual groups in the 60s and 70s, it was used also as a term which made conservatives and moderates think: this is a school of reeducation. It turned away from its original idea of the comprehensive school [*Einheitsschule*] of the 1920s or the American High School and Secondary School [...]. And [...] it turned into a [...] socio-political counter-concept. (expert interview)

The increasing political polarization came to expression in the federal elections in Hessen in 1974.¹ In NRW, the SPD's coalition partner FDP now blocked the implementation of the orientation stage. As a result, a law was passed in February 1974 which merely continued the experimental status of the comprehensive schools. The reference to the long-term integration of all school types was removed. The orientation stage was not mentioned at all (*Landtag NRW*, February 19, 1975). In the final parliamentary debate regarding this law, the speaker for the FDP, Wolfgang Heinz, justified the latter decision by adducing time pressures, since the legislative period was almost over. He stated,

a legal regulation of the school-type-independent orientation stage – which we too consider absolutely essential – requires the closest examination and coordination with all those involved. This is not possible now. Therefore, we will propose this motion in the next legislative period. (*Landtag NRW*, February 27, 1975, 5266)

He declared that an attempt to pass the orientation stage in the course of only one or two months would have been met by the opposition with “prevarications and purposeful misrepresentations” in order to create an

¹ In Hessen one of the most important reform supporters within the SPD, Ludwig von Friedeburg, had been minister of education from 1969 to 1974 and had attempted to introduce comprehensive school reforms. These encountered enormous opposition. Even though the SPD and the FDP could continue their federal government after the elections of 1974, the CDU had become the strongest party. Friedeburg was forced to resign by the coalition partner, FDP (Friedeburg, 1992, 459).

“adrenalized atmosphere” (*Landtag NRW*, February 27, 1975, 5265). Furthermore, he underlined that a six-year primary school would be a better solution but that the FDP had not received support from the other parliamentary groups for this suggestion. The CDU opposition met Heinz with derision. CDU representatives interrupted him, calling him a “pushover,” and ridiculing the FDP’s change of mind as a “dancing procession” (*Landtag NRW*, February 27, 1975, 5265).

In the same debate, the minister of education, Girgensohn, was the only SPD speaker who – with characteristic honesty – admitted that he was unhappy with the changes made to the motion (*Landtag NRW*, February 27, 1975, 5271ff). *Ministerpräsident* Kühn stated that, for him, the comprehensive school was the most desirable school type of the future but that opponents of such reforms should not be overruled but persuaded. When the leader of the CDU opposition, Heinrich Köppler, attacked him for the first part of his statement, he stated that, in his view, the comprehensive school was still in a state of experimentation and that it was not the SPD’s aim to introduce this school type as a regular one immediately. He even spoke against an extension of the number of experimental schools (*Landtag NRW*, February 27, 1975, 5268, 5270).

The CDU’s willingness for reform had now evaporated. The CDU’s manifesto for the NRW elections in 1975 stated,

As long as [...] school experiments do not necessitate a different judgment, a school structured into school types and permeable across levels of schooling does best justice to inclinations and abilities; it corresponds with different structures of endowment. This school imparts fairness of opportunity and offers parents and students possibilities and decision-making support [...]. Thus, a CDU federal state government will develop the *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium* as equally valuable schools [...], with [...] equally valuable leaving certificates, in an organizational form adapted to the regional and social structure [...], in manageable sizes.

The CDU had now replaced the term “equality of opportunity” (*Chancengleichheit*) with the term “fairness of opportunity” (*Chancengerechtigkeit*). This was an attempt to underline that inequality was not a problem, as long as everybody received a fair chance. The party had also given up its support for ten years of obligatory schooling and had gone back to the position that nine years of obligatory schooling were enough. Experiments with integrated comprehensive schools, it was stated, would only be supported if “they are necessary to develop new pedagogical and school-organizational insights, if they are continuously scientifically controlled, [...] and if alternatives are provided.”

A comprehensive orientation stage was rejected, and it was instead suggested that curricula in grades five and six should be coordinated across school types. The manifesto of 1975 declared that the “neglected *Hauptschule*” would be developed into an “attractive alternative to the *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*.”

The SPD’s manifesto for the NRW elections of 1975 remarked,

Reforms need time. Especially the big reforms which make up a great deal of leeway. There are no reforms without difficulties and problems. [...] [T]hese are the problems that arise because something is changing for the better. Therefore, we warn against those who want to use the unavoidable difficulties of today to stop the reforms or even reverse them to reintroduce the old privileges and injustices. What has been achieved, more and better education for all [...], must be safeguarded and expanded.

