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# The education policies of the populist radical right

*A comparative analysis of 13 Western European parties*

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## **Abstract**

During the last four decades, populist radical right parties (PRRPs) have emerged, developed, and gained influence in Western Europe. This has created a need for studies that look beyond the parties' preferences on immigration policies and toward other socioeconomic and socio-cultural issues. This study aims to provide knowledge on the PRRPs' positions on education, thereby filling a gap in the research literature on PRRPs and a gap existing in the literature on education policy. The study asks two research questions: First, what positions do populist radical right parties hold regarding education policies, and to what extent do these positions reflect the core ideology of the parties? Second, how important are education policies for these parties, and to what extent does the importance vary between mainstream and non-mainstreamed parties?

The thesis adopts a comparative case study approach and compares 13 PRRPs from Western Europe. The cases are investigated through a theoretical framework that draws on the literature on education policy and the PRRPs' ideology. The primary method applied is a qualitative content analysis of party manifestos, supplemented with data collected through interviews and additional documents.

The study finds that the PRRPs are mainly concerned with the content of education and show a strong interest in influencing the values and the ideas of the education systems. The parties are concerned with some socioeconomic aspects of education but seem to be less interested in the governing of the sector. The thesis argues that the parties' positions on education policies largely reflect their core ideology. There are, however, variations between the different dimensions, with the link between the ideology and positions being the strongest on the content dimension and weakest on the governing dimension. Furthermore, the education positions are influenced by economic left-right positions. The general trend is that PRRPs lean more toward the right in the sense that they support differentiated education systems. Finally, the findings indicate that education policies, particularly when related to the content of education, are more important for these parties than previously assumed. One implication of the results is that the educational policies of PRRPs challenge the liberal education systems in contemporary Western Europe.

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## Abbreviations

AFD	Alternative for Germany
AFD-N	Alternative for Germany (National)
AFD-NRW	Alternative for Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia)
DF	Danish People's Party
FPÖ	Freedom Party of Austria
FRP	The Progress Party (Norway)
HE	Higher education
LN	The League (Italy)
PRRP	Populist radical right party
PS	Finns Party
PVV	The Party for Freedom (Netherlands)
RN	National Rally (France)
SD	Sweden Democrats
SVP	Swiss People's Party
SVP-N	Swiss People's Party (National)
SVP-Z	Swiss People's Party (Zürich)
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party

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# 1 Introduction

Since the 1980s, the far-right party family has significantly increased its relevance, and it is now the fastest-growing party family in Europe (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas, 2019; Golder, 2016). In Western Europe, populist radical right parties (PRRPs) have become increasingly influential. Recent elections have shown that these parties are gaining more power at the expense of the traditional parties by winning seats in national parliaments. Examples include the German Alternative for Germany (AFD), the Sweden Democrats (SD), the Spanish Vox (VOX), the French National Rally (RN), and the Italian League (LN). In some countries, such as Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, or Norway, PRRPs have also entered governments, either as cabinet members or as support parties of minority governments (Akkerman, de Lange & Roouijdin, 2016, p. 1). There is no doubt that these parties have increased their influence on Western European politics and changed the political landscape. Even though the far-right is the most studied party family in political science (Mudde, 2017, p. 1), the PRRPs' increased relevance and influence in national parliaments and governments creates a need for even more research investigating their positions and preferences. One area where we currently lack knowledge of the PRRPs' preferences and positions is education policies, and the purpose of this thesis is to fill this gap.

There are several reasons why studying the education policies of PRRPs is both important and relevant, and the following sections will describe the thesis' academic relevance before the societal relevance will be addressed.

Firstly, the inclusion-moderation thesis (Akkerman, de Lange & Rooduijn, 2016; Downs, 1957) implies that parties participating in the electoral game over time, such as the Western European PRRPs, will broaden their profiles to be more relevant to the majority of voters and thus attract the majority of votes. However, the existing literature on PRRPs focuses mainly on narrow issues, such as immigration, ethnic minorities, law, and order or European integration (Mudde, 2016). Given that these parties have gained influence and participated in the electoral game over time, there is a need for studies that look beyond these narrow issues and toward other socioeconomic and socio-cultural issues and for studies that go “beyond the paradigm of the outsider-challenger party” (Mudde, 2016, p. 1). According to Mudde (2016, p. 16), “It is only by embracing a plurality of perspectives and theories, and by comparing within the group of far-right parties, that we can truly further our field of study.” By

investigating the PRRPs' positions on education policies, this thesis follows up on these recommendations.

Second, even though there is a lack of research regarding the supply side, meaning that we do not know what policies they offer or prefer, extensive research literature is concerned with the demand side. In other words, many studies target the social policy preferences of radical right *voters*. This area of research has shown that education is the most important predictor for the individuals' positions on the authoritarian-libertarian value dimension and individuals with low education tend toward the authoritarian pole (Stubager, 2008). In other words, the level of education is a significant predictor for the PRRPs' success, which makes the parties' preferences on education policy particularly interesting to study.

Thirdly, besides the gap coming from the literature on PRRPs, there is also a gap in the literature regarding education policies that this thesis aims to fill. For a long time, education was a neglected field in political science (Gift and Wibbels, 2014; Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2011; Jakobi, Martens & Wolf, 2013). Even though the last decades have shown an increase in interest and attention, education remains an understudied field in political science in general and in comparative political science in particular (Gift and Wibbels, 2014, p. 292). The existing research on partisan preferences and education mainly focuses on the economic left-right distinction and the aspects of educational expansion and limitation (Ansell 2010; Garritzmann and Seng, 2016; Jakobi, 2011). The political science literature has been surprisingly blind regarding the content of education. Thus, the PRRP-family is particularly relevant to study as it is one of the few party families that presumably challenge the content of education. This party family politicizes an issue that has not previously been politicized. Studying this party family opens up a new aspect of education policy previously not highlighted or studied.

Finally, providing knowledge on the PRRPs' positions regarding education also has a societal relevance, as these parties' preferences might challenge the liberal education systems we find in Western Europe. There are already some examples of how the radical right in Eastern Europe has influenced education policies. In 2018, Hungary banned gender studies at universities by removing their accreditation (Kent & Tapfumaneyi, 2018). There have also been tendencies of historical revisionism in Poland and Hungary, where the populist radical right parties are attempting to "rewrite" the history of World War II (Charnysh & Finkel, 2018). Even though Eastern Europe is a different case, these examples illustrate how

important it is to increase our knowledge regarding Western European PRRPs' positions on education. Halstead (1996, p. 8) argues that "education in western democratic societies is invariably grounded on the fundamental liberal values of freedom, equality, and rationality." Further, the liberal education systems we find in Western Europe are characterized by critical thinking, open-mindedness, development of personal autonomy, and equality of respect, in addition to multicultural education and education for citizenship and democracy (Halstead, 1996). Based on what we already know about the ideology of the PRRPs (Mudde, 2017), it is reasonable to assume that the populist radical right agenda might challenge the core values we find in modern education and Western European education systems. Further, the PRRPs might have a strong interest in influencing the education systems, as public employees, including employees in the education systems, are more likely to be more left-wing oriented and supportive of liberal values (Rattsø & Sørensen, 2016). However, we currently lack knowledge on how "radical" the PRRPs positions and preferences on education are – knowledge this thesis aims to provide.

## **1.1 Research questions and delimitations**

Given that studying the education policies of Western European PRRPs is important and relevant, both from academic and societal perspectives, this thesis aims to investigate their positions on this matter. Further, the thesis examines to what extent these positions reflect the parties' core ideology, characterized by nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. Furthermore, the thesis will address how important education policies are for these parties and investigate whether the importance varies between parties labeled as mainstreamed, meaning that they have been elected to office or participated in coalition governments and parties that have not (not-mainstreamed). The following research questions will be addressed:

- (1) What positions do populist radical right parties hold regarding education policies, and to what extent do these positions reflect the core ideology of the parties?
- (2) How important are education policies for these parties, and to what extent does the importance vary between mainstreamed and not-mainstreamed parties?

A qualitative content analysis of 15<sup>1</sup> party manifestos of Western European PRRPs is conducted to answer these research questions. Also, in-depth information for three of the parties is collected through interviews and additional documents. The findings will be analyzed through a theoretical framework developed based on existing literature from two different areas within political science: education policy and the ideology of PRRPs.

The education systems in Western Europe have much in common, but there can also be differences regarding the institutional setups. The focus will be on education policies from a broader perspective, thus avoiding the risk of comparing something that is not comparable given different contexts and institutional setups. The education policies investigated are summarized in three dimensions: A socioeconomic dimension and an autonomy-control dimension consisting of a content dimension and a governing dimension. The thesis focuses on all levels of education, except childcare, given that childcare is an issue that has tight connections to labor and family policies and not just education policy.

Further, there is no academic consensus on the correct terminology regarding far-right parties. Clarification regarding the terminology is thus needed. “The far-right” is often referred to as the actors located to the right of the traditional right-wing parties, such as conservatives or libertarians, on the political spectrum (Gattinara, Leidig and Ravndal, 2020; Mudde, 2019). A common distinction among scholars is between the *radical* right and the *extreme* right. The extreme right opposes the essence of democracy (Mudde, 2019, p. 6), while the radical right “are hostile to liberal democracy but accept popular sovereignty and the minimal procedural rules of parliamentary democracy” (Gattinara, Leidig and Ravndal, 2020, p. 47). This thesis investigates the parties that can be labeled *populist radical right*, which is radical rather than extreme, and share three ideological features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde, 2007). The lack of academic consensus on the terminology also implies that different authors use different terms, explaining why other terms are applied when the literature is referred to, such as “anti-establishment parties.” Further, this thesis also relies on literature that studies the wider far-right movement, given that the PRRPs are a part of this movement.

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<sup>1</sup> Thirteen individual parties are investigated, but because education policies are decided on the regional level in Germany and Switzerland, both manifestos from the national and the regional level is investigated and treated as different data points (see Chapter 3.2.1)

As the second research question suggests, the PRRPs investigated in this study are divided into two sub-groups, where some parties are labeled as “mainstreamed” and others as “not-mainstreamed.” Parties labeled as “mainstreamed” have entered governments, either as cabinet members or as support parties for minority governments (Akkerman, de Lange & Rooduijn, 2016, p. 1), while “not-mainstreamed” parties have not. Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn (2016, p. 4) argue that parties included in office have to adjust their agenda and positions to those of the established right-wing parties, leading to the assumption that the two sub-groups might have differing preferences. The distinction between “mainstreamed” and “not-mainstreamed” parties thus has an analytical purpose, which will be further discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

## **1.2 Positioning in the field**

To the author’s knowledge, there has been no study that investigates PRRPs’ positions on education and no study that combines the literature on PRRPs’ ideology and education policy. The exception might be the recent contribution from Giudici (2020), who investigates the wider far-right movement’s engagement with education in France, (West) Germany, and Italy. Giudici finds that the far-right does represent an “opposition to almost every aspect of postwar education systems,” but that “we still lack knowledge about what it wants to replace them with” (p. 17). It is important to note that Giudici’s approach leans more toward organizations, networks, and framing and less toward current political parties, preferences, and ideas. However, this thesis partly builds on Giudici’s research, as it aims to provide knowledge on what positions and preferences PRRPs hold regarding education policy.

Even though there are no studies that address both the PRRPs’ ideology and the literature on education policy and seek to combine them, there is still a tremendous amount of research on the PRRPs ideology and, to some degree, research that address partisan preferences on education policies. This study builds on this existing literature and combines the two fields of research in the theoretical framework. The existing research on PRRPs has found that the parties share three core ideological features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde, 2019). Nativism is an ideological feature that favors the “natives” and views “non-native” elements (both persons and ideas) as threatening to the homogenous nation-state (Mudde, 2007, 2017, 2019; Jupskås and Jungar, 2014; Fardan & Thorleifsson, 2020). Authoritarianism refers to “a belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of

authority are to be punished severely” (Mudde, 2007, p. 23). Populism is a feature that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite” (Mudde, 2007, p.23).

The theoretical framework builds on the core ideology of the PRRPs. These ideological features are expected to influence the parties’ education policies on three different dimensions: a socioeconomic dimension, a content dimension, and a dimension related to the governing of the educational institutions. Most of the existing research regarding partisan preferences and education is concerned with the socioeconomic dimension, particularly education expansion and education limitation (Garritzmann & Seng, 2016; Ansell, 2010; Jakobi, 2011; Busemeyer, 2015). The socioeconomic dimension is developed based on this literature but looks beyond just expansion and limitation and includes broader issues, such as the availability of education and the different systems’ capacity for inclusiveness. Further, both Gingrich (2011) and Jungblut (2016) argue that partisan preferences regarding (higher) education policy and the welfare state also includes a second dimension, how tightly or loosely coupled the relationship between the education sector and the state should be, and this literature lays the foundation for the dimension concerned with the governing of the educational institutions. As previously mentioned, the political science literature has been surprisingly blind regarding the content of education, and no literature targets partisan preferences on this issue. However, when studying PRRPs, this dimension becomes relevant, as these parties politicize this issue, which other party families have not previously done.

By building on the two different research fields, this thesis adapts an innovative approach. It develops a novel theoretical framework to gain knowledge on what positions the PRRPs have on the three different education dimensions and how the ideological characteristics influence these positions. This thesis thus represents an important contribution to both fields of research, and it illustrates the value of combining the two approaches. As previously described, this thesis is also a valuable contribution to the literature on education policy, as it investigates partisan preferences on education beyond the classical left-right distinction and investigates broader aspects of educational policies rather than just expansion and limitation. Regarding the literature on PRRPs, this thesis also contributes to further the field of study by investigating partisan positions on a socioeconomic and socio-cultural matter that has not previously been addressed.

### **1.3 Thesis outline**

This thesis consists of six chapters. In the second chapter, a theoretical framework is developed based on the existing literature on education policy and the PRRPs' ideology. In addition, expectations on the parties' positions are derived from this literature. The theoretical framework also lays the foundation for the coding scheme applied to the qualitative content analysis of the manifestos, which will be presented in Chapter 3. Chapter three will also present and describe the research design and the methods applied. Other central issues addressed in this chapter are the collection and selection of data, selection of cases, and measures taken to ensure reliability and validity. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the manifesto analysis, together with the findings from the interviews and the additional material. In the fifth chapter, the findings described in Chapter 4 will be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2. The two research questions will be addressed and answered. The results will be summarized in the sixth and final chapter, and the theoretical and empirical implications of the results will be discussed. Finally, based on the limitations of this study, avenues for further research will be addressed.

## 2 Literature review and theoretical framework

This thesis builds on the limited existing literature on partisan preferences on education policy and the more extensive literature on the ideology of PRRPs, both within the field of political science. This chapter aims to combine the existing literature and derive a theoretical framework for assessing the PRRPs' positions regarding education policy. The theoretical framework consists of three educational dimensions, a socioeconomic dimension and an autonomy-control dimension, consisting of a content dimension and a governing dimension, in addition to four core ideological features of the PRRPs: nativism, authoritarianism, populism, and economic left-right positions. Based on the existing literature, expectations will be derived; the theoretical framework developed in this chapter lays the foundation for further analysis. The framework is anchored in what we call the "partisan hypothesis," which is a useful starting point before the more specific literature and the theoretical framework will be approached.

When studying political parties and their positions, there are, according to Strøm and Müller (1999), two possible approaches, bottom-up or top-down. The bottom-up approach emphasizes voters and their preferences. The idea is that the relationship between voters and parties is similar to a principal-agent relationship, meaning that the parties align their positions to meet the voters' preferences. On the other hand, the top-down approach emphasizes that the parties' positions and preferences are driven mainly by their ideological background. These approaches are not mutually exclusive and can overlap, but it is still important to clarify the study's analytical starting point (Jungblut, 2016, p. 23). This thesis leans on the top-down approach and focuses on the parties' ideological background. However, this does not mean that voter preferences do not matter in shaping party positions; it simply states that the analytical focus centers around parties and that the political parties are the units of analysis.

The analyzed parties are all a part of the party family we call "populist radical right," meaning that they share ideological features even though they are located in different countries. The categorizing of parties into party families stems back to Lipset and Rokkan (1967), which states that political parties in Western Europe differ along societal cleavages or conflict lines, meaning that parties belonging to the same family center around the same



conflict lines, even though they might operate in different national contexts. These cleavages are often summarized in two dimensions along which parties compete, a socioeconomic dimension (left versus right) and a cultural dimension (Betz & Immerfall 1998; Kitschelt 1994, 1997; Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, Dolezal, Bornschieer, & Frey, 2006). It is important to note that the PRRPs are not necessarily “right” on the socioeconomic dimension (Mudde, 2017), but instead on the cultural dimension; meaning that they are seen as defenders of traditional and authoritarian values and institutions (Kriesi et al., 2006, p. 489). PRRPs in Western Europe can be labeled as both centrist and right on the socioeconomic dimension, as will be described in Chapter 3.2.3.

Much of the existing research focuses on partisan preferences and core policy areas, such as labor policy (Jungblut, 2016, p. 25), but the literature regarding partisan preferences and education policy is much more limited. There have been a few studies approaching this (Jungblut, 2016; Busemeyer, 2015; Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2011; Gift & Wibbels, 2014, Jakobi, 2011), but as will be elaborated on in the following sections, none of these focuses explicitly on the party family of the PRRPs. Further, their emphasis is mainly on tertiary education. In the following sections, the existing literature on partisan preferences on education policy and the PRRPs’ ideology will be described, and the theoretical framework of this thesis will be derived from this.

