

3 Changes and Continuities in the Development of Rural Teacher Education in the Fjords of Western Norway

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Abstract

In this chapter, we apply historical institutionalism to study the development of teacher education in Sogndal, a Norwegian rural village, from the early 1960s to the present. The rationale for establishing teacher training within the county boundaries sprang from two interconnected needs: to have access to sufficient qualified teachers for primary schools and to stop the brain drain. In the analysis of the evolution of teacher education in a rural setting, key events and critical junctures over six decades are identified and highlighted. Developments and changes are understood within the historically determined and changing framework of institutional strategies, regional needs, and national policies. The study illuminates a story from a rural Norwegian teacher education, which was quite successful in supplying teachers for the region by the 2010s. Nonetheless, the regional success was no guarantee of satisfying higher academic requirements following national reforms. When the Sogn og Fjordane University College merged into the new Western Norway University of Applied Sciences in 2017, proven lack of academic qualifications in teacher education was a major reason for joining forces with other institutions.

Introduction

Besides being a fundamental human right, education enables people to acquire knowledge, achieve and develop important skills and techniques, and become independent. Education provides a foundation towards achieving a good life, and it is considered as a prerequisite for the development of society by enabling them to know their rights and duties towards their family, society, and the nation. In addition, universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) are often seen as important factors that facilitate regional socio-economic developments and connect to global competitiveness (Lester & Sotarauta, 2007).

Providing good-quality primary education is a basic necessity for every society, which will enable students in pursuing higher education, and to deliver

this, effective teachers, enabled by effective teaching, are crucial. In this chapter, we focus on the development of teacher education in a Norwegian rural region. Equity and equality of access to public goods, such as education, are core values in the egalitarian Norwegian society (Esping-Andersen, 1990) and the central tenets of the development of the higher education sector. In general, providing teachers and educators to rural areas in such a sparsely populated country has been challenging; therefore, to determine the contributing factors to this important issue, we focus on one of the most sparsely populated counties in Norway, Sogn og Fjordane.

We chose this region to study how easy it is to forget that regional education is embedded in the larger educational system, a system that is highly influenced by the development in international and global currents. This chapter provides a historical institutionalist (HI) perspective on the development of teacher education in this region. The history of teacher education in the municipality of Sogndal is described and analysed in the context of national education policy and regional expectations from 1960 to 2020. Hence, our research question is this: *What characterizes the development of the teacher school and how is this coherent with the development of the HEI sector?*

The fundamental role of higher education in the development of society is gaining increasing recognition since the post-war period, resulting in various educational reforms in Western countries, particularly since the 1960s (Kyvik, 2004). As societies are getting more complex, there is a consensus in the literature that although considering the characteristics following dynamic and technical environments is important, considering the structural and cultural complexity when focusing on the sustainability of HEIs regional mandate is equally important (Goddard et al., 2016). Regional development is not detached from national development, but national focus and policy arrangements directed towards efficiency and global excellence can be considered as barriers to regional engagement (Benneworth et al., 2017).

The study of rural teacher education is of interest to the questions raised in this edited volume for at least three reasons. Firstly, it gives us the chance to better understand the embeddedness between higher education policy at the national level and how an organization adapts to and develops at the regional and local levels. Secondly, throughout the period, 1960–2020, teacher education in Norway has been at the forefront of the government's policies, including major reforms in higher education. By directing our focus on this development, we can follow up on how individuals and organizations influence development within a sector. Thirdly, the rural experience over time is particularly interesting because the new higher education architecture, which was designed at the beginning of the 1970s, aimed to contribute to regional development. The chapter highlights this adaption in the light of temporality and studies concerning how past events connected to development in the light of HI.

In the continuation of this chapter, we first introduce the fjord context where our case is selected from. Central elements of HI are thereafter elaborated. The presentation of national context and development of the HE sector

and the tale of Sogn og Fjordane teacher education is thereafter described, and this is considered our empirical base. The empirics are then analysed according to HI, and the chapter ends with a concluding discussion.