The “problems” referred to here were manifold. For example, the experimental schools were accused of underperforming academically. As Anne Ratzki, principal of one of the first integrated comprehensive schools in NRW, pointed out, the opponents were comparing “apples with pears,” since the social background of the children in the integrated comprehensive schools was different from the social background of the children in the *Gymnasium*. The experimental schools also struggled with a lack of suitable school material, curricula, and buildings, and teachers’ lack of experience of comprehensive teaching. In Ratzki’s words,

It was very hard. [...] There was nothing, no books, no nothing. There were the children, very different children. [...] And these first teachers came from all kinds of schools. [...] They had to develop teaching units which were responsive to these different children. That was a lot of work. [...] And it wasn’t appreciated by the ministry. [...] So [...] frustration began to set in. (expert interview)

The NRW elections of 1975, and the national elections of 1976, showed that the SPD was losing ground to the CDU. Unemployment was rising and a crisis was under way in the steel industry (Briesen, 1995, 244ff). In his first government policy statement after the election of 1975, Kühn pointed out that slowing economic growth meant that public revenue would diminish. He declared that the aim of the government would be to “secure the initiated reforms” and that educational reforms should be continued in a “sober-minded” way. The development of curricula and teacher training should take precedence over organizational reforms (*Landtag NRW*, June 4, 1975, 14ff). The coalition agreement did not contain far-reaching educational-political suggestions. Experiments with

comprehensive schools would be continued with the earlier planned number of thirty schools (Blumenthal, 1988, 16; Düding, 1998, 117).

The strategy of the CDU now became to justify the parallel school structure with an increased focus on the *Hauptschule*. Several CDU representatives, such as Karl Nagel and Peter Giesen, who were *Volksschule/Hauptschule* teachers, genuinely cared about this school type. When I interviewed him, the CDU politician Wilhelm Lenz explained that, in internal CDU debates, the supporters of the *Hauptschule* had convinced him to support their struggle for better financing of this school type and better salaries for its teachers. This inner-party class compromise satisfied representatives of the *Hauptschule* clientele while giving *Gymnasium* supporters a convenient justification for the pillared school structure. As long as all school types were valued and permeability between them was ensured, a united CDU saw no need for further reform. For example, the CDU representative and *Hauptschule* teacher Albert Pürsten remarked in a parliamentary debate that two of his daughters had attended the *Hauptschule* but had attained the school-leaving certificate of the *Realschule* [the *Mittlere Reife*]. To him, this was proof that comprehensive school reforms were simply not necessary because permeability of the school system had already been achieved (*Landtag NRW*, July 11, 1974, 4461).

Of course, what the CDU suggested to “support” the *Hauptschule* was a reduction in educational demands. In May 1976, the CDU parliamentary group proposed a motion entitled “Reform of the *Hauptschule*,” which stated that it was “unpedagogical and inhumane” to confront *Hauptschule* students with “excessive demands of abstraction.” They should receive a more practical – but “equally valuable” – education (*Landtag NRW*, May 5, 1976; *Landtag NRW*, April 2, 1979). The fact that “a certain social destiny inevitably leads to the *Hauptschule* and to a particular occupational [...] world,” as the FDP representative Silke Geringk-Groht put it, was ignored (*Landtag NRW*, May 3, 1979, 7056). Acknowledging this would have meant saying openly that the lower classes were incapable of “abstraction” and should receive only practical education.

Wilhelm Lenz, former leading CDU politician, summed up the position of the CDU as follows:

I thought this was all nonsense. This idea that one needs to keep the children together longer so that the children from the working strata, [...] who are strangers to education, will be carried along by the better ones. [...] I never

thought anything of that because we need young people in Germany [...] who are capable, who are first class. We don't need windbags, [...] we don't need average. [...] I think that one should support the high-achievers primarily. And then the mass of the children remains [...] who are in the *Hauptschule*. So we must support the *Hauptschule* primarily. [...] The SPD says, [...] we are all one family. [...] I don't want that. I don't want to stick the people together who will have leading positions later as grown-ups with students who don't enjoy school. You cannot make these [students] change. If the parental home doesn't encourage the children to go to school, to do their schoolwork, to aim at goals, it is useless. That was my innermost conviction. (expert interview)

The Failed Introduction of the Cooperative School

After the elections of 1975, neither Kühn nor the leader of the FDP's parliamentary group, Horst-Ludwig Riemer, were keen on further reform attempts. When the government abstained from any new initiative in education politics, the parliamentary groups took the matter in hand (Düding, 1998, 117ff). Hans Schwier, educational political spokesman of the SPD's parliamentary group, and Friedrich Wilhelm Fernau, consultant of the SPD's parliamentary group, prepared a law proposal for the introduction of "cooperative schools," which they published in March 1976 in the journal of the Education and Science Workers' Union.

A cooperative school was defined as a school lasting from the fifth to the tenth grade and consisted of a comprehensive orientation stage in grades five and six, followed by parallel tracks based on the *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*. An upper-secondary stage leading to the *Abitur* exam could be added. The school should consist of at least four but usually of six to nine parallel classes for each age group (Blumenthal, 1988, 19f). After the national elections of 1976, which Helmut Schmidt's social liberal government won by a small margin, the law proposal was broached in the NRW parliament (*Landtag NRW*, November 9, 1976; *Landtag NRW*, November 25, 1976). In this debate, the spokesperson for the SPD, Schwier, appealed to the CDU:

Is the CDU degrading itself to being the spokesman for archconservative groups, who reject the mere possibility of going to school with *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* students as unbearable? Is the clientele who you believe yourselves to be representing so rooted in thinking about status that it refuses to share the teachers' common-room with *Realschule* and *Hauptschule* teachers? [...] Don't make yourselves, against your previous insights, the standard bearer of school-political ignorance! The ideology which considers school education safeguarded

only through separation and selection, must be termed apartheid. But, ladies and gentlemen, you and we know that the times of apartheid are over. (*Landtag NRW*, November 25, 1976, 1808)

Other speakers for the SPD pointed out that demographic development would soon put schools in rural areas under pressure. This problem could be solved by cooperative schools. They criticized the CDU for not supporting the proposal even though it was similar to the law proposal for cooperative schools that the CDU had made in 1971. They quoted from the CDU's manifestos to show that cooperation between the existing school types was what the CDU normally claimed to support. They argued that the cooperative school would lead to more choices for parents, not fewer, and emphasized that the cooperative school would neither delay nor accelerate the introduction of integrated comprehensive schooling but that it was an entirely independent reform. The CDU's claim that the cooperative school was a step toward the introduction of the integrated comprehensive school was said to be false.