## **2.1 Education policy**

A challenge when investigating the populist PRRPs’ positions on education policy in Western Europe is that there are variations in the institutional setups of the education systems. Further, the different systems have developed along different paths and in different institutional contexts. It is, therefore, necessary to develop a theoretical framework that is plausible despite some institutional- and contextual differences. This, combined with the fact that we do not know much about the parties’ positions from before, necessitates a framework with broad dimensions of education policy.

This thesis centers around three central dimensions within education policy, A socioeconomic dimension and an autonomy-control dimension consisting of a content dimension and a governing dimension. The socioeconomic dimension of education refers to the education

systems' availability and capacity for inclusiveness, while the autonomy-control dimension refers to the content of education systems and to what extent and how the institutions are governed and is divided into two different dimensions: content and governing of educational institutions. Content speaks to what happens within the institutions, and central aspects are the ideas and values taught, the curriculum, and the teachers and students' roles, and their relationship. On the other hand, the governing of educational institutions is a more procedural aspect of education; a central question is how tightly or loosely coupled the relationship between the education sector and the state should be.

It is important to note that it is nearly impossible to create educational dimensions where context and status quo does not matter at all. Thus, there might be some issues within these dimensions that are somehow dependent on the status for that policy area in a given country, and the implications of this will be discussed in the final part of the chapter, together with the specific expectations. However, the three dimensions are broad and the theoretical framework is plausible despite some institutional- and contextual differences. In the following sections, the three dimensions will be described.

### **2.1.1 The socioeconomic dimension**

Social equality is a salient issue in most Western European countries, and education and investment in human capital can work as a tool to reduce inequality and socioeconomic differences (Busemeyer, 2015, p. 177). The socioeconomic dimension of education is thus closely linked to the term *social stratification*. According to Kerckhoff (2001, p. 3), social stratification can refer to both a process and a condition. As a condition, social stratification refers to the differentiation of the members in a population into different levels or strata, while social stratification as a process is linked to ways in which the members become stratified. Kerckhoff (ibid.) further points out that education plays a significant role in the process of social stratification, given that people obtain varied educational credentials, which in turn affects their occupational attainment, which can be seen as the primary dimension of social stratification. This means that the individuals' levels of obtained education can affect which social stratum they find themselves in and their socioeconomic status. Thus, the socioeconomic dimension is linked to the availability of education and the different systems' capacity for inclusiveness.

Further, the terms *education expansion* and *education limitation* are central within the socioeconomic dimension of education. Expansion of education can refer to expansion or improvements of educational provision, while educational limitation can refer to limiting the state's expenditure on education (Garritzmann and Seng, 2016). At first sight, this may seem like a classic economic left-right distinction, whereas one could expect the economic left to favor expansion, while the economic right would favor limitation. However, the reality is far from that simple, as investments in education often are regarded as “an archetypical crowd-pleaser” (Ansell, 2010, p. 136). Education as a crowd-pleaser has two critical implications. The first one is that it is unlikely that parties openly will promote cutbacks. Thus, it is more likely that education limitation will manifest in other forms, such as increased privatization or the introduction of fees. The second implication is that the debates are often more about *how* to spend the money. Garritzmann, Busemeyer, and Neimanns (2018, p. 34) have shown that when citizens are forced to prioritize different levels of education, “not all educational sectors enjoy equally high levels of support.” In Europe, both primary and lower secondary education are usually compulsory (European Commission, EACEA & Eurydice, 2018), and these sectors are thus not likely to be at the center in an expansion-limitation debate. Busemeyer (2015, p. 44) argues that educational expansion is to provide educational opportunities to those formerly excluded. He further argues that this can be achieved by various means and that *spending* on education is not necessarily the most effective. Instead, Busemeyer claims that expansion of education can be done through (i) expanding “access to higher levels of education for a wider share of the population,” which is related to expanding access to higher education (HE), or (ii) “to expand the kinds of education more suited to the educational need for those formerly excluded,” which is related to the role of vocational and educational training (VET). The roles of HE and VET are thus more closely related to expansion and limitation than other sectors.

Even though the relationship between education expansion/limitation, spending, and economic left-right positions are not clear cut, the economic left-right positions can influence other areas of the socioeconomic dimension. The left-right scale is an applicable indicator of differences in conceptions of the state's role compared to the role of markets (Busemeyer, Franzmann & Garritzmann, 2020, p. 21). Within education policies, the parties economic left-right positions often manifest themselves through differing approaches: Parties on the left side of the scale tend to support a comprehensive approach, while parties on the right side of the scale tend to support a more differentiated approach, with a more vital role for private

providers and more choice for parents and students (Busemeyer, Franzmann & Garritzmann, 2020, p. 104). Historically, these differences have “manifested themselves on the issue of tracked versus comprehensive schooling” (ibid.). Parties of the left tend to “consider comprehensive schooling as essential to achieve equality of opportunity” (ibid, p. 108). On the other hand, parties of the right have argued that “assigning students to different tracks facilitates a more targeted education of students with different needs and abilities and leads to higher academic standards overall” (ibid.).

There is some existing literature on PRRPs and education policies, but this literature is limited and is mainly concerned with education expansion/limitation or spending. Further, the common denominator in these studies is the claim that the far-right has few positions on this matter. Both Ansell (2010) and Busemeyer, Franzmann, and Garritzmann (2013) argue that partisan positions are formed as an inverse U shape, where the traditional mainstream parties “own” the issue of education and the extreme parties on the right (and left), including the radical right, are issue-ignorers, meaning that they are found to have only limited concrete policy positions on the issue. Further, Jungblut (2016) has investigated party families’ preferences regarding redistribution (and governance) of higher education in the UK, Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands, and he also concludes that anti-establishment parties at the right fringe of the political spectrum (PRRPs) have few formulated preferences. However, it is important to note that none of the previous studies has done a detailed mapping of what kind of positions the radical right parties hold. Further, they did not map radical right positions in particular but have compared the radical right to other party families. When comparing the radical right to other party families, these parties may be somehow “shadowed” by the “issue owners.” The expectation is that by studying the radical rights’ positions regarding all levels of education, the picture of them as “issue-ignorers” will be more nuanced. Exactly what positions we can expect the populist radical right to hold regarding the socioeconomic dimension will be outlined in 2.3.1.

### **2.1.2 The autonomy-control dimension**

According to Johan Olsen (2008), (higher) education institutions can serve as instruments for different political actors with different political agendas. Olsen only marginally mentions political parties, but as Jungblut (2016, p. 19) points out; If (higher) education systems can be seen as instruments to shape the society, we can expect that political parties will have

preferences and positions regarding how the (higher) institutions should be steered. Even though this argument is based on higher education institutions, it is transferable to all types of educational institutions.

The term *autonomy* originates from *auto nomos*, referring to “the Ancient Greek city-state implies self-governing and the right to organize one’s internal affairs and give the law to oneself without external interference” (Olsen, 2009, p. 441). Here, autonomy involves “the right of institutions to function according to their normative and organizational principles and behavioral logics” (Olsen, 2009, p. 441). Autonomy is thus related to the institutions’ room for maneuver. In the public sector, the institutions’ autonomy and the government’s control must be somehow balanced. Thus, the autonomy-control dimension centers around this balance between autonomy and control in the case of the PRRPs and the education sector, and the educational institutions. Central questions within this dimension are: How do the populist radical parties wish to govern and organize the education sector? What do the populist radical parties wish to control, and what can the sector and the institutions decide for themselves? What areas do they wish to influence?

As previously mentioned, the autonomy-control dimension is divided into two separate areas: content and the governing of educational institutions. Content is about the “what” part of the autonomy-control dimension. A central aspect here is the function of the education systems, what the systems should produce or achieve. The content dimension is concerned with what happens within the institutions. Central aspects are related to what ideas and values should shape the systems, what ideas and values should be taught (and not taught), the curriculum and the roles of teachers and students, and their relationship. As described in Chapter 1, the political science literature has been surprisingly blind toward this dimension, and no literature targets partisan preferences on this issue. However, this dimension is highly relevant when studying PRRPs as these parties are expected to politicize this issue, which the more established parties have not previously done.

On the other hand, the governing of educational institutions is about the “how”-part of the autonomy-control dimension. Central issues are the overall organizational structure of the education sector and the governing of the institutions. As we have already seen, the distinction between education expansion and education limitation is linked to the partisan preferences on the size of the welfare state. Both Gingrich (2011) and Jungblut (2016) argue

that partisan preferences regarding (higher) education policy and the welfare state also include a second dimension, how tightly or loosely coupled the relationship between the education sector and the state should be. This dimension is at the core of what the governing of educational institutions addresses.

Two terms are central regarding the governing of educational institutions: centralization and decentralization. Centralization refers to strengthening the dominant group's power (the state), while decentralization aims to spread power to the other groups (Bray, 2013). West, Allmendinger, Nikolai, and Barham (2010) conclude that policies that pursue decentralization in school systems may be associated with different educational outcomes, illustrating two important points. The first is that the relationship between decentralization and centralization matters. The second is that policies regarding centralization and decentralization are relevant in several levels of the education system, not only higher education, to which Jungblut's (2016) and Olsens' (2007) arguments relate. Further, Bray (2013) points out that a political motivation for centralizing and decentralizing can be to exclude and include certain groups in decision-making, respectively. The governing of educational institutions is more closely linked to the procedural aspect of autonomy and control than the content. These two areas might be somehow overlapping, as they are both related to autonomy and control. However, the idea is that treating them as distinctive features creates a more suitable framework to capture different aspects of the education policies of the PRRPs.

## **2.2 The ideology of the populist radical right parties**

Previous research has detected three post-war far-right waves (von Beyme, 1988; Mudde, 2013; Mudde, 2016). According to Mudde (2019), the 21st century represents the fourth wave. Despite an immense interest during the first three waves, the far-right had limited relevance—meaning relatively low support in elections and low representation in the parliaments (Mudde, 2016, p. 14). In the fourth and current wave, the populist radical right parties have significantly increased their relevance. This wave is characterized by a “mainstreaming” of the radical right, meaning that the parties are seen as acceptable for coalitions in more and more countries and that the far-right ideas are openly debated and their policies moderately implemented by the mainstream parties (Mudde, 2019 p. 20-21). The term “mainstreaming” is closely related to what we call the inclusion-moderation thesis.

Education policies have not traditionally been at the core of PRRPs, and they are often associated with a narrow profile (i.e., focusing on immigration and anti-globalization). The inclusion-moderation thesis holds that parties participating in democratic institutions and procedures will moderate their radical nature and ideology (Akkerman, de Lange & Rooduijn, 2016). This is related to the Downsian logic of the median-voter theorem (Downs, 1957), which states inclusion into the electoral game has a moderating effect. The parties apply a vote-seeking logic to appeal to the median voter to attract the majority of votes. Over time, this leads the parties to abandon the narrow profiles they were initially founded on (Akkerman, de Lange & Rooduijn, 2016, p. 3), leading to the assumption that education policies become more relevant for these parties after they have participated in the electoral game over time. The inclusion-moderation thesis implies that we can expect a broadening of the parties' profiles, meaning education policies might be higher on their agenda than previously assumed.

A second implication of the inclusion-moderation thesis is that parties may differ regarding how “mainstreamed” they are. In other words, we might find different sub-groups within the party family, and one assumption is that inclusion into office can have a particularly moderating effect (Berman, 2008). Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn (2016, p. 4) argue that inclusion into office may have a particularly strong effect in Western Europe as it requires the formation of coalitions which requires the parties to adjust their agenda and positions to those of the mainstream right-wing parties. This implies that the education policies of parties that have entered governments may differ from the parties that have not<sup>2</sup>.

Based on the inclusion-moderation- or “mainstreaming” thesis we can thus expect the PRRPs to have broadened their profile and included education policy in their agenda. However, to formulate expectations on what these policies might include, we have to take a closer look at the radical right parties' ideology. Mudde (2019) argues that the parties within the family share at least three ideological features: Nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. Further, Otjes, Ivaldi, Jupskås, and Mazzoleni (2018) builds on both Mudde (2007) and Ennsner-Jedenastik (2016) and argue that the economic ideology of PRRPs is best captured through the three ideologic features mentioned above; nativism, authoritarianism, and populism,

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<sup>2</sup> An overview of which parties that have entered governments, either as cabinet members or as support parties of minority governments, can be found in the appendix.

rather than the traditional left-right-cleavage. The reason for this approach is that the PRRPs vary in terms of support for government intervention and market-based solutions, but they share a commitment to economic nativism, economic authoritarianism, and economic populism (Otjes et al., 2018). As these aspects are related to the populist radical rights' core ideology, the economic aspects will be combined with the core ideological features. At the same time, there might be patterns of socioeconomic educational policies, which are not easily informed by the core ideology. To understand these patterns, it might also be helpful to distinguish parties based on what we already know about their economic policies in terms of left-right position. By adding the left-right position, we should also be able to tell whether the socioeconomic dimension of educational policy is mainly informed by the core ideology or by the economic left-right positions. In the following sections, the three ideological features and their economic aspect will be elaborated on before the final section approaches the economic left-right positions of the PRRPs.

### **2.2.1 Nativism**

Mudde (2007, p. 26) claims that nativism is the ultimate core feature of the populist radical right. Mudde (2017, p. 4) states that “nativism” is a combination of nationalism and xenophobia. It is an ideological feature that favors the “natives” and views “non-native” elements (both persons and ideas) as threatening to the homogenous nation-state. Nativism targets immigrants (both guest workers and refugees), and a combination of ethnic, racial, and religious prejudices are often at the core, which is illustrated through, for example, Islamophobia (ibid. p. 4). The idea is that “the nation-state should remain as culturally and ethnically homogenous as possible,” and this implies “very strict assimilationist, anti-immigration policies, and profound criticism of multiculturalism” (Jupskås and Jungar, 2014, p. 219).

Fardan and Thorleifsson (2020) claim that far-right politics are characterized by “radical nationalism,” which excludes certain groups on racial, ethnic, or cultural grounds. They argue that cultural nationalism is more widespread among Western European radical right parties rather than racial or ethnic nationalism. According to Fardan and Thorleifsson (2020, p. 15), cultural nationalists “direct their opposition toward (Muslim) immigration and Islam, claiming that Islamic culture is incompatible with “Western” values.” Further, Schwörer and Romero-Vidal (2020, p. 17) find evidence for the widespread assumption that the populist



radical right “portray themselves as defenders of Christianity against a Muslim threat,” but at the same time highlight that this is not necessarily linked to religious ideologies, but instead derives from their nativist ideology. According to Schwörer and Romero-Vidal (ibid.), “constructing religious outgroups seems to be much more important to PRRP than creating a Christian ingroup.” Further, Schwörer and Romero-Vidal (ibid.) also find evidence of nationalist parties defending secular values, such as in France, and Fardan and Thorleifsson (2020) also state that some PRRPs recently have embraced liberal values regarding women and LGBTQ rights. These examples imply that the nativist core of the PRRPs is to promote the nativist ideas and understandings and defend either Christianity or secularism. Attacking Islam or Muslims can be seen as different strategies to fulfill the overarching goal of promoting nativism. Lastly, within economic nativism, the term welfare chauvinism is central; Welfare chauvinism is a broad concept that can be summarized as all sorts of policies that involve limiting welfare benefits to include the “native” population while foreigners should be excluded (Keskinen, Jørgensen and Norocel, 2016; Otjes et al., 2018).

### **2.2.2 Authoritarianism**

The second ideological feature common for the PRRPs is authoritarianism. Authoritarianism can be defined differently in various fields of research. Here, it refers to “a belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely” (Mudde, 2007, p. 23). According to Altemeyer (1981, p. 147–148), “the right-wing authoritarian believes authorities should be trusted to a relatively great extent, and that they are owed obedience and respect.” Further, “right wing authoritarians are predisposed to control the behavior of others through punishment” (ibid. p. 153). This can, in turn, include “punitive conventional moralism” (Smith, 1967) and can be associated with moral conservatism (Otjes et al., 2018). Ignazi (1992) claims, in line with this, that the post-industrial extreme right represents opposition to post-material values, such as autonomy and self-expression, and favors law and order and traditional family values. In society as a whole, authoritarianism can be translated into strict law and order policies.

Authoritarianism is linked to the economic ideology of the populist radical right through a distinction between the “deserving poor” and the “undeserving poor.” The poverty of the “deserving” is seen as a consequence of circumstances outside their control, such as age. The “undeserving” are poor because of their moral failing, thus breaking the rules and norms of

the welfare state and are deserving of punishment (Otjes et al., 2018; Afonso and Papadopoulous, 2015; Ennsner-Jedenastik, 2016). This distinction is related to the populism of the populist radical right, as the next section will illustrate.