The fjord context

Sogn og Fjordane county is geographically located on the west coast of Norway, with high mountains, coastal islands, and deep and long fjords. Sognefjorden and Nærøyfjorden are the most famous ones. The county is sparsely populated, with weaker population growth than the rest of Norway from 1900 to 2000. The county was inhabited by almost 90,000 inhabitants in 1900, and if developments in this county had been the same as the rest of the country, the numbers would have increased to 190,000 in 2010 (Urtegaard, 2005). Instead, the county recorded 110,000 inhabitants in 2019 (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019). This weak population growth can be attributed to the rural settlement pattern, lacking a unifying larger city centre. Cities with varied business structures and large service sectors became the engines of growth driving the modern Norwegian economy. As a result, regions without such cities did not witness the new growth to the same degree (Bukve et al., 2006).

Sogn og Fjordane is divided into small municipalities with scattered villages providing services from the public sector such as education, health, and social services. The long Norwegian coastline provides natural resources to the fishing industry; the long fjords have a climate that is suitable for growing apples as well as other fruit-related industries; and the mountains provide hydropower resources, and large industrial facilities were built post-World War II (in Høyanger, Årdal, and Bremanger).

Historical institutionalism

In this chapter, we apply HI to study the development of teacher education in Sogndal, a rural Norwegian village. HI is neither a theoretical framework nor a specific method (Steinmo, 2008); rather it is an approach that in its historical orientation pays close attention to real-world empirical questions and to how institutions structure and shape social behaviour and policy and strategic outcomes. Steinmo (2008) characterizes this as an *approach* to study real historical events, politics, and social change, but the approach provides a theoretical vocabulary for the analysis on how institutions change over time by social and political actors (Capoccia, 2016b).

Society and higher education have undergone extensive changes in the last few decades, especially in technology and communication. Perspectives and key concepts from HI are helpful to narrow and conduct our empirical investigation. In conclusion, HI teaches us that history matters (Pierson, 2000; Skockpol & Pierson, 2002; Thelen, 1999). Political events are taking place within specific historical contexts that influence the output. In addition, the

actors involved can learn from their experiences and political, cultural, social, or economic events, and lastly, expectations of future events are rooted in the past (Steinmo, 2008).

Institutional changes, that is, shifts in formal and informal rules regulating the behaviour of social actors, are, to a large degree, incremental and evolutionary, thus dependent on historical paths and trajectories. Contemporary changes are dependent on a series of previous events, and even small events can result in large consequences that can be difficult to reverse (Pierson, 2000). Such moments can be viewed as “critical junctures” where the uncertainty of future development allows political agencies to influence the way forward, and this path can be persistent over time (Capoccia, 2016a). Critical junctures can be a synonym of “crisis” or “turning points” and refers to something that has occurred earlier, which influences later outcomes. These critical junctures are normally concentrated in a specific and short period. In this chapter, the critical junctures are identified through a teacher education study in Sogndal and various national reforms. Another central term is “path dependency”, which implies that development within a field depends on prior events and arrangements. Critical junctures can create new conditions or institutions that may result in path dependency (Capoccia, 2016b). The study of path dependencies, therefore, includes tracing back to the events that were of importance for future outcome (Mahoney, 2000).

As a way to study continuity or institutional change, we apply four modes of change: displacement, layering, drift, and conversion (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). *Displacement* refers to comprehensive changes where existing rules are removed and new ones are introduced, which can be either a fast or slow process. As such, the introduction of reforms can be viewed as a mode of change. *Layering* refers to changes where new rules are established in addition to the existing ones. This can also lead to considerable changes over time or stabilize and reproduce core features of the organization, such as new routines or curriculum. *Drift* refers to gradual changes where existing rules are losing impact due to changes in external conditions. For example, an educational system that persists to remain due to its local appropriateness may lose impact over time if not responding adequately to crossing trends in society. *Conversion* relates to internal changes within an organization while the external core appears to be unchanged. The formal rules are interpreted in new ways as strategic redeployment. For example, the school retains its name while merging with other organizations. Here, although there may be large organizational changes and altered formal rules internally, the school appears to remain the same to an outsider.

To ensure that our analysis of the evolution of teacher education in a rural setting remains relevant, key events and critical junctures in the formation of teacher education will be highlighted. The study is based on a large range of historical documents, decisions, central reports, and literature that stems from internal correspondence between the Ministry of Education, Sogn og Fjordane county, and interest organizations in the 1960s and the teacher training college

and university college board from the 1970s until 2020. For further elaborations, refer to studies conducted by Yttri (2008, 2016).