Minister of education Girgensohn was the exception: he expressed openly that, in his view, a cooperative school could only be a "transitional stage" on the way toward the general introduction of the integrated comprehensive school. This was directed at the comprehensive schooling "purists" in the Education and Science Workers' Union and the leftist wing of the SPD, who thought that the reform proposal was a bad idea. These groups believed that the cooperative school would not further but delay more far-reaching reforms (*Landtag NRW*, November 25, 1976, 1826ff). For example, Anne Ratzki, member of the SPD, the Education and Science Workers' Union, and the Organization Comprehensive School, described how shocked she was to find that a new school reform was planned while "their" school had not even left the experimental state:

It was a SPD damp squib. [...] We were appalled. We had the integrated comprehensive school as a concept. And now a new concept turned up. [...] We were absolutely against it. We really saw the integrated comprehensive school going down the drain if it were instituted. (expert interview)

Girgensohn was thus right that these groups would have to be convinced of the reform but was nevertheless heavily criticized for his statement in a later meeting of his parliamentary group (Düding, 1998, 119). His statement was considered to have been strategically unhelpful. And indeed, during the debate, the conservative speakers rejoiced in Girgensohn's "honesty" and accused the other speakers of the SPD to be

lying about their true political aims. The CDU speaker, Nagel, remarked that the *Hauptschule* needed to be reformed before it could be included in any kind of cooperative school. The CDU was not “in principle against a cooperative school,” but what was really needed was an increased focus on the pedagogical work in the *Hauptschule* (*Landtag NRW*, November 25, 1976, 1812ff).

The speaker for the FDP, Jürgen Hinrichs, supported the reform proposal with the argument that it would reduce costs and ensure the educational supply at a time of declining birth rates (*Landtag NRW*, November 25, 1976, 1819). In the expert interview, he explained that he was skeptical of the reform at first but was convinced by more leftist party fellows such as Wolfgang Heinz that it would be a useful reform for less populated areas, like his own municipality in eastern Westphalia. Heinz also spoke in the debate but used a considerable amount of his speaking time to criticize Girgensohn for having claimed that the cooperative school should be a step toward the comprehensive school. Such a “personal statement of faith” was not backed by the liberal parliamentary group and the coalition agreement, Heinz argued (*Landtag NRW*, November 25, 1976, 1831).

On December 10, 1976, the Association of Philologists NRW decided to start a campaign against the cooperative school. In January 1977, the campaign began. The leader of the CDU, Heinrich Köppler, decided that the CDU would “spearhead the movement in solidarity,” and support it financially (quoted in Rösner, 1981, 116). The campaign was supported by conservative teachers’ and parents’ organizations: the *Realschule* teachers’ organization (*Realschullehrerverband*), the parents’ associations of the *Gymnasium* (*Landeselternschaft der Gymnasien in Nordrhein-Westfalen*) and the *Realschule* (*Verband der Elternschaften Deutscher Realschulen*), the Association of German Catholic Female Teachers, a Catholic parents’ association, the Association for Freedom of Research (*Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft*), and the parents’ associations *Elternverein Nordrhein-Westfalen*, *Landesschulpflegschaft Nordrhein-Westfalen*, and *Arbeitsgemeinschaft von Schulpflegschaften im Regierungsbezirk Münster* (Blumenthal, 1988, 135).

The FDP was now highly split. On January 21, 1977, the NRW FDP’s chair and NRW minister for economic affairs, Horst-Ludwig Riemer, proposed a motion at a meeting of the FDP’s parliamentary group that was entitled “Reservations against the Cooperative School.” Riemer was an economic liberal. He expressed worries that were shared by leading

national FDP politicians, such as Hans-Dietrich Genscher, that NRW was about to “turn into a second Hessen” (Blumenthal, 1988, 70). Many critical and supportive letters to the FDP’s office in Düsseldorf during the first weeks of 1977 document the split within the party (Blumenthal, 1988, 70). In February, Riemer gave a press interview in which he criticized his own parliamentary group for isolating itself from the party. On February 10, 1977, the FDP parliamentary group met with the FDP federal state board to discuss the issue. Blumenthal (1988, 69ff) refers to a discussion paper written by the skeptics on the federal state board. Here, they criticized tactical mistakes, such as an underestimation of the opposition from parents and the CDU, unnecessary time pressures, and insufficient discussion of the law proposal within the FDP. They disagreed in principle with the reformers in the parliamentary group, for example regarding the orientation stage, which they only wanted to experiment with, instead of implementing it straightaway (Blumenthal, 1988, 72ff).