### **2.2.3 Populism**

Thirdly, the radical right parties' ideology is characterized by "populism." Populism can be regarded as a political style or a style of a political rhetoric, but also as a "thin ideology" (Mudde, 2007), which it will be regarded as here. Mudde (2007, p. 23) defines populism as "a thin ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite.'" The distinction between the groups is based on a different moral status; "The people" is seen as pure and authentic, while "the elite" is not (Jupskås, 2020). However, Brubaker (2017, p. 363) criticizes Mudde's definition, arguing that it is too minimal. Brubaker argues that "the people" can be defined not only in relation to those on the top (the elite) but also those at the *bottom*. "The people" is a homogenous group, and those at the bottom are undeserving, and they are unworthy of respect and do not belong to the so-called decent, respectable, "normal," hard-working people. Further, populism is common sense oriented, and according to Scott (2020, p. 58), populism inherits a general mistrust in university-educated elites and experts, given that they tend to hold cosmopolitan values rather than patriotic values. Scott (2020, p. 44) also notes that new technologies have led to an explosion of "anti-intellectualism" within populist camps. Lastly, economic populism can be defined as "economic policies specifically meant to limit the economic role of elites" (Otjes et al., 2018, p. 275).

### **2.2.4 Economic left-right positions**

In the case of the PRRPs, different studies place them on different points at the economic left-right scale. Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, Dolezal, Bornschie, and Frey (2008) place them on the economic right. Mudde (2017, p. 6), building on Bobbio (1996), argues that PRRPs are not necessarily "right" in a classic socioeconomic understanding of the state versus the market, but is, however, "right" in the sense that they believe that "inequalities between people are natural and positive, and should be either defended or left alone by the state." Others, such as Rovny (2013), claim they lean more toward the left or apply a deliberate strategy of *position blurring*. However, the general agreement is that there are significant variations within the party family and that it does not make sense to label the family as either

left, center, or right. To be able to locate each of the PRRPs on the economic left-right dimension, this thesis leans on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey from 2019 (Bakker, Hooghe, Jolly, Marks, Polk, Rovny, Steenbergen & Vachudova, 2020) (see Chapter 3.2.3.) which places the parties on an economic left-right scale from extreme left to extreme right. Based on this measure, the parties included in this study can be labeled as either ‘centrist’ or ‘right’.

## **2.3 Populist radical right positions on education policy: What can we expect?**

How can we expect the PRRPs to influence the socioeconomic dimension, the content dimension and the governing dimension? In the following sections, these dimensions will be brought together with the ideological core of the populist right parties, in addition to their economic left-right positions. Specific expectations regarding their positions will be derived.

### **2.3.1 The socioeconomic dimension**

As outlined above, the socioeconomic dimension is linked to the availability of education and the different systems’ capacity for inclusiveness. The nativism of the populist radical right targets the “non-natives,” and the cultural nationalism of Western European PRRPs specifically targets “non-native groups.” This, in combination with welfare chauvinism, leads to an expectation that the PRRPs will favor the “natives” in the education systems, and at the same time, exclude or limit the availability for “non-natives.”

Further, the terms *education expansion* and *education limitation* are central within the socioeconomic dimension of education. As previously mentioned, education expansion can refer to expansion or improvements of education, or as Busemeyer (2015) argues, educational expansion is to provide educational opportunities to those formerly excluded. On the other hand, education limitation is concerned with limiting the state’s expenditure on education, and this may include the introduction or expansion of study fees (at all levels) or increasing the number of private schools. In terms of which levels or types of education the populist radical right might have an interest in expanding/limiting, VET and HE are central. As will be further discussed in sections 2.3.2. and 2.3.3, the populism of the populist radical right might lead to a more instrumental approach toward education: Education should be useful. Further, the PRRPs are skeptical toward elites and professional expertise. The expectation is

thus that the populist part of the ideology will lead the parties to expand VET while limiting HE. However, it is important to note that this can depend on the status quo in a given country and how satisfied the parties are with the current situation. On the other side, parties that are satisfied with the status quo will likely use the manifestos to highlight the areas and sectors that are most important to them, and in this regard, the parties can be expected to favor VET.

In terms of the economic left-right positions of the PRRPs, we can expect that parties labeled as “right” will have an overweight of more traditional right-wing educational policies, while parties labeled as “centrist” will have a more extensive mix of both left- and right-wing policies. As previously discussed, parties on the “right” side of the economic left-right scale tend to support a differentiated approach to education. This includes both a more vital role for private providers, more choice for parents and students, and a more differentiated and performance-oriented system. On the other hand, parties on the left side of the scale consider comprehensive schooling essential to achieving equality of opportunity. In other words, we expect parties labeled as “right” to have more “pure” right policies, while the parties labeled as “centrist” are expected to have elements of both traditional right- and left-wing positions on education.

### **2.3.2 The autonomy-control dimension: Content**

As outlined above, the content dimension is related to the “what”-part of the autonomy-control dimension. What do the populist right parties wish to control within the education systems? Central aspects are the ideas and values taught, the curriculum, the roles of students and teachers, and their relationship. Firstly, the nativism of the populist radical right leads to an expectation that these parties will favor nationalism and the worldview of the “natives” instead of diversity and multicultural education. This also implies that the education systems should facilitate the assimilation of the “non-natives.”

Further, the authoritarianism of the PRRPs leads to an expectation of strict rules, discipline, and control within the education systems. Central within the aspect of “control” is punishment and the distinction between the “deserving” and “undeserving.” Within the education systems, we can expect that the “undeserving” can be translated into the students/pupils who are seen as lazy, causing problems, or simply not following the rules, and thus should be punished. Authoritarianism also represents opposition to post-material values,

such as autonomy and self-expression—two common aspects in the liberal education systems we find in Western Europe today. The expectation is thus that the populist radical right will be in opposition to these values within the education systems and rely on moral conservatism rather than post-materialist values. This also implies that students and pupils should rely on authority rather than reason.

Further, the populism of the populist radical right is anti-elite and common sense oriented, and we can thus expect that the PRRPs represent a more instrumental approach toward education; Education should be useful. This could further imply that they favor practical skills rather than theoretical knowledge and perhaps natural sciences over humanities and social sciences.

### **2.3.3 The autonomy-control dimension: Governing of educational institutions**

How do the PRRPs wish to govern and organize the education sector? How do they wish to balance the state's control and the institutions' autonomy? These are central questions related to the governing of educational institutions. Firstly, one can argue that authoritarianism can translate into centralization as the preferred governing of education systems. Centralization gives the authorities more control over the institutions while at the same time limiting the institutions' autonomy. Jungblut (2016, p. 337) also argues that PRRPs (anti-establishment parties) might favor centralization of higher education, as they “distrust HE institutions to steer themselves” and he argues that this is “because they do not have a strong representation of their electorate in these institutions.” Even though Jungblut does not mention authoritarianism, his arguments can be seen in line with authoritarianism; The populist radical right distrusts educational institutions to steer themselves, which creates the need for control and thus centralized systems. As previously mentioned, control is closely linked to the punishment of “rulebreakers.” This can also be the case when steering the education sector; the institutions which do not follow the rules or expectations can expect to be punished, for example through limitations in funding.

On the other hand, the populism of the parties can point in a different direction and lead to a contradictory expectation, namely decreased centralization and increased decentralization. The populism of the PRRPs states that the parties are skeptical toward elites. Within the governing of the education sector, this can imply that the parties are skeptical toward

professional expertise; The people know what is best, not the experts. This can, in turn, imply that the parties distrust the “experts” and prefer “the people”, that is, the teachers or the institutions, to steer themselves. The parties’ skepticism toward experts and elites can also imply that they favor less bureaucracy in schools and the sector in general, as administrative and “bureaucratic” tasks often consist of reporting or documentation requirements.

We know that countries differ tremendously regarding how centralized/decentralized systems they have. The aspect of centralization/decentralization is thus highly dependent on the status quo in a given country. However, no existing research has mapped and compared those differences accurately, and it has not been possible to include such mapping within the scope of this thesis. Thus, there is a risk that this framework will not measure the parties’ positions on this matter in a meaningful way. Despite these limitations, the aspects of centralization/decentralization have been included because being able to say *something* is much more meaningful than the alternative, which is *nothing*.

### 2.3.4 Summary of expectations

The expectations outlined in 2.3.1–2.3.3 are summarized in Table 2.1. The table shows what positions we expect on the three different educational dimensions and what part of the ideology these positions reflect. The boxes where no specific expectations are formulated are left blank.

<b>Table 2.1: Summary of expectations</b>						
		<b>Nativism</b>	<b>Authoritarianism</b>	<b>Populism</b>	<b>Economic left-right</b>	
					<b>Left</b>	<b>Right</b>
<b>Socioeconomic</b>		Favoring ‘natives’  Excluding ‘non-natives’		Expand VET, limit HE	Comprehensive systems	Differentiated systems  Privatization  Free choice of school
<b>Autonomy-Control</b>	<b>Content</b>	Favoring nationalism and the worldview of the ‘natives’  Assimilation of ‘non-natives’  Opposing diversity and multicultural education	Punishment of ‘rulebreakers’  Moral conservatism  Rely on authority rather than reason	Instrumental approach to education: Education should be useful.  More focus on practical skills		
	<b>Governing of educational institutions</b>		Centralization  Punishment of ‘rulebreakers’	Decentralization  Skeptical of professional expertise  Anti-bureaucracy		

### **3 Methodology**

This thesis adopted a comparative case study approach involving collecting qualitative data through documents (party manifestos and some additional documents) and semi-structured interviews. In this chapter, central aspects of the research design and methods applied for investigating the research questions will be described. The advantages and limitations of the design and the methods applied will be discussed, and the choices made in the selection of cases and the selection and collection of data will be described. Further, the chapter will outline how the data were coded and analyzed and discuss the measures taken to ensure validity and reliability.

#### **3.1 Research design and case selection**

The comparative case study design was chosen because the approach is particularly well suited to answer the research question. The research question focuses on the positions of the party family of PRRPs, not just a single party. Thus making the comparative case study approach particularly well suited, as it has excellent ability to discover and identify similarities, differences, and patterns across cases (Ljiphart, 1971). Particularly essential is the design's ability to identify new hypotheses through deduction and induction (Bennett, 2014, p. 19). This study is deductive because a theoretical framework, specific expectations, and an analytical framework have been developed based on the limited existing literature on education policy and existing research on the ideology of PRRPs. However, the study also has an inductive element as these two research areas have not previously been combined, and the existing knowledge on what positions PRRPs hold regarding education policies is limited. In other words, we do not know for sure that the developed expectations, theoretical and analytical framework will catch the parties' positions in a meaningful way. Thus, the comparative case study approach is particularly suitable as it enables a combination of a deductive and an inductive approach. Further, such a design enables the cases to be "intensively examined, even when the research resources at the investigator's disposal are relatively limited" (Ljiphart, 1971, p. 691).

A comparative case study design also has the advantage that it allows for using several sources of data. This study relies on two different primary sources of data: manifesto data and



data collected through semi-structured interviews with representatives from the parties. Details on the collection of data will be elaborated on in 3.2. Using several types of data makes it possible to get a richer understanding of the phenomenon. Further, this approach helps to balance out potential weaknesses of single types of data. However, a challenge related to the use of non-standardized data is that it allows for differing interpretations by different researchers (Jungblut, 2016, p. 56). Measures have been taken to cope with this limitation and ensure validity and reliability during the analysis. These measures are elaborated on in 3.4.

As previously mentioned, a great advantage of the design is its ability to discover and identify similarities, differences, and patterns across cases (Ljiphart, 1971). The relatively small number of cases makes it possible to gather rich and detailed information about the parties' positions and enables "contextualized comparison." Contextualized comparison is a comparison that "self-consciously seeks to address the issue of equivalence by searching for *analytically equivalent* phenomena—even if expressed in substantively different terms – across different contexts" (Lock & Thelen, 1990, p. 11). In other words, the comparative case study design has high levels of construct validity due to the rich and detailed information that is analyzed. However, this comes at a cost, as a low number of cases leads to limited transferability (Ljiphart, 1971, p. 685). Ljiphart (1971, p. 686-687) points at a possible solution for minimizing this "small-N"-problem; to increase the number of cases as much as possible—both geographically and longitudinally. In this case, it would, due to lack of resources, not have been possible to expand both the geographical scope and the time horizon. Thus, a trade-off has been made between a cross-sectional and a longitudinal analysis, where a larger number of cases have been included at the expense of longitudinal data. The consequences of this trade-off will be elaborated on in 3.4.

One of the most common critiques toward case studies is related to the danger of "selection bias" when selecting cases (Bennett, 2014, p. 39). The "selection bias" with the most damaging consequences is related to "confirmation bias," meaning that cases are selected because they "fit" the hypothesis, and contradicting cases are ignored (Bennett, 2014, p. 40). Some selection criteria have been developed and applied to avoid bias in the selection of cases. As mentioned in the introduction, the units of analysis are PRRPs in Western Europe. The countries and parties were selected based on what Krippendorff (2019, p. 122) calls *relevance sampling*, meaning that cases are selected based on their relevance for the research

question. Cases that met the following criteria were considered as relevant and thus selected: i) countries and parties located in Western Europe, ii) parties labeled as populist and radical right, iii) the parties have to be or have been represented in the national parliament, and iv) the parties must have participated in two parliamentary elections or more. In the following sections, the criteria for the selection of cases will be elaborated.

Firstly, the countries (and parties) had to be located in Western Europe. A challenge when investigating education policies of PRRPs is that the national contexts, including both the education system and the political system, can differ tremendously from country to country, giving the parties very different points of departure. It was thus an important point to investigate parties that operate in somewhat similar contexts. Given that Western Europe is a region with a relatively common socio-political background, this was a natural starting point. Western Europe is also a region where PRRPs have increased their relevance and influence tremendously, making it an interesting region to study. Western Europe is here defined as the European countries located west of the Balkans, excluding countries that were behind the iron curtain or part of Yugoslavia. Based on this definition, Western Europe would also include a set of “small states,” but these are not included in the analysis. A “small state” definition must be provided, as there is no clear academic consensus on the term’s meaning (Bacchus, 2008; Veenendaal & Corbett, 2015; Maass, 2009). The size of states can be measured on multiple variables, such as population, territory, or economic indicators (Veenendaal & Corbett, 2015, p. 529), and using the size of the state’s population is the most common approach (Maass, 2009, p. 71). The challenge with this approach is to set a cut-off point, as “many different cut-off points—and accompanying rationales for them—have been suggested” (ibid.). Previous research regarding education policies in small states often set the threshold at 1.5 million (Crossley and Sprague, 2012; Powell, 2012; Bacchus, 2008). This thesis follows the same approach, categorizing Andorra, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, San Marino, and Iceland as “small states.”<sup>3</sup> The rationale for excluding the small states from the study is based on the assumption that the education systems will differ tremendously from those of the other Western European countries, making a comparison across parties challenging. For example, small states can be dependent on other countries in the training of their citizens (Powell, 2012). Other specific challenges that are prominent in

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<sup>3</sup> The Independents (DU) in Liechtenstein is the only party excluded on the basis of operating within a ‘small state’.

small states are labor migration, limited highly-qualified human resources, and a lack of economies of scale (Powell, 2012; Crossley, Bray & Packer, 2011; Martin & Bray, 2012). For these reasons, it was considered appropriate not to include the “small states” in the study. The Western European countries remaining were, therefore, the following: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Austria, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

The second criterion was that the parties had to be labeled as both populist and radical right<sup>4</sup>. To identify relevant parties, the PopuList-dataset was used (Rooduijn, Van Kessel, Froio, Pirro, De Lange, Halikiopoulou, Lewis, Mudde, & Taggart, 2020). The dataset covers parties from 31 European countries classified as populist, far-right, far left, and/or Eurosceptic. All the Western European countries mentioned above are included in the dataset. Further, the classification of “far-right parties” in the dataset is based on Mudde’s (2007) definition of PRRPs, which is the exact definition that this thesis leans on. “Far-right parties” are both nativist and authoritarian, in addition to populist, in other words, what this thesis labels “PRRPs”, as described in Chapter 2. The PopuList-dataset was thus used to identify the relevant parties within the Western European countries.

The third criterion was that the party has to be or has been represented in the national parliament. The fourth criterion was that the parties had to have run for two parliamentary elections or more. The third and fourth criteria are related to what we call the inclusion-moderation thesis described in Chapter 2. The inclusion-moderation thesis holds that parties that participate in democratic institutions and procedures will moderate their radical nature and ideology (Akkerman, de Lange & Rooduijn, 2016), leading to the assumption that education policies become more relevant for these parties after they have participated in the electoral game over time. The Downsian logic (Downs, 1957; Berman, 2008) implies that the moderating effect occurs only when the parties participate in the electoral game. In other words, education policies are probably not a priority for parties that still focus on a narrow profile. The implication of this is that relevant cases have to have participated in the electoral game; The third criterion is thus that parties are considered relevant if they have been elected to the national parliament. Further, building on the Downsian logic, the parties must participate in the electoral game *over time*. For this reason, the parties had to have

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<sup>4</sup> Ireland does not have a party labeled as populist radical right and was thus excluded.

participated in two parliamentary elections or more to be selected, meaning that parties that were running for their first election were excluded<sup>5</sup>. An overview of the selected countries and parties can be found in Table 3.1.