In this continuation, we will first elaborate on the development of higher education in Norway, followed by the development of the teacher school in Sogn og Fjordane.

Development of higher education in Norway

Teacher education has roots back to the start of higher education in Norway. The first teacher education was established in the 1820s, shortly after the first university was founded in 1811, the University of Oslo. The university sector was inspired by Humboldtian values and a German university model where research-based teaching and freedom for the individual professor were emphasized (Vabø, 2011). This contrast in the development of teacher education, since their establishment under the county's educational system, is due to strict regulations (Garm & Karlsen, 2004).

The Norwegian educational sector is dominated by public providers at all levels; the provision for the sector is tax-based, and education at all levels is tuition-free. Stipends and affordable state loans have been made available to students for expenses since 1946 (Bjelle, 2019). This acts as a remedy to support young people to pursue education without being dependent on their families for financial support.

Since the 1950s, to maintain the population in dispersedly populated districts of Norway, the government has made a conscious effort to ensure that their policies are designed to emphasize the importance of education and increase access to education (Pinheiro et al., 2016). Furthermore, there was a growing political awareness of the use of established district colleges in rural communities as a means to serve districts with professionals to public and private sectors and to maintain population within the districts (Kvil, 2004). This concept was introduced in Norway at the end of the 1960s (Yttri, 2016, pp. 29–32). As a result, a dual model of education was introduced. The universities were placed in the largest cities, while occupationally oriented district colleges expanded to the regions throughout the 1970s. The parliament decided that some of these should be in rural communities. While the focus of universities has been on research, the mission of district colleges was on providing central educations to districts, such as teacher education.

From 1970 to 2020, higher education in Norway, as in many other European countries, was characterized by significant and tremendous growth in the number of students and types of education. Furthermore, the number of students increased from almost 50,000 to 300,000 approximately (Yttri, 2016; Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019). In the 1970s, there was a myriad of different professional schools, such as engineering, types of health education, social work, and teacher education. These specialized schools were upgraded to higher educational institutions during the 1970s to the 1980s (Kyvik, 2008). Schools for teacher training were upgraded to colleges of higher education in 1975.

Regional college boards were established to enable coordination of the new educational system.

This disperse model, however, was expensive, fragmented, and difficult to coordinate (*ibid.*). Hence, in 1987, the Hernes Commission was established to draw guidelines for future educational policy (Kvil, 2004). On the basis of this, in 1993, the government merged a variety of independent colleges within the regions through the college reform (KUF, 1993–1994; Kyvik, 2008). Many small and specialized providers belonging to the college sector were regionally integrated through large-scale mergers of geographically close university colleges in 1994. In this process, 98 district and vocational colleges merged into 26 state colleges in 1994 (in a top-down process) (Kyvik, 2002). In addition, through the mergers, the dual model of district colleges and universities was replaced by the establishment of a binary system of universities and state colleges (“*høyskoler*”).

Another goal of the reform (Kyvik, 2002) was to prevent large regional colleges to apply for university status. The pressure continued as many large colleges pursued their ambition to become universities, and by the turn of the millennium, there was a discussion concerning abolishing the binary system.

In 1998, the Mjøse Commission was established to develop Norwegian higher education after 2000 (Kvil, 2004). Their comprehensive suggestions culminated in the Quality Reform (ME, 2001), which contributed to higher academic requirements for both the institutions and the employees. The central elements from this reform were to prepare the HEIs to develop towards the international degree systems, aligned with the Bologna intergovernmental process as part of the aims of creating a common European higher education area. In August 2003, the international degree systems with bachelor and master programmes were established, along with the use of the European Credit Transfer System (commonly referred to as ECTS) (*ibid.*).

In 2004, in efforts to further develop the sector, the government decided that state colleges could apply for full university status if they could fulfil certain standards (Kyvik, 2005). This resulted in numerous initiatives, and a new “wave” of mergers began (in a bottom-up manner). The mergers in 2005–2007 resulted in 7 universities, 7 specialized universities, 25 state colleges, and 25 smaller, private institutions (Kyvik, 2008).