The campaign against the proposal gathered momentum and there were large demonstrations. In March 1977, the SPD and the FDP lost the federal state elections in Hessen, where the introduction of the comprehensive orientation stage had been debated fiercely. The reformers were on the defensive. To calm the opposition, the law proposal was changed so that the orientation stage would no longer have to be comprehensive but could be tracked. A cooperative school could now also consist of only two tracks so that rural areas with only two existing school types could implement it more easily. It was underlined that municipal school authorities were not obliged to introduce the cooperative school, but that it was merely a legal offer (*Angebotsschule*). The schools were now supposed to be smaller and had to include an upper-secondary stage leading to the *Abitur*. None of this helped win over the CDU. The CDU’s motions of the early 1970s were off the table.

Within the FDP, opposition remained significant. The chairs of the FDP chapters of Düsseldorf and Cologne publicly opposed the reform in press interviews (Blumenthal, 1988, 75). In June 1977, the FDP federal state committee finally decided to support the law proposal but against the opposition of a sizable number of critics (Blumenthal, 1988, 86ff). In the second parliamentary debate on the proposal, the liberal speakers continued to support the reform and ignored the split in their own party (*Landtag NRW*, June 29, 1977; *Landtag NRW*, October 26, 1977). Gerigk-Groht, who with Heinz and Hinrichs was

responsible for education politics and, like them, represented the social liberal wing, attacked the CDU:

Those who want rest on the school front create regression and then it becomes difficult to realize the postulates of the federal state constitution which still assign us [the duty] to realize the best possible education for everyone. [...] I find it particularly regretful that the *Hauptschule* student is always used throughout this discussion; one couldn't expect him to learn with other students. [...] One simply suspects that what is playing a role here is instead the motive that the other students can't be expected to learn with *Hauptschule* students. [...] Here there are people, who are defending a certain position. [...] I'd like to know what is more important, the protection of some people, who have succeeded, or the realization of the federal state constitution and its principles! (*Landtag NRW*, June 29, 1977, 2926f)

The leader of the CDU's parliamentary group, Heinrich Köppler, on the other hand, had now sensed that there was a possibility "to create a furor in the majority of the population" if one opposed all further organizational reforms (Wilhelm Lenz, former CDU politician, expert interview). In the debate, Köppler emphasized that "the people in the country finally want some rest." He criticized the coalition for wanting to have their way, no matter what, and for ignoring the "reactions in the population." The CDU, he claimed, cared more about "the content of schooling than [about] its organization." It would stand by the side of students, parents, and teachers against this "so-called cooperative school." He also pointed to the internal split of the SPD and the FDP and mocked *Ministerpräsident* Kühn and his FDP deputy, Riemer, for carrying out a reform they did not really support (*Landtag NRW*, June 29, 1977, 2894ff).

Indeed, *Ministerpräsident* Kühn had not been convinced from the outset. In a newspaper interview in February 1977, he stated that one should not "force anything on the parents." He pointed out that while he supported the proposal "in principle," it been prepared by the parliamentary groups, "not by the government" (Blumenthal, 1988, 33). In June 1977, the aging Kühn was replaced as chair of the NRW SPD by the young Johannes Rau, a reform supporter. At the same party congress, several motions were passed that emphasized that the cooperative school would only be a step toward comprehensive schooling and repudiated tracking in grades five and six. The SPD had also begun to react to the opposition's campaign by publishing leaflets and suchlike. Nevertheless, the split within the party remained palpable.

The school reformer H.-G. Rolff, a member of the SPD and the Organization Comprehensive School, described how he came to understand that an abolition of the *Gymnasium* and a general introduction of comprehensive schools were no longer enforceable within the SPD and that Schwier had developed the law proposal for the cooperative school because he perceived it to be the “last chance” (Blumenthal, 1988, 18). Rolff had been invited by Schwier to internal meetings with SPD representatives, at which the law proposal was discussed:

Rolff: The social democrats told us, why should we support the abolition of the *Gymnasium* now, when for the first time in history our children are attending the *Gymnasium*?

Interviewer: That’s what they said?

Rolff: Yes. Not publicly during the hearings, in the preliminary talks. That was the tipping point. [...] There was a crazy expansion during the 1960s and 1970s and, in fact, these parliamentary representatives now had their children in the *Gymnasium* and they had not attended the *Gymnasium* themselves. So they did indeed think like that. [...] That was the time when I thought, “now the window is closed.” [...] It was socially selfish, not social democratic. (expert interview)

On October 26, 1977, the law on cooperative schools was debated for the last time and passed by the SPD and the FDP against the opposition of the CDU. The chair of the FDP parliamentary group, Hans Koch, claimed that the FDP had never considered abandoning the law proposal (*Landtag NRW*, October 26, 1977, 3257). This statement might have been true of the parliamentary group but not of the party as a whole. Koch criticized the Catholic bishops of NRW for interfering in the debate with an episcopal letter (*Landtag NRW*, October 26, 1977, 3278). This letter warned against a “comprehensive school which could become an instrument of social change with ideological characteristics” and was read aloud in all churches and published as a leaflet (quoted in Seifert, 2013, 254). There were also reports of Catholic priests and nuns who mobilized against the cooperative school (Seifert, 2013, 259f). Koch regretted that “the money of the CDU and the ‘non-blessing’ [or ‘bane’] of the ministerial church [were coming together] against the educational-political initiatives of the SPD/FDP coalition” (*Landtag NRW*, October 26, 1977, 3278). He also declared,