<b>Table 3.1: Overview of selected countries and parties</b>			
<b>Country</b>	<b>Party name</b>	<b>Party name in English</b>	<b>Abb.</b>
Norway	Fremskrittspartiet	The Progress Party	FRP
Sweden	Sverigedemokraterna	Sweden Democrats	SD
Denmark	Dansk Folkeparti	Danish People's Party	DF
Finland	Suomen Maaseudun Puolue   Perussuomalaiset	Finns Party	PS
France	Front National	National Rally	RN
Germany	Alternative für Deutschland	Alternative for Germany	AFD
Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Freedom Party of Austria	FPÖ
Belgium	Vlaams Belang	Flemish Interest	VB
Netherlands	Partij voor de Vrijheid	The Party for Freedom	PVV
Switzerland	Schweizerische Volkspartei	Swiss People's Party	SVP
Italy	Lega Nord / Lega	The League	LN
Spain	Vox	Vox	VOX
United Kingdom	United Kingdom Independence Party	United Kingdom Independence Party	UKIP

All of the parties in Table 3.1 were included in the manifesto analysis. Due to time constraints stemming from the thesis as such, it was impossible to conduct interviews with representatives from all parties. It was thus necessary to select some of the parties. Again, the strategy was to select parties based on relevance. As previously pointed out, parties can differ according to how “mainstreamed” they are. The Downsian logic already led to the exclusion of some parties that are inexperienced in the electoral game. A second aspect of the inclusion-moderation thesis can affect the already selected parties’ policies. Berman (2008) highlights that inclusion into office can have a significant moderating effect. Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn (2016, p. 4) argue that inclusion into office may have a particularly strong effect in Western Europe as it requires the formation of coalitions which requires the parties to adjust their agenda and positions to those of the mainstream right-wing parties. This implies that the

<sup>5</sup> The fourth criteria led to the exclusion of New Right in Denmark, Forum for Democracy in Netherlands and Chega in Portugal.

education policies of parties that have participated in coalitions or been in office may differ from the parties that have not. The parties that have participated in coalitions or been in office are here labeled as “mainstreamed”. Thus, it was essential to interview representatives from both “mainstreamed” and “not-mainstreamed” parties.

Even though countries in Western Europe have a relatively common socio-political background, there are contextual differences regarding the institutional set-ups of the education systems. It was thus important to include parties operating in countries with different institutional set-ups of the education systems. Busemeyer (2015) has classified the education systems in Europe into three clusters: liberal regimes, statist regimes, and corporatist regimes. This classification is done based on two dimensions: the levels of educational stratification and the levels of de-commodification. De-commodification “is related to whether education is seen as a tradeable commodity and capital investment or a social right and entitlement” (p. 30), which can be expressed through the funding of the sector. When a large share of the funding comes from private sources, it is more likely that education is seen as a tradeable commodity, while high state involvement indicates that education may be regarded as a social right and entitlement. Social stratification is related to “the strength of class-related inequalities of access to higher levels of education and the degree of educational mobility within different tracks (academic and vocational) within the system” (p. 31). Segmented systems where the students are put onto different tracks at an early age are associated with higher levels of educational inequality, while systems with comprehensive secondary education and open access to tertiary education are associated with lower educational stratification. Statist regimes combine low levels of educational stratification with high levels of de-commodification, while corporatist regimes combine high levels of educational stratification with medium levels of de-commodification. Liberal regimes have low levels of de-commodification (high share of private spending) and low levels of stratification. However, the UK is the only liberal regime included in the thesis, while all of the other countries are classified as either statist or corporatist regimes. This makes UKIP in the UK an odd case, especially since the UK also differs from the other countries in several other aspects, such as being the only two-party system and the fact that UKIP lost much of its relevance and influence after Brexit became a reality. The selection strategy was thus to select cases from both statist and corporatist regimes.

To summarize, two factors were important when selecting the parties to interview: i) include both mainstreamed and not-mainstreamed parties, and ii) include parties operating within both statist and corporatist regimes. A summary of which parties and countries belonging to the different classifications can be found in Table 3.2.

<b>Table 3.2: Parties according to skill regime and mainstreaming<sup>6</sup></b>		
	<b>Statist</b>	<b>Corporatist</b>
<b>Mainstreamed</b>	Finland (PS) Italy (LN) Norway (FRP) Netherlands (PVV) Denmark (DF)	Austria (FPÖ) Switzerland (SVP)
<b>Not-mainstreamed</b>	Sweden (SD) Spain (VOX) France (RN)	Germany (AFD) Belgium (VB)
<i>Based on Busemeyer (2015) and Akkerman, de Lange and Rooduijn (2016)</i>		

The idea was to select four parties to meet both the criteria described above: Two mainstreamed parties, including one operating within a statist and the second within a corporatist regime, in addition to two parties classified as not-mainstreamed, with one operating within a statist and the second within a corporatist regime. In other words, the idea was to select one party from each box in Table 3.2: FRP in Norway, SD in Sweden, FPÖ in Austria, and VB in Belgium. However, only two parties agreed to participate: FRP and VB. Further, the idea was to collect additional written material, such as statements in the media and additional material from the parties not willing to participate, to compensate for the two missing interviews. However, meaningful additional material was found for only one of the two remaining parties, SD.

### **3.2 Data**

This study relies mainly on two different sources of data; manifesto data and data collected through semi-structured interviews with representatives from two of the parties. In addition, public statements and extra material published by the party were collected for one party as a replacement for an interview. In the following sections, the different types of data will be described, and central issues regarding the collection of data will be discussed. In addition to manifestos and interviews, background information about each party was collected. The

<sup>6</sup> UKIP is excluded from the table as it is the only party operating within a liberal skills regime.

collection of background data will be described in the final section.

### **3.2.1 Manifesto data**

According to Dinas and Gemenis (2009), three main approaches are common when studying party positions: (i) expert surveys, (ii) opinion poll data, and (iii) content analysis of party manifestos. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses, but the content analysis of party manifestos has undoubtedly been the most popular within political science. One of the reasons for this is that the manifestos are impartial, given that both expert surveys and opinion poll data are based on experts and voters *perceptions* of the parties' positions (Dinas and Gemenis, 2009, p. 1), while manifestos "have a special standing as the only collective policy statement that parties as such ever make" (Budge, 2001, p. 211). However, analysis of manifestos has faced some criticism as it is questionable whether the manifestos represent the "real" positions of the parties that publish them. Laver and Garry (2000, p. 620) state that this debate is fruitless, as the "real" policy position of a political actor is a metaphysical notion, and "all we can do in practice is use evidence about policy positions in particular political contexts and make context-specific inferences from this." When investigating what positions PRRPs hold regarding education policies, party manifestos are thus an appropriate starting point, especially since party manifestos usually are issued by each party at each election (Laver and Garry, 2000, p. 620), making the manifestos comparable across countries and parties. Even though party manifestos provide valuable data for investigating the research question, it is important to note that manifestos are strategic documents published by the party, with different objectives in mind (Laver and Garry, 2000, p. 620). In other words, the manifestos cannot be viewed as a complete or absolute overview of the parties' positions on education policy. Further, the manifestos are not binding contracts, and they do not state whether the parties follow up on the statements. However, given that manifestos are official documents, Laver and Garry (*ibid.*) point out that it is difficult for party members to resile from policies in the manifesto.

As previously mentioned, there has been a trade-off between geographical scope and time horizon. The inclusion of all relevant cases has been given priority over longitudinal data. In other words, only the most recent manifesto from each party has been analyzed. In most cases, selecting the most recent manifesto was a straightforward process. However, there are some special cases where selecting the manifesto has been more complicated. These cases are

related to the manifestos from the parties in Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland. Firstly, Denmark does not operate with election manifestos, which can be a serious problem, making it challenging to compare the Danish People's Party's positions to the rest of the PRRPs (Hansen, 2008). However, instead of excluding the Danish People's Party from the analysis, two replacement documents have been analyzed: the party's program of principles and the election brochure. These are the same documents that The Manifesto Project uses in their research. Further, the most recent manifesto of PVV in the Netherlands (from 2017) includes only one page, while the 2012 manifesto has a more "traditional manifesto design." The 2012-manifesto was used to be able to investigate PVV's positions on education policy meaningfully. Finally, Germany and Switzerland are federal states, where the education policies are decided mainly at the state level and not on the national level. The most recent manifestos from both the regional and the national levels were included and treated as two different data points to overcome this challenge. At the regional level, the largest Bundesländ/Canton was the chosen case, leading to the inclusion of the manifestos from AFD in North Rhine-Westphalia and SVP in Zürich, in addition to their most recent national manifesto. Further, it is important to note that Belgium has three different education systems, as the community governments decide education policies. Given that there are no successful PRRPs in the German-speaking community or the French community, only the manifesto from VB—which belongs to the Flemish community—has been included.

An overview of all the manifestos included in the analysis can be found in Table 3.3. It is important to note that only the parts regarding education policy were analyzed, and the remaining part of the manifestos was not included. Further, given that most parties publish the manifesto in their native language, translations into English had to be done. The manifestos of FPÖ, VB, TF, RN, AFD, LN, PBB, VOX, and SVP were translated through digital translation tools, such as DeepL and Google Translate, and the translations were proofread and quality checked by native speakers afterwards to ensure that statements were not lost in the translation. However, a Finnish native speaker could not be identified, and an authorized translator translated the Finnish manifesto. The remaining manifestos (DF, FRP, SD, and UKIP) were not translated and were analyzed in their original form.



<b>Table 3.3: Overview of the included party manifestos</b>		
<b>Country</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Manifesto</b>
Norway	FRP	2017
Sweden	SD	2018
Finland	PS	2019
Denmark <sup>7</sup>	DF	2019
United Kingdom	UKIP	2019
Germany	AFD-N (National)	2017
	AFD-NRW (North-Rhine Westphalia)	2017
The Netherlands <sup>8</sup>	PVV	2012
Belgium	VB	2019
France	RN	2017
Switzerland	SVP-N (National)	2019
	SVP-Z (Zürich)	2019
Austria	FPÖ	2017
Spain	VOX	2019
Italy	LN	2018

### 3.2.2 Interviews

Interviews with representatives from two parties were conducted to gain more knowledge about the PRRPs' positions and the importance of education policy and to remedy some of the limitations regarding manifesto data. The interviews aimed to supplement the data collected through the manifestos. The aim was not to cross-validate the findings in the manifesto but rather to get a better understanding of the relevance and importance of education policy for these parties and get a better understanding of the relevance of the manifesto and their specific positions on education policies. The interviews were semi-structured and based on an interview guide. The interviews lasted about 45-60 minutes and were conducted through an online video call. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed after the interview. As previously mentioned, the two parties willing to participate were FRP and VB. The representative from VB was the parliamentary assistant on education policy in the Flemish parliament. In contrast, the representative from FRP was a member of the education committee in the Norwegian parliament. The interview guide can be found in the appendix.

<sup>7</sup> Denmark does not operate with manifestos. The principle program in addition to the 2019 "Mærkesager" were included instead.

<sup>8</sup> The 2017-manifesto is only one page. Therefore, the 2012 manifesto is included instead.

Initially, the idea was to interview representatives from four of the parties. To compensate for the two missing interviews, the idea was to collect additional written material, such as statements in the media and additional material published by the parties, for SD and FPÖ. However, meaningful additional material was found for only one of the two remaining parties, namely SD. The additional material consists of statements given by representatives from SD through the media and material published on the party's website. A summary of the additional material from SD can be found in Table 3.4. The two interviews and the additional information from SD enable us to say more about the parties' positions and the importance of education policies than we would have been able to without this information.

**Table 3.4: Overview of additional material for SD**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Type of data</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Published at</b>
A to Ö	SD website	SD	Collected 15.04.21	SD.se
We are worried that the state's values may be misinterpreted	Opinion	Patrick Reslow and Robert Stenkvisst,	13.04.2021	Sydsvenskan.se
Share-owned schools will be forced to have a buffer	Opinion	Patrick Reslow and Florian Aranda	23.02.2021	Norrköpings Tidningar (nt.se)
Stop forced relocation of students	Opinion	Patrick Reslow, Jörgen Grubb, Anette Rangdag	23.02.2021	Jamtlandstining.se
S has finally sobered up about immigration policy	Opinion	Patrick Reslow, Robert Stenkvisst, Michael Rubbestad and Jörgen Grubb	18.12.2020	Dagenssamhalle.se
Our party does not want a socialist school system	Opinion	Patrick Reslow,	03.12.2020	Expressen.se
Stop pretending that all children have the same need for preschool	Opinion	Patrick Reslow and Michael Rubbestad	03.12.2020	Dagenssamhalle.se
The school proposals are praised and criticized	News article	Oscar Schau (journalist in SVT); quotes from Patrick Reslow	30.11.2020	SVT.se
S, you have ruined the equality of schools	Opinion	Patrick Reslow, Robert Stenkvisst, Michael Rubbestad and Jörgen Grubb	02.07.2020	Aftonbladet.se
C advocates for sexualizing little girls	Opinion	Patrick Reslow, Lars Nyström	01.03.2020	Expressen.se
Why is the oppression of children allowed in our schools?	Opinion	Patrick Reslow, Robert Stenkvisst, Michael Rubbestad and Jörgen Grubb	25.06.2019	Aftonbladet.se

### 3.2.3 Background data

In addition to the data collected through manifestos and interviews, background information on the parties' economic left-right positions was collected. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the populist radical right parties are not necessarily “right” on the socioeconomic dimension but instead on the cultural dimension (Mudde, 2007). The parties’ positions on the socioeconomic left-right scale can thus contribute to different positions on the socioeconomic dimension of education. To be able to take this into account in the analysis, the parties’ positions on the economic left-right scale were located, based on data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey from 2019 (Bakker, Hooghe, Jolly, Marks, Polk, Rovny, Steenbergen & Vachudova, 2020). In this dataset, the parties are placed on an economic left-right scale from extreme left to extreme right (0–10). The scale opens for a distinction of parties into different groups, and the parties were here grouped as follows: 0–3: left-wing, 4–6: centrist, 7–10: right-wing. The data shows that the parties range from 4,4 to 9,3 (see Table 3.5), meaning that the PRRPs can be divided into two groups regarding economic left-right position: Centrist parties (DF, VB, SD, PS, PVV, FPÖ, and RN) and right-wing parties (AFD, LN, UKIP, FRP, SVP, and VOX).

<b>Party</b>	<b>L-R-position</b>	<b>Group</b>
DF	4,4	Centrist
VB	5,0	Centrist
SD	5,6	Centrist
PS	6,4	Centrist
PVV	6,5	Centrist
FPÖ	6,5	Centrist
RN	6,9	Centrist
AFD	7,0	Right
LN	7,7	Right
UKIP	7,7	Right
FRP	7,9	Right
SVP	8,2	Right
VOX	9,3	Right

*Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (2019)*

### 3.3 Qualitative content analysis and coding

A content analysis was conducted to analyze the collected data material. There are several approaches to content analysis, and Drisko and Maschi (2015, p. 2) distinguish between three approaches: basic content analysis, interpretive content analysis, and qualitative content analysis. Basic content analyses use “word counts and other quantitative analytic methods to analyze data,” and the approach is to “code mainly manifest data by using deductively or inductively generated code lists” (Drisko and Maschi, 2015, p. 3). This approach is similar to the one applied by the Comparative Manifestos Project (now MARPOR). Their extensive work has played a significant role in manifesting analysis of manifestos within political science, with their dataset covering manifestos in most Western democracies after 1945. However, the Comparative Manifestos Project measures the parties’ *relative emphasis* on an issue and not their *substantive position* (Laver and Garry, 2000, p. 620). Further, the Comparative Manifestos Project dataset does not map valid party positions on education, given that education policy is limited to education expansion and education limitation. The parties’ positions that do not belong in these categories are not mapped. For this reason, the standardized data and datasets provided by the Comparative Manifestos Project are not suitable for answering the research question. Further, there is no existing code list relevant for this thesis, and creating a valid code list based on the limited knowledge of the PRRPs’ positions would not have been possible. Neither basic content analysis nor applying the existing MAPOR dataset were thus valid options for this thesis.

Further, interpretive and qualitative content analysis shares many features. However, qualitative content analysis is distinguished from interpretive content analysis in that its goal is to describe patterns or regularities in the data without a mandate to re-present the data in any other terms but their own, thus making it less “interpretive” than interpretive analysis. (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338; Drisko and Maschi, 2015, p. 86-88). The interpretive content analysis represents a constructivist epistemological stance, while the qualitative content analysis, which is applied here, represents a realist epistemological stance.

In qualitative content analysis, the coding process is based on a pre-established categorization system, and decisions on how the material should be approached should be decided in advance (Bauer, Biquelet, and Suerdem, 2014, p. 17). The benefit of such an approach is that one preserves the systematic nature of the quantitative content analysis while also

replacing the rigidity with the resilience of human coders (Mayring, 2000). The coding was thus done based on a pre-developed coding scheme. The categories in the coding scheme were deduced from the existing literature and the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2. The coding was organized in the Nvivo software and systematized in Excel. In the following sections, details on the coding scheme and how the material was approached will be elaborated.