In 2007, the Stjernø Commission was set up by the government to investigate the development of the sector for the following decade. Furthermore, the commission recommended that the binary system should be abolished and a unified higher education system should be established instead in line with international developments (Regjeringen, 2008). This could probably be materialized by granting university status to large colleges and integrating small colleges and specialized university institutions into existing universities. However, the government rejected the proposal (Kyvik, 2008), and the arrangement that each college could qualify for university status was continued and clarified.

In the 2010s, several more institutions merged, and some of these mergers joined together without pressure from national authorities; however, regional

authorities also played an active role. For example, Telemark was supportive of a merger with the University in Agder, whereas the Agder region was against it (Stensaker et al., 2016). For the remaining institutions, the government-led structural reform in higher education, in association with the government's parliamentary report approved by the parliament in 2015, was decisive. In addition, during this period, there was a shift in the political landscape that resulted in a government that was very pro-mergers and had a focus on reforming the sector into a more unified, competitive and efficient sector. By 2017, the number of universities and colleges was reduced from 33 to 21 (Regjeringen, 2016).

Currently, most tertiary education providers are universities, with only a handful of university colleges remaining, of whom, several have stated their ambitions to become fully fledged universities in the near future. All the mergers were motivated by a desire to achieve greater strategic strength, not only within the respective region but also nationally and internationally. For several of the colleges, especially the larger ones, achieving university status was an important part of this strategic strength and a special motivation for the mergers. For others, often smaller ones, considerations for participating in a merger were greatly influenced by the government's introduction of higher academic requirements to be allowed to offer new 5-year teacher education from the autumn of 2017 (Regjeringen, 2016; Yttri, 2016, pp. 71–72).

Sogn og Fjordane teacher education: regional needs and national policies

Local and regional interests in the county of Sogn og Fjordane raised the demand for teachers' schools in the early 1960s. For a county consisting of some rural municipalities scattered along fjords and mountains, therefore, making communication difficult, it was not sufficient to have these schools in neighbouring counties. By the beginning of 1960, Sogn og Fjordane county had the least number of qualified teachers working in a primary school in southern Norway (Yttri, 2008, p. 37). A paradox in this respect was the fact that in national surveys (Strømnes, 2006, pp. 128–140; Yttri, 2008, p. 37, 2015, pp. 24–25), Sogn og Fjordane was the county that recruited the very best for teacher education and teaching profession for decades. However, most of the local youths who pursued teacher education in the other parts of the country did not return to their counties after completing their studies, which was a major issue. The rationale for establishing a teacher training college within the county boundaries thus sprang from two interconnected regional needs: to have access to sufficient qualified teachers for primary schools and to stop the brain drain. This was a strong rationale that remained over the years. It was the *raison d'être* of the rural teacher education.

Initially, the demand for new teacher education was met with sympathy by the government's Labour Party (Yttri, 2008, pp. 37–45), but all teacher schools established in Norway post-World War II were located in cities and urban areas.

A central government advisor on education, Eva Nordland (Yttri, 2008, pp. 37–49), strongly opposed the idea of new teacher education in rural counties and succeeded in stopping the initiative. At the beginning of the 1960s, the government, therefore, decided not to establish a teaching school in Sogn og Fjordane county. The arguments from the advisor were that the rural areas neither have the population and infrastructure to conduct a modern teacher education nor could it match urban areas in recruiting competent teachers and staff for the school. In addition, the adviser strongly opposed that the location of new teacher education in Sogn og Fjordane could contribute to more qualified teachers in the county's scattered rural municipalities. The measure was considered too weak to stop the ongoing process of brain drain from the periphery to more central areas (*ibid.*).

Nonetheless, the proven needs of teacher education in Sogn og Fjordane were later acknowledged in 1962. In the process that followed, the Ministry of Education determined that a teacher school serving Sogn og Fjordane should be located in the south-eastern part of the county in Sogndal municipality (Yttri, 2008, pp. 40–42). To ensure that the school was accessible, as much as possible, to the county's various municipalities, the regional authorities had proposed a location in the middle of the county in the municipality of Førde. However, the central authorities did not share this reasoning. The size of Sogn og Fjordane's population was not sufficient to secure a new teacher school and fill up the required number of students. If a new educational organization had to have the right to exist, it should have a location that made it possible to recruit students from neighbouring counties, including the east and the south. The ministry, therefore, in 1962, decided to locate the new school in Sogndal, a village at the inner part of the Sognefjord. Comparatively, this location was closer to eastern Norway and counties to the north and the south. The recruitment of students from the surrounding counties became a feature of the teacher education in Sogndal in the following decades: the ability to recruit a relatively high proportion of students outside the county of Sogn og Fjordane. The Sogndal Teacher School opened in 1972.