The *Gymnasium* has received its greatest importance in the history of the federal state during the last two legislative periods and we want to preserve the

Gymnasium's educational supply with this law proposal. Those who accuse us of wanting to smash the *Gymnasium* are disabused of this notion by these facts or disqualify themselves as intentional propagandists. (*Landtag NRW*, October 26, 1977, 3260)

In September 1977, the Association of Philologists and the other organizations belonging to the movement against the cooperative school formed the Citizens' Action for a Petition for a Referendum against the Cooperative School (*Bürgeraktion Volksbegehren gegen die kooperative Schule*) (Blumenthal, 1988, 135). The Citizens' Action movement argued against a "leveling of achievement" and accused the cooperative school of being the first step toward the general introduction of integrated comprehensive schools. The term "socialist comprehensive school" [*sozialistische Einheitsschule*] was widely used. It was argued that the cooperative school would destroy the *Gymnasium* (Rösner 1981, 168ff, 216f). Less prominently, the movement argued that the cooperative school endangered the Catholic *Hauptschulen* that remained after the reform of denominational schooling of 1968 (Seifert, 2013, 245ff; see Chapter 5). Support for the pillared structure was justified with the theory of "endowment," according to which "intelligence is up to 80% hereditary and only up to 20% related to the environment" (propaganda material by the Citizens' Action movement, quoted in Rösner, 1981, 170). Finally, the movement emphasized parental rights of choice. From February 16, 1978, to March 1, 1978, the movement collected 3 636 932 signatures for a referendum on the law, equivalent to 29.8 percent of the population of NRW eligible to vote. The 20 percent quorum was exceeded by almost 10 percent. Especially in rural areas, many people signed (Rösner, 1981, 172).

Only three relevant teachers' and parents' associations did not support the Citizens' Action movement (Blumenthal, 1988, 135): the parents' association of the integrated comprehensive schools (*Landeselternrat der Gesamtschulen in Nordrhein-Westfalen*), the Education and Science Workers' Union, and the Association of Education and Upbringing. The latter aimed at the upgrading of the *Hauptschule* through an integration of the *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* and was neither a strong supporter nor opponent of integrated comprehensive schooling or cooperative schooling (VBE, 1978; 1991, 66). As its former chair Uwe Franke explained in the expert interview, several of its leading members opposed the Citizens' Action movement, but they could not bind their members to this position. Franke emphasized that the high number of signatures was an expression of general uneasiness resulting from far-reaching social changes: "There was a great social struggle where a great deal was lumped together which

very much constituted a test of the internal unity of our association” (expert interview). The Association of Education and Upbringing therefore attempted to stay out of the conflict.

The Education and Science Workers’ Union NRW campaigned against the referendum, but many of its members were not fully motivated. As former chair of the Education and Science Workers’ Union NRW Ilse Brusis put it, they thought that the cooperative school was “neither fish nor fowl” and difficult to defend (expert interview). They were worried that this half-baked reform would discredit the integrated comprehensive school. Nevertheless, some hoped that it could perhaps be a modest first step.

The SPD and the FDP also campaigned against the referendum, but, as the FDP politician Wolfgang Heinz put it, “the reform momentum which was characteristic of the second half of the sixties and the early seventies for the SPD and FDP alike was strongly diminished, if not evaporated” (expert interview). In a special issue of the NRW FDP’s newspaper, *Forum liberal*, of February 1978, it was emphasized that they were not attempting to abolish the *Gymnasium* and it was even stated that “the FDP and SPD support a pillared school system” (FDP Landesverband NRW/Wolfgang-Döring-Stiftung, 1978, 2). The former FDP politician Jürgen Hinrichs regretted in the expert interview that they had not managed to get that message across.

A day after the Citizens’ Action movement’s success was made public, the coalition committee, consisting of the leaders of the parliamentary groups, decided that the law would be repealed. There would be no referendum. The parliamentary groups had no choice but to agree. The cooperative school was taken off the agenda (Düding, 1998, 123f; Seifert, 2013, 317ff). As pointed out by Reinhard Grätz, Kühn repealed the law “not unwillingly, since the cabinet overall didn’t think much of it” (expert interview). The reformer Anne Ratzki summed up how supporters of comprehensive schooling analyzed the defeat:

But it [the counter-campaign] was no use. [...] And what really irritated us – and that was what we had foreseen – was that it damaged the integrated comprehensive school, because the SPD always said afterwards, “the comprehensive school isn’t enforceable.” (expert interview)

This event marks the end point of this study. It had become clear that the integrated comprehensive school would not be introduced on a general level, since not even the cooperative school had survived the political process. In March 1978 the new chair of the NRW SPD, Johannes Rau,

declared in a letter to all SPD officials that the new aim would be to turn the integrated comprehensive school into an additional regular school type (Düding, 1998, 125). In September 1978, Rau was elected *Ministerpräsident*. In the SPD and the FDP manifestos for the elections of 1980, both parties made it clear that they would not abolish the traditional school types. The SPD won the elections, partly because of tensions in international politics (Düding, 2008, 749). The SPD now had an absolute majority of seats, as the FDP did not make it over the barring clause. In July 1981, the social democrats turned the integrated comprehensive school into a regular school type. The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the federal states agreed in May 1982 to accept the school-leaving certificates of each other's comprehensive schools. Up to 1987, forty-nine more integrated comprehensive schools were founded in NRW (Blumenthal, 1988, 371ff). During the late 1970s and the 1980s, ten years of obligatory schooling were introduced (Düding, 1998, 38). The SPD's strategy was now – and to some extent still is – to introduce comprehensive schooling in a bottom-up way, through decisions by municipalities, with the support of parental groups. Leading SPD politicians never again articulated the aim of abolishing parallel schooling, including the *Gymnasium* (Düding, 1998, 175f).