The framework developed in chapter 2, included three educational dimensions, which cover both broad and essential aspects of education policies. These dimensions were used as a base for the coding scheme. The different aspects of the ideology of the PRRPs worked as indicators in the scheme. However, it is not given that the ideology steers the parties' positions, and it was thus essential to include "other" categories within the educational dimensions. In addition, on the socioeconomic dimension, it is also possible that the positions are influenced by left-right positions rather than the core ideology, and left-right indicators were included in the scheme. Further, a broader "other" category was also included, which was used for broader statements not covered by the two education dimensions. The complete coding scheme can be found in Table 3.6, and examples of how the material was coded can be found in the appendix.

An essential principle in the coding process was that each code line should only be coded into one node (exclusive coding). This, however, creates challenges related to both locating the most fitting node and ensuring consistency. Descriptions and examples were added as guidelines to overcome these challenges and ensure that similar phenomena or statements were coded consistently. It can be argued that several phenomena or statements belong in several nodes, and the description and examples worked as guidelines ensuring that similar positions were coded similarly. For example, one can argue that privatization is related to the governing of educational institutions rather than the socioeconomic dimension. Here, this is, however, coded as an economic right-position. The coding examples were thus included to ensure consistency in the researcher's interpretations and coding, ensure transparency, and increase the study's reliability.

A common approach within content analysis is to code quasi-sentences (Werner, Laceywell, & Volkens, 2015, Jungblut, 2016). However, in this study, this was not beneficial. The reason for this is that the parties' ideological background plays a significant role in the study. The

analysis aimed not just to identify positions but also to analyze the background or motivation for the position. For this reason, it was in some cases necessary to code several sentences or even a paragraph. Following a strict regime where only quasi-sentences were coded could have been beneficial to increase the reliability of the study. However, it would probably have caused critical information to be excluded from the analysis. The principle followed was thus to code the information needed to make sense of the data.

<b>Table 3.6: Coding Scheme</b>	
<b>Code</b>	<b>Coding examples</b>
<b>Socioeconomic dimension</b>	
Nativism	Favoring ‘natives.’ Excluding ‘non-natives.’
Authoritarianism	Scholarship/loans based on certain demands (results, progression).
Populism	Expand VET, limit HE
L-R position: Left	Use the education system as an equalizer. Comprehensive schools. Inclusion.
L-R position: Right	Study fees, increase numbers of private schools. Free choice of school. Differentiation. Performance orientation.
Other	
<b>Autonomy-control dimension: Content</b>	
Nativism	Nationalism. Favoring the worldviews of the ‘natives’. Assimilation. Opposing diversity/multi-cultural education.
Authoritarianism	Punishment of ‘rulebreakers’. Moral conservatism. Authority. Strict bullying policies. Special needs – differentiation.
Populism	Instrumental approach to education: useful. Practical skills. Natural science over humanities/social science. Distrust.
Other	
<b>Autonomy-control dimension: Governing of educational institutions</b>	
Nativism	Anti-EU, Anti-Bologna. Decrease student mobility (inwards).
Authoritarianism	Centralization. Punishment of ‘rulebreakers’.
Populism	Decentralization. Skeptical of professional expertise. Anti-bureaucracy.
Other	
<b>Other</b>	

### 3.4 Reliability and validity

The research design and the methods described in this chapter must provide trustworthy results, and reliability and validity are two central terms within this matter. In general, qualitative content analysis is a systematic approach, which is rule-governed and shaped by criteria of validity and reliability (Schreier, 2014). The following sections describe and discuss the concrete measures taken to ensure both reliability and validity in the study.

According to Krippendorff (2019, p. 277–78), “A research procedure is reliable when it responds to the same phenomena in the same way regardless of the circumstances of its implementation”. In other words, reliability refers to the extent to which a measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 112). Given that the researcher’s judgments and interpretations can have significant leeway during the coding and the analysis, information about the criteria used as a basis for interpretation must be provided (Leseth & Tellmann, 2014, p. 160; Bratberg, 2017, p. 91). The coding scheme was developed deductively based on existing literature and the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2 to overcome this challenge. Further, descriptions and examples for each code were added after a trial coding. This is also in line with Drisko and Maschi’s (2015, p. 106) suggestion: to do a reliability check after coding a part of the data set in analyses where the coding scheme is based on deductively generated categories. During this check, “examples of coded content are compared to the deductive frame to ensure reliability” (ibid.). A trial coding of 10 manifestos was conducted in this study, and a reliability check was then completed. During the trial coding, several reliability issues were discovered. These issues were related to exclusive coding regarding themes or statements that could fit into several boxes. These reliability and consistency issues were solved by creating more detailed descriptions of how the material should be approached.

According to Krippendorff (2019, p. 278), “Researchers need to demonstrate the trustworthiness of their data by measuring their reliability.” A single coder coded the material, and an intra-coder reliability test was conducted to ensure reliability. Three months after the initial coding, 10 percent of the material was coded a second time by the same coder. Krippendorff’s alpha was used as a measure of reliability (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). Krippendorff’s alpha was calculated at .82. Perfect disagreement is 0, while 1 is perfect agreement. Krippendorff (2004, p. 241) suggests the following for interpreting his



coefficient: “It is customary to require  $\alpha \geq .800$ . Where tentative conclusions are still acceptable,  $\alpha \geq .667$  is the lowest conceivable limit. The coding performed can thus be considered reliable.

While reliability is concerned with the research process itself, validity, on the other hand, concerns truths and “provides assurances that the claims emerging from the research are borne out in fact” (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 278). Validity refers to the “integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). Reliability and validity are related but still different terms; Unreliability limits the chance of valid results, but reliability does not guarantee validity. In other words, “Reliability is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for validity” (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 279). Kleven (2008) distinguishes between four different types of validity, three of which are relevant for this study: construct validity, internal validity, and external validity.

Firstly, construct validity is about the validation of inferences from observable indicators to non-observable constructs (Kleven, 2008) and is thus related to how theoretical concepts are measured. In this study, the theoretical and analytical framework was developed with a strong foundation in the research literature, strengthening the construct validity. However, it is important to note that the available literature regarding this subject is limited. No existing studies focus on the education policies of PRRPs, and the theoretical framework had to be developed by combining literature from two different fields of research: research on PRRPs’ ideology and research on education policies. The framework is thus based on the assumption that ideology matters. However, “other” categories were included in the scheme to consider that this might not be the case and avoid construct invalidity. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the relatively small number of cases makes it possible to gather rich and detailed information about the parties’ position, which also contributes to high levels of construct validity.

Second, internal validity is related to the accuracy of the analysis. The most central factor regarding internal validity is a fitting research design. Schreier (2012) suggests that triangulation can increase the internal validity of qualitative content analyses. This strategy was applied here, as interviews were conducted in addition to the content analysis of the manifestos. “By demonstrating the fit between the data, its representation, and previously generated theoretical expectations, it is possible to increase the internal validity of a study”

(Jungblut, 2016, p. 72). A second strategy applied to ensure internal validity was thus to use a pre-designed analytical framework, where a set of theoretical expectations was developed based on existing literature and research. These expectations were tested with the empirical material, thus contributing to strengthening the internal validity. As previously mentioned, there was a trade-off between longitudinal and geographical expansion in the selection of cases, a choice that can influence the study's internal validity. The fact that only one manifesto from each party is analyzed makes the study more vulnerable to insufficient or biased data, as specific trends or political currents can have influenced the content of the manifestos (Tapper, 2007, p. 101). However, by including all relevant cases in the study (geographical expansion), the construct validity and the possibility for analytical transferability were increased. It is important to note that the case of Denmark and the non-existing manifesto problem is a weak spot in terms of internal validity. It is possible that the replacement documents do not provide sufficient positions on education policies, and it is possible that The Danish People's Party cannot be compared to the other parties as different documents are analyzed. The alternative was, however, to exclude DF from the analysis. As this option was not a good one, DF was included despite this challenge. Thus, it is important that the reader is aware of the uncertainty regarding their positions vis-à-vis the other parties.

External validity is concerned with the transferability of the results. In other words, external validity is the "validity of inferences from the context of the study to a wider context or to other contexts" (Kleven, 2008). In quantitative studies, external validity is related to statistical generalization from the selected cases to the broader population. This is not the aim of this study. In this study, the aim is to say something about the educational policies of PRRPs in Western Europe, and nearly all the relevant cases are already included in the study. External validity is more closely related to analytical generalization or transferring based on rational arguments in qualitative designs (ibid.). As Jungblut (2016, p. 57) points out: even though a qualitative approach has some limitations regarding external validity, it is still possible to "draw conclusions beyond the scope of the involved cases, if the analysis is properly grounded in the existing literature." In other words, it is "still possible to develop models, concepts, or medium-ranged theories that can serve as the basis for future studies when comparing different cases that have been carefully selected and whose selection is based on theoretical considerations" (ibid.). This implies that the concepts and framework developed in this thesis can be transferable to future studies, even though the specific findings might have a limited transferability to other contexts. Further, this study can also

help in developing hypotheses that can later be tested in other contexts, thus aiming at analytical generalization rather than statistical generalization.

## 4 Findings

In this chapter, the findings from the analysis will be presented. The first section describes the findings from the manifesto analysis, which includes all the parties, while the second section describes the findings from the interviews with representatives from VB and FRP. The final section describes the findings from the additional material from SD.

### 4.1 Manifesto analysis

Before approaching the findings related to the three dimensions, it is necessary to look at how the parties differ regarding how much emphasis they put on education in their manifestos. As previously mentioned, only the parts explicitly focusing on education were analyzed. As Figure 4.1 shows, there are significant variations regarding the size of this material; the number of words ranges from 86 to 5610. It is important to be aware of this, as the number of words naturally also will influence the number of coded positions each party has. For example, DF, VOX, SD, RN, and PVV have fewer coded positions than PS, FRP, and VB. The relative length of the parts covering education in the manifestos varies from 1.30% (VB) to 6.56% (PS).

Figure 4.1: Coverage of education policies in manifestos

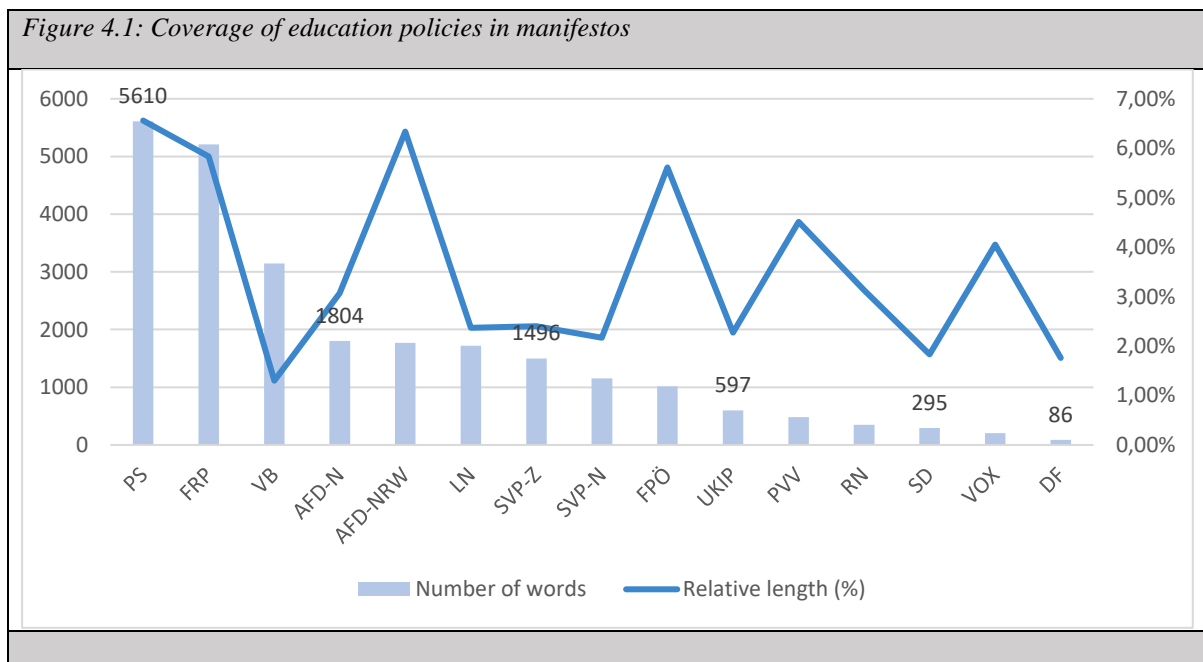
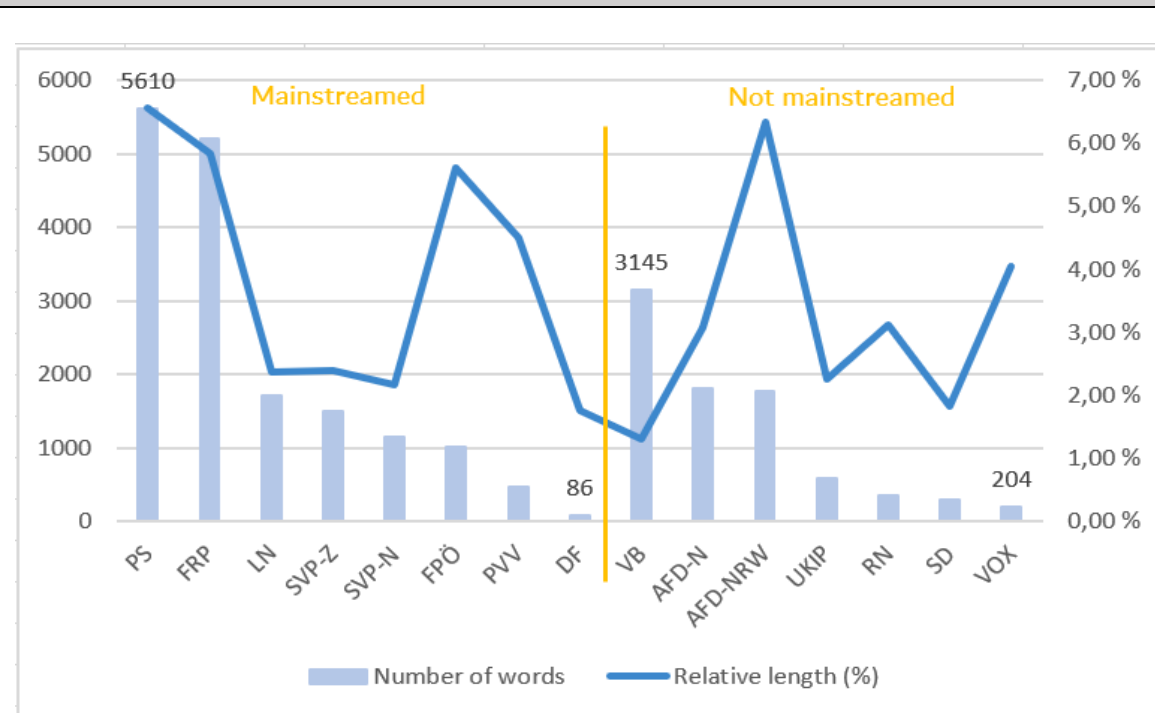


Figure 4.2: Coverage of education policies in manifestos (mainstreamed vs not.mainstreamed)



As mentioned in Chapter 2, we could expect that parties labeled as “mainstreamed” would have a stronger focus on education than less “mainstreamed” parties. However, as Figure 4.2 shows, there is no clear pattern that supports this idea, as there are parties with high and low numbers of words in both groups. Further, there is no clear pattern regarding the relative length. There are both higher and lower numbers for the relative length in both groups. Thus, it is not confirmed that parties labeled as “mainstreamed” put more emphasis on education in their manifestos than parties that are not labeled as “mainstreamed.”

It is also important to note that the number of words and the relative length of the education part of the manifesto will depend on the structure and tone of the manifesto. For example, both VOX and RN have “numbered” manifestos, where they have respectively 100 and 144 concrete bullet points that they are running on. On the other side, the manifestos of PS and FRP are around 100 pages and include much more elaboration. These examples also illustrate a challenge that arises when relying on manifestos alone: Some parties have relatively short manifestos, which can be a limitation for the analysis. However, it does not necessarily have to be seen as a limitation, as all parties include some parts on education. Despite varying lengths, the parties likely include the areas they find the most important, meaning that the

information provided in the manifestos is valuable and meaningful for the analysis.