Although teacher education in Sogndal followed national guidelines and thus educated teachers for the whole country, regional needs were very much in focus (Yttri, 2008, pp. 86–87). During the first few years, measures that specifically aimed at educating teachers for small rural municipalities were developed. For instance, teachers at the rural school accepted assignments and provided part-time training in various parts of the county. More importantly, specialized on-campus courses were developed to qualify teachers for small schools wherein teaching students of different ages at the same time and in the same classroom was the norm. Despite these developments, at the tenth anniversary in 1982, the county's school director pointed out that several schools across the county still lacked qualified teachers (*ibid.*).

Initially, the teacher school was separated from the district colleges, but following the development of the HE sector, the post-secondary teacher training was upgraded to colleges of higher education in 1975, and Sogndal Teacher

School was given the responsibility to lead and develop the new district college, the Sogn og Fjordane District College. However, the process involved in developing this district college was not without tensions because two different academic cultures were involved in this merger. The teacher education came from the rule-based vocational training tradition, while the district college was more oriented towards the university sector, regarding both the background of employees and academic focus. Since 1975, this became the basis for turbulence, conflicts, and inadequate cooperation. In 1981, the ministry finally decided to establish two independent institutions under their own leadership, the Sogndal Teacher School and the Sogn og Fjordane District College (Yttri, 2008, pp. 64–73).

The second half of the 1980s was a time of crisis for Norwegian teacher education. Few young people wanted to become teachers, and in Sogndal, several desks were empty. The recruitment of students became significantly better in the early years, and Sogndal also recruited a high proportion of students from outside the county. However, during a period of low interest in teacher education nationally, the student base was not sufficient. Yet, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, the teacher college was allowed to re-allocate resources (Yttri, 2008, pp. 89–91). These resources were used to initiate the sports education in Sogndal from 1986, as well as part-time education, with decentralized teaching at various places across the county. This provided teachers in the whole county a new foundation to pursue education. Eventually, Sogndal Teacher School also offered education outside the county. This activity became a trademark of the rural teacher college, and it was highly appreciated beyond the county's boundaries (Yttri, 2008, p. 204). During various political regimes in the 1990s and 2000s, the extensive decentralized educational activities were continued, as it compensated for the lack of sufficient numbers of on-campus students.

During the waves of mergers after the college reform in 1994, changes were also observed in Sogn og Fjordane where the HEIs that had been established in the county in the 1970s and 1980s were gathered. The Sogn og Fjordane University College was a merge between the Sogndal Teacher School, Sogn og Fjordane District College, the Nursing Education in Sogn og Fjordane, Sogn og Fjordane Engineering College, and the College at Sandane. However, the Sogndal Teacher School continued as a separate department in the university college.

In the latter half of the 1990s, teacher training in Sogndal began to adopt a more systematic and long-term competence programme for the teaching staff in all municipalities throughout Sogn og Fjordane. This was executed in close cooperation with regional state school authorities, municipalities, and employers, as well as teachers' organizations. The teaching methodology and results won national praise, and the good results were reflected in the testing of the pupils. At the national tests that were introduced to Norwegian primary schools from 2004 in reading, maths, and English, pupils across Sogn og Fjordane topped the national tests in the 2000s and 2010s

(Langfeldt, 2015). The close collaboration between the university college and the municipalities received much of the credit for these results (Glosvik, 2015; Yttri, 2016).

In 2012, a recruitment study comparing several colleges documented that teacher training in Sogndal for decades had played a particularly important role in providing qualified teachers to the region (Gythfeldt & Heggen, 2012). Combined with the strong school results, this helped strengthen both the legitimacy of the education and the regional and national reputation.