COMPARISON: THE CLASS CLEAVAGE IN POSTWAR EDUCATION POLITICS

In summary, a left-right opposition can be distinguished in the debates about comprehensive school reforms in both cases. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 give an overview of the positions of the most important actors within these struggles. Importantly, internal disagreement was the rule rather than the exception within all these organizations, which is why their placement in the figures only approximately indicates their overall positioning.

In Norway as in Germany, the major protagonists for reform were social democrats. They aimed at creating more equality and at giving the children of the working class access to education. Many social democrats themselves stemmed from those parts of the population that had previously been excluded from upper-secondary and tertiary education and considered it their historical role to make sure that the people's thirst for education could be quenched.

Especially within the Norwegian left, hierarchies and competition in school were seen as negative and as a precondition for capitalist society.

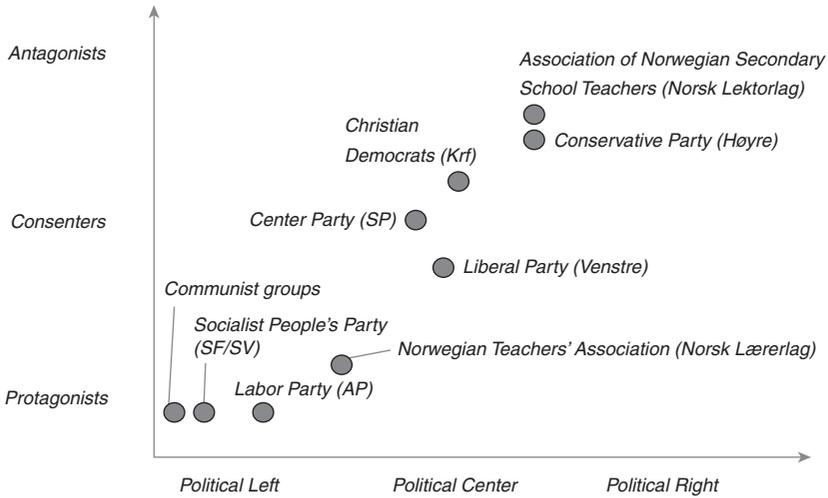


FIGURE 4.1 Protagonists, consenters, and antagonists of comprehensive school reforms along the political left-right axis in Norway, 1950s to 1970s

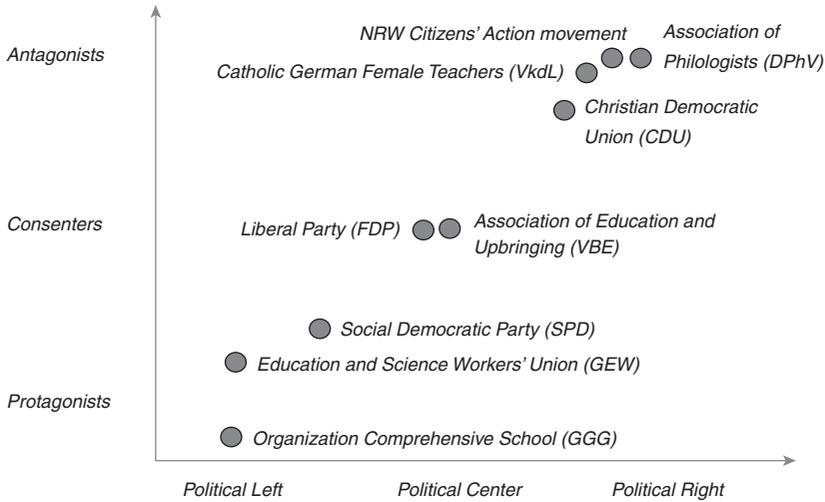


FIGURE 4.2 Protagonists, consenters, and antagonists of comprehensive school reforms along the political left-right axis in North Rhine–Westphalia/Germany, 1950s to 1970s

The reform of the school system was associated with the goal of overcoming a class society. In Germany, the left’s skepticism toward competition was not as outspoken and the ideological emphasis was more on equality

of opportunity than on social leveling. Some leading social democrats thought that the opening of the *Gymnasium* to children from the working class was sufficient and did not question the hierarchy of educational institutions as forcefully as Norwegian social democrats did. An equalization of students' school careers up to the tenth grade was harder to imagine in the more hierarchical, German class society, where school-leaving certificates had long been tightly interwoven with labor market opportunities. Ideas of biological endowment and achievement were dominant and influenced social democrats' thinking to a higher degree than in Norway.

More leftist German reformers, for example in the ranks of the Education and Science Workers' Union or the Organization Comprehensive School, were closer to the Norwegian left's ideology. They were not keen on the introduction of cooperative schooling but preferred the model of the integrated comprehensive school. Because the German left was split over such central aspects, social democrats could not act as one in struggles with reform antagonists. This weakened them considerably. In Norway, a similar split first came about in the grading debate of the 1970s, when the Norwegian Teachers' Association and parts of the Labor Party politically abandoned the more radical representatives of the reform movement, who wanted to abolish grading in the youth school. Before that, Norwegian social democrats were comparatively united behind their aims to introduce nine years of comprehensive education and to decrease organizational differentiation in primary and youth schools.