#### 4.1.1 The socioeconomic dimension

Figure 4.3: Key findings: Policies within the socioeconomic dimension

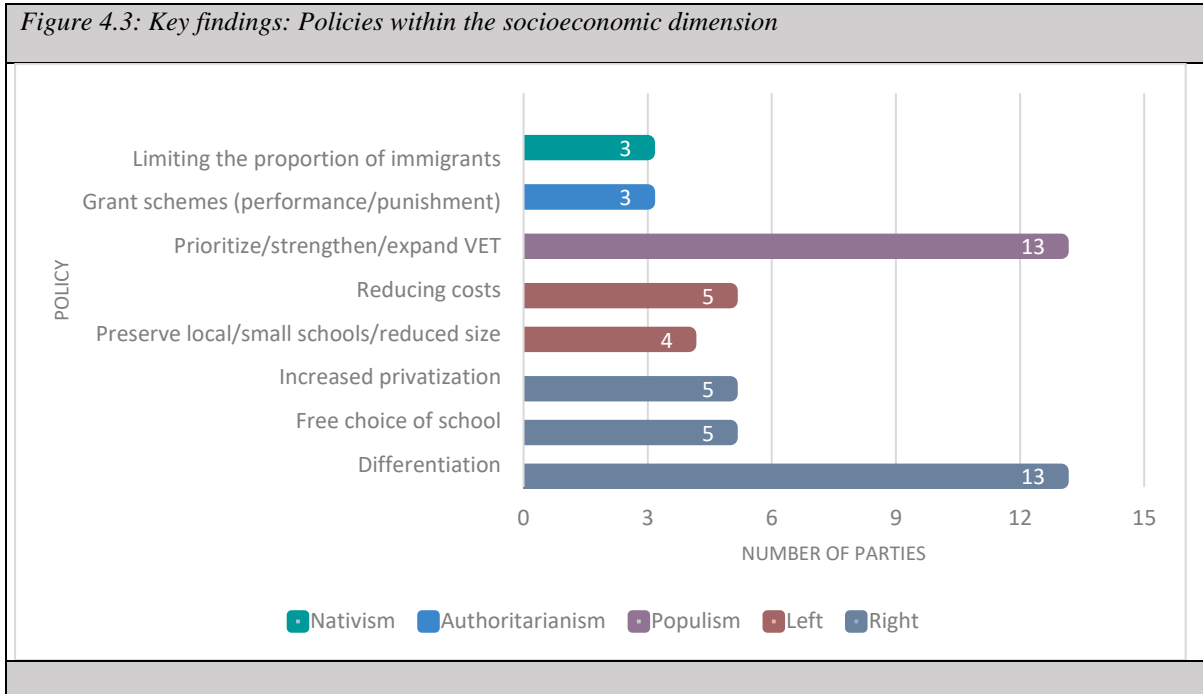


Figure 4.3 illustrates the key findings within the socioeconomic dimension. Regarding nativism within the socioeconomic, three parties (PS, FPÖ, and VB) express that the proportion of foreigners or immigrants in schools/classes should be limited. FPÖ expresses that this should be done so as not to “*endanger the learning success of Austrian children*” and that children should have sufficient knowledge of the language of instruction before starting school, while VB wants “*absolute priority given to Flemish people.*” PS also states that “*integration must not take place at the expense of other children.*”

Three parties (PS, SVP-N, and FRP) have specific policies regarding scholarships/grants, which is related to authoritarianism. For example, FRP wants to give the students who complete their studies within the standard time or shorter more money than those who do not. SVP calls for incentives for student loans instead of scholarships and wants the scholarships to be consistently reclaimed when students drop out, while PS states that “*the student grant system should encourage (the students) to complete studies in time. The student support system should encourage graduation, and benefits should be paid based on credits rather than study time*”. Except for VOX and DF, all parties have policies related to “populism”

within the socioeconomic dimension. A common feature among these parties is that they want to prioritize, strengthen, or expand the vocational training systems. Further, eight of the parties, including PS, UKIP, SVP-N, SD, FRP, VB, AFD-NRW, and AFD-N, highlight that within higher education, studies that are aimed at “meeting the needs of the society” and/or that natural or technical sciences should be prioritized.

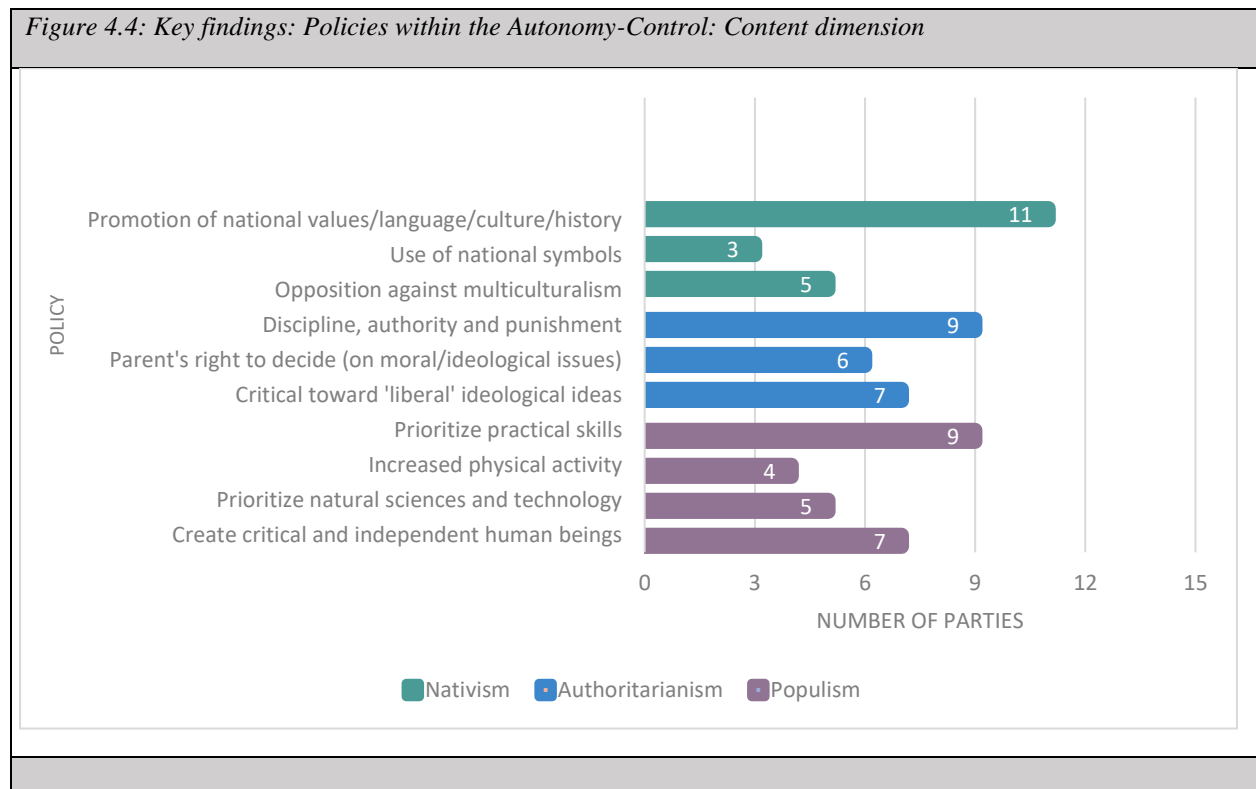
Regarding left-right policies, the general pattern is that more material is coded as “right-wing” compared to “left-wing.” However, eleven parties have at least one statement that can be labeled as “left-wing.” The kind of left-wing policies mentioned varies among the parties. Two overarching policies are repeated amongst the parties. The first one is related to policies that aim to preserve local/small schools and/or policies that aim to reduce class or school size. Four parties want to preserve local schools or reduce the class sizes (PS, PVV, SD, AFD-NRW). PS, PVV, and SD want to preserve local/small schools, while PS, PVV, and AFD-NRW aim for smaller class sizes. PVV does not mention any number here, but PS prefers 18–24 pupils, and AFD-NRW prefers 12–20 pupils. The second is policies related to reducing the costs for those with fewer resources (PS, VOX, FRP, PVV, VB). VB wants more work to be done on real study grants in secondary education and a maximum invoice diversified by field of study in order to limit the cost for parents and pupils. VOX wants a generous and comprehensive grant system for families with fewer resources. PS wants to develop travel support for secondary school students. They state that “equality in education must be ensured by allocating resources to the needy through targeted measures, like textbook purchases.” FRP states that the fee-for-service funding should cover the costs for education, books, material, and equipment, and PVV states that the financial threshold to study should be as low as possible. Other interesting findings related to left-wing policies are that LN wishes to increase the number of researchers, professors, and staff within higher education. PS implies that education has value in itself in terms of personal development and growth. Finally, SVP-N demands that private actors are not in competition with the state, especially in the area of continuing education.

When it comes to “right-wing”-policies, PVV is the only party without any code lines. As with “left-wing” policies, there are also some repeated patterns within the “right-wing” policies. Firstly, nearly all parties have statements regarding policies that aim for differentiation and performance orientation, often at the expense of comprehensive school systems (PS, AFD-NRW, AFD-N, UKIP, FPÖ, SVP-N, SVP-Z, SD, LN, FRP, VB, RN, DF).

Further, five parties have policies regarding free choice of school and/or policies that aim to increase the parent’s freedom of choice (UKIP, VOX, LN, FRP, VB). Finally, five parties also explicitly mention increased privatization within the education systems (UKIP, FPÖ, LN, FRP, DF).

#### 4.1.2 The autonomy-control dimension: Content

The content-part of the autonomy-control dimension is the dimension that contains the most coded material. A summary of the key findings within this dimension is illustrated in Figure 4.4.



Eleven parties (PS, AFD-N, UKIP, SVP-N, SVP-Z, VOX, FRP, PVV, VB, RN, and DF) have statements coded as nativism within the content dimension. These parties have statements regarding the promotion of national values, language, culture, and/or history in school. For example, PS states, “*We consider it important that schools promote Finnish values and culture and emphasize the importance of Finnishness.*” Five parties (PS, AFD-N, VOX, VB, and RN) state that the national language should be prioritized. Some parties (PS, SVP-N, and PVV) also promote the use of national symbols in schools, such as the national anthem or the national flag. Further, five parties (PS, AFD-N, FRP, PVV, and VB) have



positions regarding assimilation and opposition to diversity and multicultural education. For example, AFD-N states that schools offering Islamic studies should only give lessons in German and that teachers who teach Islamic studies must be educated at German universities. PS states that immigration should not happen at the expense of other children. Both FRP and PVV want to ban headscarves in schools. Finally, VB is in opposition to what they call “multicultural indoctrination.”

All parties, except LN and DF, have coded statements regarding authoritarianism within the content dimension. One of the findings is that nine of the parties (PS, AFD-NRW, AFD-N, FRP, SD, SVP-N, PVV, RN) are concerned with stricter discipline in schools and restoring the teacher’s authority in the classroom. There are also several examples of attempts at controlling behavior through punishment. PS, SD, FRP, and PVV favor strict bullying policies, and some of the parties state that the bully should be forced to change schools. PS states that the illiterate should not be allowed to graduate, while AFD-N states that truancy, apathetic mentality, lack of discipline, bullying, and violence at school cannot be tolerated and must be punished appropriately and with the involvement of the guardians. SVP-N, AFD-NRW, and FRP mention behavioral assessments. For example, AFD-NRW states that positive or negative abnormalities in social and work behavior should be documented on the certificate. Further, six parties (PS, AFD-NRW, FPÖ, SD, PVV, and VB) state that students/pupils with special needs should be taught separately from the rest.

Further, ten parties (PS, AFD-NRW, AFD-N, UKIP, AFD-N, SVP-N, SVP-Z, VOX, FRP, and VOX) have statements related to moral conservatism within authoritarianism. One recurring theme among the parties (PS, AFD-NRW, UKIP, SVP-N, VOX, and FRP) is that parenting should not be outsourced to the schools, and there is a wish to preserve the parents’ right to decide (some of the parties mention this in relation to moral or ideological issues). For example, VOX states that they want to create a PIN code and an express authorization so that the parents can give consent to any activity concerning the content of an ethical, social, societal, moral, or sexual nature. A second example is from AFD-NRW, who state that they stand for human rights and the legally guaranteed right of parents to bring up their children according to their ideological convictions. A second recurring theme among seven of the parties (PS, AFD-N, AFD-NRW, UKIP, SVP-N, SVP-Z, VOX) regarding moral-conservative issues is that the parties are critical toward “liberal” ideas, such as gender studies, “liberal” sex education, feminist ideas and/or issues regarding climate changes. For

example, AFD-NRW does not want gender ideology to be taught, and AFD-N states that the picture of the traditional family must not be destroyed; thus, they reject the one-sided emphasis on homosexuality and trans-sexuality in classrooms as well as the ideological influence of gender mainstreaming. UKIP, SVP-N, and SVP-Z also reject “political indoctrination” of gender confusion and climate alarmism. In addition, PS states that they want to stop “ideological woo” in universities, but it remained unclear what “ideological woo” really is.

All parties except DF, and VOX, have policies coded as populism within the content dimension. The parties’ policies within this area can be summarized in four different but somehow related categories. The first category consists of policies related to a focus on practical skills, learning through doing and is related to the underlying idea that education should be useful (i.e., lead to a specific job). Nine of 12 parties have policies that fall into this category. These parties are PS, AFD-NRW, AFD-N, SVP-N, LN, FRP, PVV, VB, and RN. For example, AFD-N states that job-related subjects must be strengthened, and SVP-N states that they “*combat the advancing academization of education.*” In another example PS states that school needs more learning by doing and that the teaching of economics needs to be increased so that young people learn to take care of their affairs and work.

The second category is somehow related to the first one and includes policies that aim for increased physical activity in schools. This is also related to education being useful but is still a bit different from the focus on practical skills. Both PS, AFD-NRW, FPÖ, and FRP have policies that specifically aim to increase physical activity in schools.

Thirdly, five parties (AFD-N, SVP-N, SVP-Z, FRP, and PVV) have statements that imply a stronger focus on natural sciences, including technology. For example, FRP states that they want to strengthen the natural sciences and implement incentives for people with degrees within natural sciences to work in schools. PVV wants to give technology more attention in primary school, and AFD-N states that they “*welcome the central role of MINT subjects (mathematics, computer sciences, natural sciences, and technology.)*”

The fourth category is related to the idea that the education systems should create critical human beings who can think independently. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, these policies can be viewed as both contradictory and overlapping to the policies related to

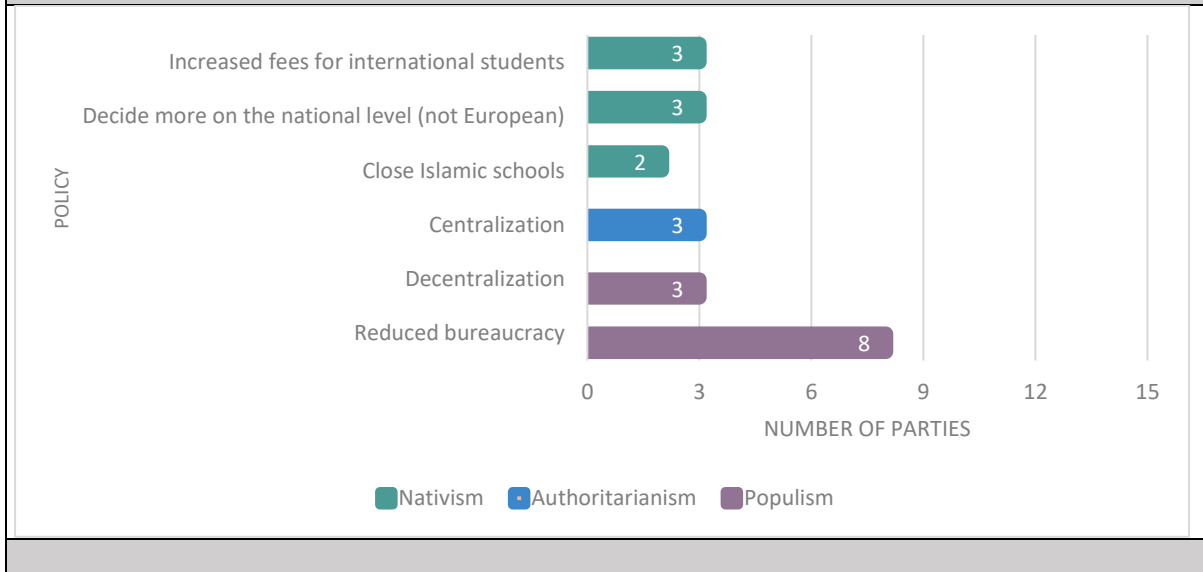
authoritarianism. However, seven parties (PS, AFD-N, UKIP, FPÖ, SVP-Z, LN, and VB) have statements that relate to this. For example, AFD-N states that German schools do not support pupils in forming their own opinion but promote the uncritical adoption of ideological guidelines. To a more considerable degree, school education should contribute to the development of future citizens who can think and act independently. Further, UKIP states that *“Indoctrination of young minds is wrong. What we must give them is the desire and capacity to think freely for themselves,”* and LN states that the education system should create an authentically critical spirit in young people.

Within the “other” category of the content dimension, there are no clear patterns. However, an interesting finding is that PS also includes some more “liberal” statements than expected. For example, they want to maintain a comprehensive network of local schools that promotes diversity, sustainable development, and close contact with nature. Further, they state that high school should be an educational, inspiring, and socially valuable experience for everyone. Finally, they state that the academic freedom of the universities is a great resource that provides opportunities for the diverse and interdisciplinary development of personal interests. A second interesting finding which does not fit within the other codes is that RN wishes to restore a genuine musical education in schools.

### **4.1.3 The autonomy-control dimension: Governing of educational institutions**

The governing of educational institutions is the dimension with the least coded material. A summary of the key findings is illustrated in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5: Key findings: policies related to the governing of educational institutions within the autonomy-control dimension.