Although the Sogn og Fjordane University College established in 1994 had a wide range of education, the teacher education had a high internal and external prestige during the first few decades or the 2000s. This probably contributed to the moderate academic ambitions that were found for the entire college (Yttri, 2015, pp. 56–57). While other university colleges across the country established master's and doctoral degrees, Sogn og Fjordane University College profiled itself as a bachelor's or first cycle college. In a regional context, this was probably a great strength because occupational relevance then was the most important criterion. To compensate for the small number of teacher students on campus, the focus on decentralized education was increased. However, at the national level, the university college's academic development was too weak. Neither the college reform in 1994 nor the quality reform in 2003 led to any significant changes in the competence profile of teacher education. The research activity increased slightly, and some employees completed their doctoral studies. However, in addition to the closely related sports education, the research activity was insignificant. The typical career path remains in the line of vocational tradition, which is lecturer and docent, rather than following university tradition: associate and full professor. In 2014, the Ministry of Education required the colleges to offer a 5-year programme in teacher education from 2017 (ME, 2014). The teacher training in Sogndal was far from satisfying the academic requirements, and it appeared that the focus that had earlier reckoned strength became their major weakness.

In 2016, the board of Sogn og Fjordane University College chose to merge with Bergen University College and Stord/Haugesund University College, and Western Norway University of Applied Sciences was established in 2017. The colleges from these neighbouring regions had teacher education that was a part of the merger. The consideration of the future status for teacher education in Sogndal was crucial to the final decision (Pedersen, 2017).

Analysis, critical junctures, and modes of change

In our attempt to analyse the development of teacher education in Sogn og Fjordane from the early 1960s until 2020, we applied the HI approach and used it to highlight the developments according to the development in the sector otherwise, as described in the contextual chapter. Firstly, we focus on critical junctures as turning points, which has influenced the development in the later

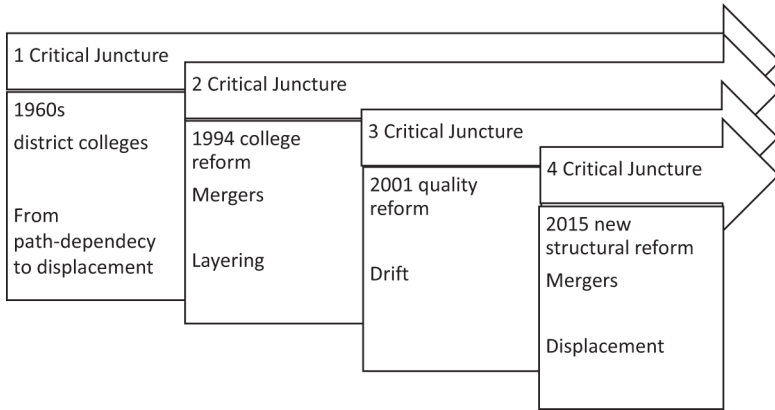


Figure 3.1 Critical junctures in the development and modes of change

stages (Capoccia, 2016a). The critical moments are listed in Figure 3.1, which will be discussed in relation to the development in the teacher education after the figure.

Critical junctures create an uncertainty that makes it possible for political agency to manoeuvre and influence the way forward (Capoccia, 2016a). In the 1960s, the actors from Sogn og Fjordane fought for establishing a teacher education and were rejected by the government initially (Yttri, 2008, pp. 37–49). This can be seen as the first critical juncture. Parallel to this, we focus on the political trends from society regarding the development of the districts (Kvil, 2004). This can be interpreted as the critical juncture provided a room for the ongoing political process, and this paved the way for establishing teacher education in Sogn og Fjordane in 1972. The first period can be seen as path-dependent (Mahoney, 2000), wherein the development of higher education followed the path that educational institutions should be established in urban areas. The critical juncture led to a change in this path and can be seen as a displacement (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010), wherein the old model was abolished and prepared the ground for the new development of the sector.

The second turning point and critical juncture with the severe influence of the development of the sector came with the structural college reform initiated by Hernes in 1993–1994. The top-down restructuring of the sector that resulted in mergers all over the country did not appear to influence the development of teacher education in Sogndal, despite the mergers and formation of Sogn og Fjordane University College. No drastic changes were introduced in this wave of mergers for teacher education in Sogn. During the 1990s, which were turbulent times for the rest of the sectors in Norway, they continued to develop what appeared to become their brand, decentralized education. While displacement (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010) and establishment of new HE

constellations characterized the sector in other places, layering (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010) can be a way to analyse the development in the teacher education at Sogn og Fjordane University College during this period. In addition to the existing rules, new rules were introduced, that is, with further development of the decentralized model of teacher education by introducing systematic and long-term programmes for improving competencies for teachers across the municipalities in the county.