Social democrats in both countries emphasized the value of practical and vocational education and the necessity of upgrading the status of such knowledge. The German social democrats supported the reform of the *Hauptschule* and the introduction of the ninth and later tenth obligatory school year. Protagonists of comprehensive schooling went along with these reforms because they believed them to be a prerequisite for the introduction of comprehensive schools. They failed, however, to connect the *Hauptschule* reform and the introduction of nine years of obligatory schooling directly with comprehensive school reforms. In Norway, social democrats connected the prolongation of obligatory schooling with the youth school reform, which made the reform attractive to the center parties. Finally, social democrats in both countries emphasized that school reforms should serve to increase pleasure in learning and that mixing students socially would foster understanding and respect among people of different backgrounds. When children felt respected and at ease, they would learn more. These arguments became hegemonic in Norway but not in Germany (Tables 4.1 and 4.2).

TABLE 4.1 *Similarities between ideological arguments in comprehensive school debates*

Important ideological arguments in both cases were . . .	
Equality vs.	freedom of choice/parental rights
Social leveling vs.	the rearing of elites/support for high-achievers /schooling with different content but of equal value for unequal groups of students
Upgrading of practical/vocational education vs.	academic standards
Community of joyful learners vs.	competitive achievement

TABLE 4.2 *Differences between hegemonic ideological arguments in comprehensive school debates*

Hegemonic ideological arguments . . .	
. . . in Norway	. . . in Germany
Mixing students with different social backgrounds and abilities is valuable for the development of comradeship and community as well as learning.	Children should be taught in homogenous ability groups of practically, theoretically, or practically theoretically endowed children. Low achievers and high achievers must be separated to facilitate learning.
Excessive differentiation, such as parallel schooling, tracking, or ability grouping, will lead to a reproduction of class inequalities. Elite schooling and separation based on social background is unjust. In primary and youth schools, all children should therefore be kept together.	The <i>Gymnasium</i> should continue to be the most important path to the <i>Abitur</i> exam and the school type of high achievers and future elites. In principle, it should be open to all talented students but many students from “bad parental homes” will be better served by attending one of the lower secondary schools.
Too much competition will produce “losers” and have a demotivating effect. Pleasure in learning must be safeguarded.	Competition in hierarchies, based on achievement, serves to motivate students and is necessary for selection.

The antagonists of comprehensive school reforms were representatives of the upper and middle classes and organized mainly within the Norwegian Conservative Party, the German CDU, and the secondary

schoolteachers' organizations. In Germany, parental organizations and Catholic female teachers also played a role in the movement against the cooperative school. One of the antagonists' arguments was that a certain amount of differentiation was necessary to make sure that the ablest students received sufficient support. In addition, the conservative mantra in both countries was that academic standards must be upheld and that achievement should be the most important criterion. Hierarchies and competition were seen as positive, motivating, and necessary for selection to upper-secondary schooling. Organizational differentiation either into school types or ability groups was considered important to foster future elites, who had to be well educated. This argument was, however, much more influential in Germany (Tables 4.1 and 4.2). Few, if any, conservative Norwegian politicians would have voiced this as clearly as German Christian democratic politicians and the Association of Philologists did. In both countries, the individual freedom of choice of parents was an element of antagonists' ideology, but, again, this argument played a more significant role in Germany. It was argued that the state should not decide over parents' heads which education was best for their children.

German Christian democrats often repeated their conviction that it was necessary to provide schooling of "equal value" but with "different content" for different groups of the population. An important element of this ideological strategy was to demand a better *Hauptschule* so that the widespread increase in demand for upper-secondary schooling would slow down. The development of the *Hauptschule* into a school for the lower classes could then be portrayed not as a result of parallel schooling during times of educational expansion but as negligence toward the *Hauptschule* by social democracy. For the CDU's representatives, who were educated as primary schoolteachers or came from rural areas within NRW, the expansion of the *Realschule* and *Gymnasium* in these areas and the upgrading of the *Hauptschule* were important. Like the Norwegian center parties, they wanted good educational provision in the countryside; however, they felt that this could be achieved without comprehensive schooling. The CDU's emphasis on the importance of the *Hauptschule* is thus also evidence of an internal cross-class compromise.

In Norway, this alternative solution was no longer a possibility after the Labor Party's decision in 1959 that the old school types could not participate in the experiments. Nevertheless, the conservative parliamentary representative Christie argued in the Norwegian debate of 1959 that the *framhaldsskole* should have been developed into a better alternative to

the *realskole*, instead of merging the school types. This indicates that Norwegian conservatives could have made use of similar arguments, if the parallel school system had persisted. However, the Norwegian Conservative Party was highly split over the introduction of the youth school. Its leading education politician, Fredriksfryd, consented to the Labor Party's education politics, while other important parliamentary representatives, such as Christie or Lønning, held more antagonistic views. As with the German social democrats, this lack of internal unity was a major problem and prevented Norwegian conservatives from developing a strong, antagonistic voice. This changed gradually during the 1970s when political polarization became more pronounced.