Six parties have statements coded as nativism related to the relationship between the state and the educational sector. These parties are PS, AFD-NRW, AFD-N, SVP-N, FRP and PVV. Five parties (PS, AFD-NRW, AFD-N, SVP-N, FRP) have statements related to skepticism toward the EU, European integration (such as the Bologna process), and/or international students. Both PS, AFD-NRW, AFD-N, and SVP-N want to decide more on the national level instead of at the European level. AFD-NRW, AFD-N, and SVP-N are specifically critical toward the Bologna process. PS, SVP-N, and FRP also favor increased tuition fees for international students. PS states explicitly that this is for students outside the EU/EEA, while the two other parties do not mention what group of international students this applies to. In addition, PVV and AFD-N want to close all Islamic schools, AFD-N state that this is because *“it is likely that uncontrolled radical and unconstitutional indoctrination takes place there.”*

There are a few examples of statements regarding “centralization” that could be linked to authoritarianism. Firstly, AFD-N wants to control some parts of the universities; more specifically, they state that the federal and state governments should no longer provide special funds for gender research. Further, existing university chairs for gender research should not be filled again, and ongoing gender research projects should not be prolonged. Second, UKIP wants to control more of the training of teachers. More specifically, they want to give the teacher training courses a radical overhaul, as they should re-focus on *“training educators to use successful traditional teaching methods that focus on facts and excellence*

*rather than post-modern, deconstructive, and relativistic methods.*” Finally, SD wants the schools to have state leadership, meaning that the state should control and govern the schools.

On the other hand, three parties include specific statements regarding increased institutional autonomy: FPÖ, SVP-N, and FRP. FPÖ claims that the state has to decide the framework conditions, the financing, and the education system's fundamental goals, while everything else should be regulated independently by the school. Further, they state that more school autonomy should enable parents to be more closely involved in school decision-making processes. FRP also argues that the state should decide the framework, but everything else should be decided by those who make up the schools: pupils, employees, and parents. Finally, SVP-N wants the sovereignty of the cantons over elementary schools to continue to be a cornerstone in the education system; The cantons and thus the citizens must be able to determine their school system themselves through direct democracy. Within this dimension, a second expectation was derived based on the populist part of the parties' ideology. The parties were expected to favor less bureaucracy. Eight parties include statements that aim to reduce the bureaucracy within the education system, including PS, UKIP, SVP-N, SVP-Z, SD, FRP, PVV, and VB.

#### **4.1.4 Other**

Firstly, an interesting finding within this category is that four parties (FPÖ, SD, FRP, and VB) have statements about making the teaching profession more attractive. Except for this finding, there are no clear patterns within this category. However, another interesting finding is that AFD-N states that the universities must be free to decide the nature and scope of the courses they offer, and that freedom of research and teaching are essential prerequisites for scientific progress, which is somehow contradictory to some of their other statements regarding gender studies. This will be further elaborated on in Chapter 5.

## **4.2 Interviews and additional material**

The purpose of the interviews was to supplement the data collected through the manifestos. The aim was to understand better the relevance and importance of education policy for these parties, their positions on education, and the relevance of the manifesto in day-to-day politics. As previously mentioned, representatives from two parties were interviewed. This included VB's parliamentary assistant on education policy in the Flemish parliament and a representative from FRP who is a member of the education committee in the Norwegian parliament. As described in Chapter 3, additional material was also collected for SD. The purpose of this material was to gain more insight into their positions regarding education. The findings from the interviews are structured along the lines of the interview guide, which can be found in the appendix, while the additional material from SD is structured along the three dimensions.

### **4.2.1 Interviews**

For VB, education policy is, together with care and well-being and integration, one of the party's main priorities on the Flemish level. Over time, education has become more important for the party, and the reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, it has been a matter of resources; the party increased their initiatives on education after the 2019 election, as they went from having six MPs to 23 MPs. Second, decreasing PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) results has set education policies, especially the quality of education, higher on the agenda in the Flemish community. For FRP, education policy is not among the top four prioritized areas and has never been so. According to the representative, their electorate is not concerned with education because they represent an electorate with a lower educational level than the average population. Further, education has not been a priority because the other Norwegian right-wing party, "Høyre," traditionally has had a strong focus on education. Regarding what areas of education the parties view as the most important, VB mentions several areas, such as i) improving the quality, ii) finding and keeping teachers, iii) uplifting of labor-oriented training, and iii) increased differentiation. Like VB, FRP also wants an increased focus on VET.

When it comes to the aim of the education systems, both parties highlight that the main goal is to educate people into a profession and a job. Further, VB states that they disagree with the notion that education systems should work as equalizers. Social mobility is an effect of

education but is not a purpose per se. Further, both parties state that VET and labor-oriented studies are critical areas. FRP also highlights the importance of prioritizing areas of HE that society needs. In relation to this, they are currently trying to find solutions that give them more control over the institutions, that is, demand that the institutions offer certain studies that are regarded as beneficial to society. They want the institutions that prioritize these studies to receive more funding than *“those who educate people that we do not need.”* At the same time, FRP also finds it important that institutions have a lot of autonomy and freedom as that makes them better, especially since they know the needs of their specific region better. On the other hand, VB states that *“in an ideal world, you do not have central government involvement.”* However, centralization is seen as a means to get things done and keep quality standards and a certain efficiency.

Regarding privatization, VBs position is a bit unclear: On the one side, they state that setting up more private schools would benefit the school system, as the market mechanisms can help increase the quality. On the other side, they state it is a sign of failure of public schools that people have to rely on private schools. However, the Flemish community does not have many private schools (except free schools, which the local government subsidizes), so these statements come across as reflections rather than a clear position on the matter. On the other hand, FRP states that private and public actors should be treated equally and that it should, to a greater extent, be opened up to private actors within the education system, as long as the quality is good enough.

When it comes to essential learning objectives, FRP finds natural sciences to be one of the most important as this is needed in nearly all occupations. Further, they think social studies, history, and Norwegian are essential subjects, and they want Christianity to have a unique position in the study of religion, philosophies of life, and ethics. These subjects are essential to the party, as they find it important that the pupils, particularly immigrants, learn about their new country's society. VB highlights mathematics and statistics, science, and Dutch and foreign languages as important subjects. Further, history and culture are equally important, as it is important to them to transfer the country's heritage, culture, and history to the children. They want to require that the population of 18-year-olds know the big lines in the history of Flanders, the national anthem, and how a democracy works.

Further, VB opposes the teaching of attitudes and social skills in the sense of solidarity, social justice, and environmental justice, as these are linked to ideology. According to VB, the pupils should be taught how things work, but not what attitudes to have. On the other hand, FRP does not mention any subjects or areas that should not be taught. However, they are concerned with what they call “scaremongering.” For example, the children should learn about climate and environment, but they should not be scared. Teaching on climate and environment should thus be arranged so that the children understand and see how they can contribute. Further, FRP also states they are a party that makes demands on pupils, and they want them to be graded beginning at age ten. The party is also concerned with “common decency” in schools; for example, pupils should learn to stand by the desk and not leave the classroom until the teacher gives notice. According to FRP, this structure is necessary and crucial for many pupils, and the party wants more of it in school. The means to achieve this is to increase the teacher’s position in the classroom and preserve small schools. Further, both VB and FRP assert that most teachers are leftists, which they find problematic, and call for more teachers from the “right” side of the political spectrum.

For both VB and FRP, the manifesto and the positions in the manifesto play a significant role in the daily work, and both parties view the positions here as mandatory to follow. VB states that *“the manifesto is like a constitution: It is basic rules that you have to keep.”* FRP underscores that the manifesto is what the party is elected on, and thus something that has to be followed. However, there is a bit more freedom and room for maneuvering regarding issues not discussed in the manifesto. When issues that are not discussed in the manifesto arise, the MPs for both parties discuss and formulate new positions. Both parties highlight that this is only when the manifesto does not provide sufficient positions—the MPs are not “allowed” to contradict the manifesto. There is, however, a significant difference between the parties when it comes to the involvement of other actors in the processes of formulating new positions. FRP states that it is crucial for them to meet and keep in touch with many interest groups, given that they often have firsthand experience regarding matters. In matters where different groups disagree, they find it important to meet with both sides. On the other side, VB does not keep in touch with interest groups because they do not want to be attached to anyone and because such groups have particular interests and agendas, which sometimes conflict with other groups.



#### 4.2.2 Additional material

SD is among the parties with the lowest number of words regarding education in their manifesto (295 words). The additional material works as a supplement to the manifesto, and it shows that SD has more positions on education than what was found in the manifesto. As described in Chapter 3, the additional material consists of about 2000 words about education policies acquired from SD's website, nine opinion articles written by representatives of the party, and one newspaper article in which the educational spokesperson is quoted.

Regarding the **socioeconomic dimension** of education, SD expresses several positions that were not included in the manifesto. Firstly, the party proposes compulsory preschool for children with foreign-born parents. In this compulsory preparatory school, the aim is to learn Swedish and learn about Swedish society's essential functions, values, and rules. Further, they want to put newly arrived immigrants in classes separate from the rest so that the teaching of other pupils can continue at its achieved level. This will also give the teacher a more homogenous group, promoting study fulfillment, and teaching quality. Further, the party states that *"cutting back Swedish children's freedom because immigrant children do not achieve an acceptable level of language development is under all criticism and something we will not accept."* SD opposes proposals that aim to mix children with different backgrounds in schools, as *"schools should focus on knowledge, and not be a new tool for dealing with a failed immigration policy"* by creating social mixes. According to SD, the funding of HE institutions must be governed with regard to quality and societal relevance, and the party wants the courses offered and the number of places to be adjusted to meet society's needs. SD also promotes cutbacks in funds for artistic research. Students who study areas that are "needed" should be given more support. Further, SD is not opposed to schools being run as a company and states that it does not matter whether schools are driven privately or publicly as long as the quality is good enough. The primary concern is the student's needs, and the type of school is subordinate to that. The party also wants to secure the pupils' right to free choice of school. Further, SD underlines that the diet should not be adapted to any form of religious diet.

SD proposes increasing the Swedish language teaching for newly arrived immigrants when it comes to the **content dimension**. At the same time, they want to abolish mother-tongue teaching. The party also supports a ban on hijabs in schools, as *"girls should not be forced to*

*cover themselves with a veil just because their parents happen to have delusions about the role of women in society.*” SD also demands stricter requirements for scientificity in gender research. Further, they state that the primary responsibility for upbringing lies with the parents and that they should have the freedom to decide on the upbringing of their children as far as possible. The party wants to introduce grades from the fourth year in school and behavioral assessments from the first year. SD also promotes strict bullying policies, and pupils who have committed grave breaches of regulations should not participate in regular school activities without receiving separate tuition. The party also wants to create separate classes for pupils who *“do not function in a normal school situation.”* The party wants physical activity to be a part of every school day.

When it comes to the **governing of the educational institutions**, the party, as previously mentioned, supports that schools can be run like companies. However, they also promote tight legislation to avoid *“unscrupulous actors or financiers with links to Islamism or other extremist groups”* running schools. Further, the party wants to increase the support for conducting controls of the schools and wants the state to take over “dysfunctional schools.” Regarding European cooperation within education, the party favors Erasmus but says no to an increased budget, as this will lead to an increase in the Swedish EU fee. They do not want to contribute to constant budget increases for EU projects. In addition, education should first and foremost benefit the national level. Further, SD is also critical of the increased budgets of Horizon Europe; Swedish research should not risk reduced financing because of more funding to Horizon Europe. SD thus primarily advocates for strategic research areas in Sweden.

## **5 Discussion**

This chapter will discuss Chapter four's findings in relation to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter two. The first part of this chapter will address the research question: (1) *What positions do populist radical right parties hold regarding education policies, and to what extent do these positions reflect the core ideology of the parties?* The second part of this chapter will address the second research question: (2) *How important are education policies for these parties, and to what extent does the importance vary between mainstreamed and not-mainstreamed parties?*

### **5.1 Populist radical right parties' positions on education**

This section addresses the first research question: (1) What positions do populist radical right parties hold regarding education policies, and to what extent do these positions reflect the core ideology of the parties? In the following sections, the findings from Chapter 4 will be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and the expectations outlined in Chapter 2. The main focus is on the findings from the manifestos, but these are supplied with the findings from the interviews and the additional material. The discussion is structured along the three dimensions outlined in Chapter 2: The socioeconomic dimension and the two autonomy-control dimensions; content and governing of educational institutions.

#### **5.1.1 The socioeconomic dimension**

The socioeconomic dimension is linked to the availability of education and the different systems' capacity for inclusiveness. In the following sections, the findings on the socioeconomic dimension will be discussed in relation to the expectations and the parties' core ideology. It is clear that both the parties' core ideology and economic left-right positions have a strong influence on their positions within this dimension. Table 5.1 summarizes the expectations developed in Chapter 2 in relation to the findings from the study.

<b>Table 5.1: Summary of expectations and findings on the socioeconomic dimension</b>			
<b>Ideology</b>	<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Parties</b>
<b>Nativism</b>	Favoring ‘natives’ and excluding ‘non-natives’	Limit the proportion of foreigners or immigrants in schools/classes	VB, FPÖ, VB, (SD)
<b>Authoritarianism</b>		Student grant schemes should create incentives related to the performance and/or punishment of students who do not finish within the standard time.	PS, SVP-N, FRP, (SD)
<b>Populism</b>	Expand VET	Prioritize/strengthen/expand VET	PS, LN, FRP, PVV, SD, UKIP RN, FPÖ, SVP-N, SVP-Z, AFD-N, AFD-NRW, VB
	Limit HE	Prioritize studies that are aimed at ‘meeting the needs of society’ and/or natural and technical sciences	PS, UKIP, SVP-N, SD, FRP, VB, AFD-NRW, AFD-N
<b>Left</b>	Comprehensive systems (education as an equalizer)		
		Preserve local/small schools and/or reduced class sizes	PS, PVV, SD, AFD-NRW
		Reducing costs	PS, VOX, FRP, PVV, VB
<b>Right</b>	Differentiation	Differentiation	PS, LN, FRP, DF, SD, UKIP, RN, FPÖ, SVP-N, SVP-Z, AFD-N, AFD-NRW, VB
	Privatization	Increased privatization	FRP, LN, UKIP, DF, FPÖ, (SD) (SVP-N against)
	Free choice of school	Free choice of school	VB, FRP, LN, VOX, UKIP (SD)
Parentheses indicate information retrieved from the additional material/interviews and not the manifesto			

The nativism of the PRRPs led to an expectation that the parties would favor “natives” and exclude “non-natives” from the education systems, as “non-natives” are seen as threatening to the nation-state. Further, this expectation was also based on the parties’ tendency toward “welfare chauvinism,” which involves policies that aim to limit welfare benefits to the “native” population while foreigners should be excluded. There are no parties that explicitly state that they want to exclude foreigners from the education systems. However, some parties favor “the natives” in some areas within the socioeconomic dimension. The findings show that three parties want to limit the proportion of foreigners or immigrants in schools or classes, and it is clear that the learning success of the “native” children is seen as more important than that of the “non-natives.” In addition to these three parties, the findings in the

additional material from SD show that SD also is highly concerned with this matter, as they want newly arrived immigrants to be put in separate classes and create a compulsory preschool for children with foreign-born parents. It is thus clear that these four parties have policies that aim at “favoring the natives.” While none of these parties explicitly state that foreigners should be excluded, SD’s proposals are very close to doing precisely that. SD also underlines that the school meals should not be adapted to any form of religious diet, which is also an excluding policy as it can be interpreted as an attempt to limit this welfare benefit to the “native” population only.

When it comes to the authoritarian part of the parties’ ideology, no specific expectations on the socioeconomic dimension were derived from the theoretical framework. A few statements can be interpreted as authoritarianism within the socioeconomic dimension, and all of these are related to scholarships or grants within higher education. These statements are two-sided; on the one side, the parties want to reward the students who complete their studies fast. On the other side, this also implies that the students who use more time to complete or drop out should “punished” through the grant systems. These policies can be interpreted as a reflection of authoritarianism as the policies aim to control students’ behavior through punishment (and incentives).

The populist part of the parties’ ideology led to an expectation that the parties would have an instrumental approach toward education: It should be useful. Based on this, the parties were expected to include policies aimed at expanding VET and limiting HE, which is related to the terms *education expansion* and *education limitation* (Busemeyer, 2015). All parties, except VOX and DF, which are the two parties with the lowest number of words regarding education, have policies that aim to strengthen or expand the VET systems. Prioritizing VET is linked to the “common sense” orientation and the “anti-intellectual” tendencies within the parties’ populist ideology. No parties explicitly express in their manifesto that they promote cutbacks in HE, which was somehow expected, given that education is regarded as an “an archetypical crowd-pleaser” (Ansell, 2010, p. 136). However, the additional material from SD shows that this party promotes cutbacks in “artistic research.” Further, eight of the parties state that they want to prioritize studies within HE aimed at “meeting the needs of the society” and/or technical and natural sciences. These statements also support the expectation regarding an instrumental approach toward education. Based on the findings, we cannot argue that the parties want to limit HE in general, but it is clear that many parties want to prioritize areas

within HE that are seen as “useful.” However, LN has a somehow contradictory statement here, as they want to increase the number of researchers, professors, and staff within higher education, which can be interpreted as a more general expression of expansion of HE. For the eight other parties, this prioritizing of “useful” areas could, on the one side, indicate that the parties want to preserve the status quo for the remaining areas, but on the other side, it could also indicate that the remaining areas are areas that potentially could be limited. Based on the instrumental approach, it is likely that areas within HE that are or can be seen as less “useful,” that is, areas that do not lead to a specific job, such as humanities or social sciences, are more likely to be subjects of limitations than areas that are “useful,” in the sense that they “meet the needs of the society” or lead to a specific profession or job.