The third critical juncture in the sector can be highlighted according to the quality reform in 2001, where the whole sector had to change their degree systems to align with the European education (Kvil, 2004). State colleges across the country took on this displacement mode (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010) and replaced the old educational structure with new rules and ways to organize education. This became a critical time for teacher education in Sogndal. In Sogndal, the teachers' education pride was in delivering relevant education to meet regional needs but was now met with more challenges that would continue through to the next decade. They decoupled the push towards a higher focus on research and academic achievements. This can be seen as a period of drift (*ibid.*) where their inner core of existing rules was losing impact due to external demands from society and government.

As the fourth critical juncture appeared in 2015 with the new structural reform (KD, 2014–2015), teacher education remains in a critical place. Because the focus had been towards meeting regional needs, the academic development was too weak. Very few of the lecturers fulfilled the demands with a PhD and research competencies, and measures had to be taken to be able to keep the teacher education. The board of Sogn og Fjordane University College initiated the merger with neighbouring state colleges across the region to secure the status for teacher education in Sogndal. With the new merger in 2017 and the establishment of Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, the mode of change can once more be characterized by displacement (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010) with radical changes regarding organizing, teaching, and research, and by merging different types of education at large distances. As a part of a larger university college, the teacher education in Sogndal finally established a 5-year master's degree in teaching. Nonetheless, the development of Western Norway University of Applied Sciences is in progress and this is also fuelled by the application for full university status. Could this be viewed as a new critical juncture?

Conclusion

This chapter aims to study the development of teacher education in a rural county within the Norwegian education system in light of HI. The development of an educational organization depends on history, geography, and governmental policy. For the teacher education in Sogndal, it was clear since the beginning of the 1960s that the population in the county was too small to establish a teacher school, and recruiting students from other counties was of

high importance. A characteristic feature of teacher education in this county was the regional push to be active with different types of decentralized education throughout the county. In periods when on-campus recruitment was weak, this was crucial to maintain the number of students. This decentralized activity was growing through the decades. The collaboration with municipalities and counties was developed and followed quite advanced methodologies in the 2000s and 2010s. This increased the popularity of teacher education in the region, and the educational model received some of the credit for the strong results of regional primary school pupils in national tests. The cooperation with municipalities and counties was highlighted as a model for other organizations. Nonetheless, in the same period as this collaboration was characterized by success, the same teacher education slowed down in terms of research, academic merit, and internationalization. When new national academic standards were introduced regarding offering a 5-year teacher education from 2017, the same teacher education was not able to keep pace with the academic developments and expectations in the sector. A new merger became the solution.

In this chapter, we described four critical junctures of significance for teacher education in the county. The first critical juncture provided the base to initiate teacher education in Sogndal. During the turbulences after the college reform in 1994 and critical juncture number 2, the teacher school was not significantly affected, but the problems started to materialize after critical juncture number 3 (quality reform) and number 4 (structural reform). The latter two displayed that the focus on regional relevance, which was so successful for the teacher education in Sogndal, also became a trap. The education was lagging in academic development and was at risk for closing down. The mergers with other teacher educations in the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences rescued the teacher education in Sogn og Fjordane, and Sogndal could finally provide a 5-year master's programme in teaching.

Our study illuminates a story from a Norwegian region that successfully built an education system that provided teachers for their county, and through the model they had developed, the pupils in this scattered, rural region delivered top results in national rankings. However, this embeddedness in regional need also became a trap regarding embeddedness in the national programme of education (which again reflects international and global influences). Teacher education in Norway has always been highly regulated, and by losing focus on the current trends in the sector otherwise, they drifted away from national requirements for education. Another aspect is that the trap also can be viewed as a lock-in mechanism. Such lock-ins not only depend on path dependencies but can also relate to geographical features and, in that way, can also be place-dependent (Martin & Sunley, 2006). Such dependencies make it difficult to explore new developmental paths. Central actors here have been politicians at a national and regional level, the HEIs and municipalities. Through the HI perspective, we have also highlighted the importance of temporality and how past events are providing patterns for path dependency and layering and that critical junctures pave the way for displacement and new directions.

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