In both cases, conservatives mostly did not openly acknowledge the reproduction of class differences in the school system. Sometimes, they would point out that it was simply impossible to erase all inequality. Thus, they acknowledged implicitly that class differences persisted and that educational paths were not of "equal value" but were associated with unequal life chances. Especially in Germany, conservatives sometimes explicitly stated that children from lower-class backgrounds were better served attending a lower-secondary school type, because their chances of success in the *Gymnasium* were marginal. They did not consider this a great problem. As long as particularly talented or motivated individuals could make their way upwards in the system by way of exception, they did not think that the system was unfair. Class differences in educational attainment were concealed with theories of biological endowment in both countries, though more so in Germany. Such theories, according to which children are either theoretically or practically endowed, were referred to by the left and the right, but more often by the right. The idea that students should be taught in homogenous ability groups remained hegemonic in Germany.

In Germany, the hegemony of the antagonists also came to expression in the way the protagonists argued: In the debate about cooperative schooling, some social democrats did not even consider it wise to say in parliament that they saw the cooperative school as a step toward comprehensive schooling but pretended that it was an entirely "neutral" reform. Their ideological strategies were mostly defensive. In Norway, the conservatives, not the social democrats, had to adapt their arguments to a different hegemonic consensus. As a result, their arguments come across as a strongly extenuated version of the German antagonists' arguments. This was not exclusively a result of strategic decisions but also a result of their actual opinions, which were less radical compared to the opinions of

German Christian democrats. The hegemonic consensus thus influenced Norwegian conservatives' convictions. In the Norwegian context, suggesting a school system like the German one would have seemed absurd and unjust – and presumably politically suicidal – to everyone, including the conservatives.²

Experiments played an unequal role in the two cases. In Norway, the decision of 1959 to experiment exclusively within the framework of the youth school and exclude the old school types from experiments with nine-year obligatory schooling is exemplary. Experiments, planned in such a way, served to set the course while legitimizing reforms. Nobody could really argue against the experiments, which is why it was so fatal for the antagonists of the reforms that the old school types were excluded. Had they not been excluded, experiments might have served to slow down change. As it was, they served to speed up the reform process. This was related to the financial incentives that the Labor government gave to municipalities that implemented the reforms. These were considerable and made it unattractive, especially for poorer rural municipalities, not to participate in the introduction of the youth school.

In NRW, experiments were designed in a way which slowed the reform process because they prevented final decision-making. Antagonists of the reforms argued that experiments should be evaluated in more detail before any decisions could be made. As the former CDU politician Wilhelm Lenz declared, this was primarily a strategic argument: “It was in a way cheating: the CDU couldn't come up with anything other than experiments” (expert interview). In addition, German postwar education politics were at first dominated by debates over denominational schooling (see Chapter 5). For this reason, experiments with comprehensive schools started later than in Norway, giving comprehensive school reformers a shorter time window.

In the second half of the 1970s, the political trend was reversed in both cases, in part because of the global economic development. The times of seemingly never-ending growth and optimism were coming to an end. This was marked by a shift from outer structural reforms to “the inner reform” of the schools. Reform antagonists in particular criticized the strong focus on structural reforms. In both cases, radical reformers were

² This is illustrated by remarks by Norwegian conservatives in the expert interviews. They showed polite interest in the structure of the German school system and indicated that Norway could perhaps have something to learn here. At the same time, they made it clear that even though they supported a higher degree of differentiation, dividing students at the ages of ten or eleven seemed rather extreme to them.

disappointed that the social democratic governments had given up the most far-reaching reform ideas. In Norway, this was manifested in the grading debate. Suddenly, public opinion was more on the side of the conservatives. In NRW, the reversal in the political trend became evident in the conflict over cooperative schooling. The short-term openness to reform of the CDU was over and a conservative alliance was formed against the reform politics of the social-liberal government.

Overall, the ideologies of the left and the right regarding comprehensive schooling were clearly opposed in both cases. Power resources theory's focus on the class cleavage as the main driver of political and institutional change thus seems warranted to a certain degree. However, the observation that the left and the right disagreed does not quite explain why the hegemonic consensus and the political coalitions for or against comprehensive school reforms that came about in the two cases differ.

For example, most Norwegian primary schoolteachers supported the structural comprehensive school reforms. Among the organizations of German primary schoolteachers, only the Education and Science Workers' Union did so, while the organizations with denominational roots at best consented to or, in the case of the Association of German Catholic Female Teachers, even opposed comprehensive schooling. The Norwegian center parties, while opposing some aspects of the reforms, ended up consenting to most of the structural changes, and were even responsible for regularizing the youth school in 1969. The Conservative Party and secondary schoolteachers did not manage to build up significant opposition through most of the period. In Germany, farmers, the rural and the religious population, secondary schoolteachers, some primary schoolteachers, and upper-class groups were united under the umbrella of the CDU and became antagonistic to reform attempts. This broad cross-class alliance within the CDU represented a serious obstacle to social democratic school reforms. If we are to truly understand the nature of this intra-CDU alliance, as well as the nature of the cooperation between social democrats and center parties in Norway, it is necessary to examine these coalitions in more detail and to expand the focus beyond comprehensive school debates. What were these coalitions about? What made them durable? Which cleavages were they founded on? The next chapter sheds more light on these questions by examining several crosscutting conflicts that had an impact on political coalitions and outcomes.