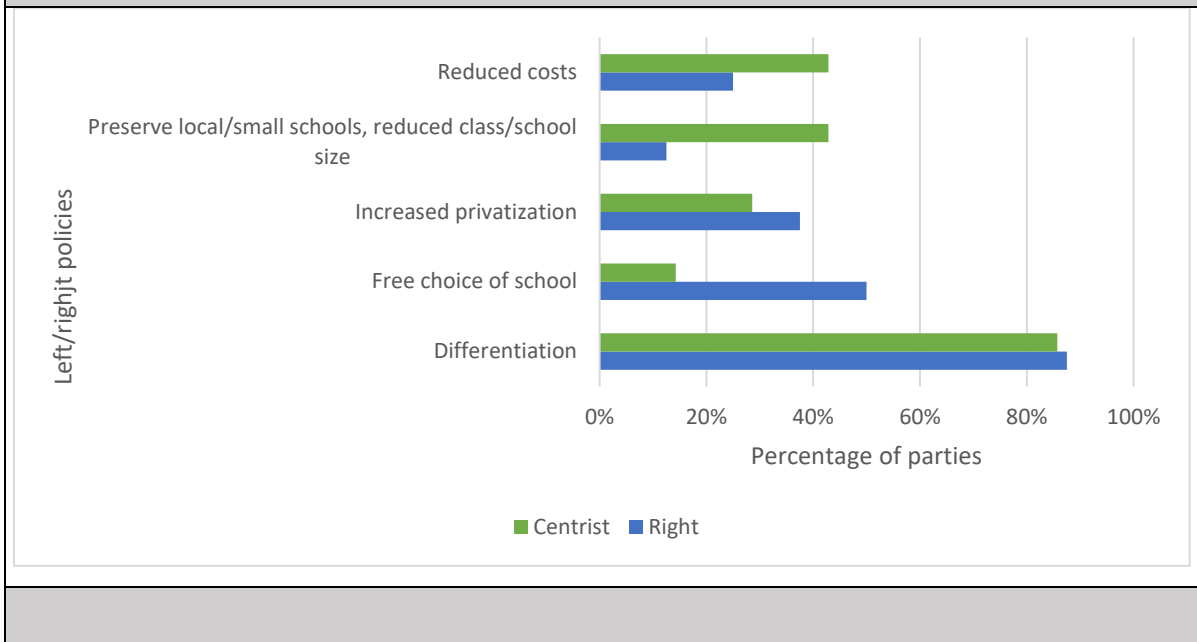
In terms of the more traditional economic left-right positions, these tend to manifest through differing approaches toward education. Parties on the left side of the scale tend to support a comprehensive approach, as this is an essential means to achieve equality of opportunity. Parties on the right side of the scale favor differentiated systems, a more vital role for private providers, and more choice for both parents and students (Busemeyer, Franzmann & Garritzmann, 2020, p. 104). As previously mentioned, the PRRPs are not necessarily “right” on the economic left-right scale. Seven parties are labeled as “centrist,” and eight parties are labeled as “right” (see Table 3.5). Regarding the more traditional left-right distinction within education, there does not seem to be differences between centrist and right parties, as 13 of 15 parties explicitly mention that they favor differentiated systems and performance orientation. The tendency is clear; nearly all parties favor differentiated systems and performance orientation at the expense of comprehensive systems. No party states they are in favor of a comprehensive system. Further, it is conceivable that the instrumental approach (“education should be useful”) is more compatible with a differentiative approach. Comprehensive systems are often seen as “equalizers” as they can work as means to achieve equality of opportunity, which can be conflicting to an instrumental approach. This can explain why the parties—including parties labeled as centrist—favor differentiation over a comprehensive system.

In addition to differentiated systems, other “traditional” economic right positions are the free choice of school and increased privatization within the sector. Five parties are in favor of the free choice of school, whereas UKIP, FRP, LN, VOX, and UKIP are labeled as “right” on the economic left-right scale, while VB is labeled as “centrist.” Further, five parties state that they

are in favor of increased privatization. Three of these parties are labeled as “right” (FRP, LN, and UKIP), and two parties are labeled as “centrist” (DF and FPÖ). SVP-N. On the other side, the “right” party SVP-N demands that private educational institutions, especially in the area of continuing education, are not in competition with the state, which is more of a traditional economic left policy. When it comes to positions coded as left-wing, three statements have already been mentioned regarding LN and expansion of HE, PS, and the highlighting of less “useful” areas of education such as folk high schools, and regarding SVP-N and privatization. In addition, five parties (three “centrist” and two “right”) are also concerned with reducing the costs for those with fewer resources. Four parties are concerned with preserving local schools and/or reducing class sizes.

In terms of left-right positions on education, the most prominent pattern is, as discussed above, that nearly all parties are in favor of differentiated education systems. The picture becomes more blurred when it comes to the remaining left-right policies, as the findings are not entirely coherent with the parties’ positions on the left-right scale. The expectation was that the “centrist” parties would have a more extensive mix of left and right-wing policies and that “right” parties would have an overweight of right-wing policies. As Figure 5.1 shows, there seems to be a slight overweight of centrist parties within the left-wing policies (reduced costs and preservation of small/local schools and reduced class/school size), and a slight overweight of right parties within the right-wing policies (privatization and free choice of school). However, when we include the additional material from SD, this picture becomes even more blurred, as SD is a centrist party but promotes increased privatization and free school choice. To summarize, we find some tendencies that indicate that the parties' left-right positions influence their education policies, meaning that not all of the parties' positions are shaped by their core features of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. In general, the parties lean more toward the right, as nearly all parties promote differentiation and no party favor comprehensive systems. However, on the remaining matters, the material is too limited to conclude explicitly on how their economic left-right position influences their positions on education, also because both centrist and right parties have somehow overlapping positions.

Figure 5.1: Summary of left-right positions on education derived from the party manifestos



### 5.1.2 The autonomy-control dimension: Content

The content dimension is about the content of education. Central aspects are related to what the systems should produce or achieve and the means used to achieve these aims, what ideas and values should shape the systems, what ideas and values should be taught (and not taught), the curriculum and the roles of teachers and students, and their relationship. In other words, this dimension is concerned with what happens inside the institutions. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the content part of the Autonomy-Control dimension is the dimension that contains the most coded material. As the following sections will illustrate, it is clear that the parties' ideology influence their positions on this dimension. This is also the dimension where the link between the core ideology and the positions is most prominent. A summary of the expectations and findings can be found in Table 5.2.



<b>Table 5.2: Summary of expectations and findings regarding content within the autonomy-control dimension</b>			
<b>Ideology</b>	<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Parties</b>
<b>Nativism</b>	Favoring nationalism and the worldview of the 'natives'	Promotion of national values, language, culture, and/or history in school.	PS, AFD-N, UKIP, SVP-N, SVP-Z, VOX, FRP, PVV, VB, RN, DF (SD)
		Use of national symbols	PS, SVP-N, PVV
	Assimilation of 'non-natives' and opposing diversity and multicultural education	Assimilation and opposition against diversity and multiculturalism	PS, AFD-N, FRP, PVV, VB (SD)
<b>Authoritarianism</b>	Punishment of 'rulebreakers' and relying on authority rather than reason	Stricter discipline in schools and restoring the teacher's authority in the classroom	PS, AFD-NRW, AFD-N, FRP, SD, SVP-N, PVV, RN
	Moral conservatism	Parenting should not be outsourced to the schools and preserve the parents right to decide on the upbringing	PS, AFD-NRW, UKIP, SVP-N, VOX and FRP (SD)
		Critical toward 'liberal' ideas, such as gender studies, 'liberal' sex education, feminist ideas, and/or issues regarding climate changes.	PS, AFD-N, AFD-NRW, UKIP, SVP-N, SVP-Z, VOX (SD) (VB)
<b>Populism</b>	Instrumental approach to education: Education should be useful:	Increased physical activity in schools.	PS, AFD-NRW, FPÖ, FRP (SD)
		Focus on natural sciences and technology	AFD-N, SVP-N, SVP-Z, FRP, PVV
	Education should be useful -> More focus on practical skills	Focus on practical skills and learning through doing	PS, AFD-NRW, AFD-N, SVP-N, LN, FRP, PVV, VB, RN
		The education systems should create critical human beings who can think independently	PS, AFD-N, UKIP, FPÖ, SVP-Z, LN, VB
Parentheses indicate information retrieved from the additional material/interviews and not the manifesto			

The expectations regarding nativism were that the parties would favor nationalism and the worldview of “the natives,” demand assimilation of “non-natives,” and oppose diversity and multicultural education. The findings support all of these expectations. Eleven parties have statements in their manifesto that indicate within the education systems they want to favor the worldviews of “natives.” They are all concerned with promoting national values, the national language, the national culture, and/or the national history in school. The additional material for SD also shows that their policies are in line with the 11 other parties on this matter.

Further, some parties mention Christianity, such as FRP, stating that Christianity and the Christian cultural heritage should be central within the religion and ethics class and that the owners of the schools should have the freedom to draw the Christian cultural heritage into everyday school life and that school services should be legal. However, RN in France does not mention Christianity but highlights secularism instead. This supports the idea of Schwörer and Romero-Vidal (2020). They state that promoting a certain life stance is not necessarily linked to religious ideologies but rather to nativism, as constructing religious outgroups can work as a strategy to promote the worldviews of the “natives” and fulfill the overarching goal of promoting nativism. Assimilation of “non-natives” and opposition to diversity and multicultural education are expectations that somehow overlap with the other expectation, “favoring the ‘natives’ worldview,” as nationalism in itself indicates opposition to diversity and multiculturalism. Nationalism and multiculturalism are mutually exclusive ideologies, as one cannot promote one of them without opposing the other. This indicates that support for opposition to diversity and multicultural education is not limited to the five parties (six with SD) that explicitly acknowledge it. The parties that tend to favor nationalistic values and the worldview of the “natives” also share this perspective. It is thus clear that the nativism of the parties influences their position on this dimension.

Many parties have policies related to restoring the teacher’s authority and more discipline in schools, which is in line with authoritarian ideas and the formulated expectations regarding “relying on authority rather than reason” and “punishment of rulebreakers.” As mentioned in Chapter 4, there are several examples of attempts at controlling behavior through punishment. Punishment can work as a tool for controlling behavior, but it is also a tool that can be used to punish the “undeserving.” Here, authoritarianism and populism blend. The authoritarian part of the parties’ ideology distinguishes the “undeserving poor” from the “deserving poor,” while the populism part of the ideology separates “the people” from those at the bottom. “The people” is a homogenous group, and those at the bottom are the undeserving, unworthy of respect, and do not belong to the so-called decent, respectable, “normal,” hardworking people. There are two similar, but still very different, policies related to the distinction of different groups; policies that state bullies have to change schools and policies that aim to separate pupils with special needs from the rest. These are similar because they are both policies that aim to distinguish between and separate different groups. Forcing the bully to change schools can be interpreted as authoritarianism as it is the use of punishment as a mean of controlling behavior or punishment because the bullies are “undeserving,” while in light of populism, it

can be seen as a means to separate the “undeserving” at the bottom from the “normal, hardworking people.” This is an interesting finding, as it shows an overlap between authoritarianism and populism, which has not been discussed in the literature this study builds on. However, separating pupils with special needs from the rest differs from strict bullying policies, as pupils with special needs do not have these needs because of their moral failing but because of something outside their control. These statements can thus not be regarded as expressions of populism or authoritarianism, but rather expressions deriving from the differentiative approach mentioned within the socioeconomic dimension.

Further, regarding the findings of authoritarianism within the content dimension, an expectation was that the parties would promote moral conservatism. We find support for this expectation, as 10 parties have statements that can be interpreted as moral conservative, 12 parties when including the additional material from SD and VB. Firstly, a large number of the parties state that parenting should not be outsourced to schools. One can assume that a reason for this is the idea that the parents should raise the children according to the values they find appropriate, not the schools. Related to this is the aspect of the teaching of “liberal ideas” in schools. However, the parties emphasize different “liberal” ideas, such as gender studies, “liberal” sex education, feminist ideas, and climate change. There is thus not a clear pattern regarding which liberal ideas they oppose. Further, this is a matter where the remaining parties might have contradictory positions, as previous research (Fardan and Thorleiffsson, 2020) have found that some PRRPs recently have embraced liberal values regarding women and LGBTQ rights. Thus, some parties are probably less critical toward the teaching of liberal ideas in the education systems. We also find support for this assumption in the findings from the interviews, illustrated by the following example: VB does not want children to learn any specific “attitudes” related to climate changes—they want the children to learn how CO<sub>2</sub> works, not what attitudes to have. On the other side, FRP believes the children should learn about climate changes and how they can contribute to the environment—as long the teaching is adapted to fit the children’s level of understanding.

As discussed in 5.1.1, the populist ideology led to an expectation that the parties would have an instrumental approach toward education: It should be useful. This expectation was formulated based on the “common sense” orientation within populism in combination with their tendency to be “anti-intellectual” (Scott, 2020, p. 44). As we saw in the discussion regarding the socioeconomic dimension, nearly all parties want to strengthen or prioritize

VET. On the content dimension, the parties were expected to focus on practical skills, including promoting policies aimed at preparing the students for a specific job and learning through doing, which is related to the idea of education being “useful.” We find support for this expectation, as nine parties express these kinds of policies in their manifesto. In addition to a strong focus on practical skills, we also find other proposals that can be interpreted as expressions of the idea that education should be “useful”. A large number of parties propose increased physical activity and/or a stronger focus on natural sciences and technology. Increased physical activity can be seen as “useful,” as it reduces the risk of obesity and illness, and natural sciences and technology can be seen as more “useful” to society, in contrast to, for example, social sciences or humanities.

Further, five parties express that the education systems should create critical human beings who can think and act independently. At first sight, this can sound like a liberal idea. The liberal education systems we find in Western Europe are characterized by critical thinking and the development of personal autonomy (Halstead, 1996, p. 8). This idea would then be conflicting with authoritarian aspects, such as “punishment” as a tool for controlling behavior and the idea of relying on authority rather than reason, as liberalism is the antithesis to libertarianism (Norris and Inglehart, 2019). In other words, when interpreted without context, the idea of creating critical human beings who can think, and act independently can be seen as a liberal idea. However, when we consider the context, it is clear that these statements are not necessarily expressions of liberal ideas. Firstly, populism has an anti-authoritarian impulse as it represents a general mistrust of elites. In an authoritarian regime or an authoritarian education system, populism can have a democratizing effect. However, in liberal regimes with liberal education systems, populism gets a more reactionary touch. Therefore, these statements can be interpreted as an expression of general distrust and a populist feature. Some of the parties' statements support this assumption as they speak of an “uncritical adoption of ideological guidelines” and “ideological indoctrination” connected to the statements related to creating critical human beings. Thus, we can assume that these statements are populist expressions of distrust rather than expressions of liberal ideas. This also illustrates a rather interesting aspect regarding the mix of authoritarianism and populism within the parties' ideology. On the one side, populism and authoritarianism complement each other. On the other side, they are contradictory: “The right-wing authoritarian believes authorities should be trusted to a relatively great extent, and that they are owed obedience and respect” (Altemeyer, 1981, p. 147-148), while populism inherits a general mistrust in university-educated elites and

experts (Scott, 2020, p. 58). Thus, the findings illustrate an interesting contradiction regarding how populism and authoritarianism influence the policies: The parties want authorities to be trusted, respected, and obeyed, but only the “correct” ones.

### 5.1.3 The autonomy-control dimension: Governing of educational institutions

Central issues within this dimension are the overall organizational structure of the education sector and the governing of the institutions, including how tightly or loosely coupled the relationship between the education sector and the state should be. This is the dimension where the parties have the fewest statements and positions. Compared to the two other dimensions, this is also the dimension where the link between the core ideology and the positions is the weakest. A summary of the expectations and findings can be found in Table 5.3.

<b>Table 5.3: Summary of expectations and findings on the governing of educational institutions within the Autonomy-Control dimension</b>			
<b>Ideology</b>	<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Parties</b>
<b>Nativism</b>		Decide more on the national level (not European)	PS, AFD-NRW, AFD-N, SVP-N (SD)
		Increased fees for international students	PS, AFD-NRW, FRP
		Close Islamic schools	PVV, AFD-N (SD)
<b>Authoritarianism</b>	Centralization	Prevent/make it more difficult for the HE institutions from conducting gender research	AFD-N (SD)
		Control what studies HE institutions offer	(FRP)
		Control the training of teachers	UKIP
		State leadership in schools	SD
	Punishment of rulebreakers		
<b>Populism</b>	Decentralization	More school autonomy/preserve school autonomy	FPÖ, FRP, SVP-N
	Reduced bureaucracy	Reduced bureaucracy	PS, UKIP, SVP-N, SVP-Z, SD, FRP, PVV, VB.
<b>Other</b>		Making the teaching profession more attractive	FPÖ, SD, FRP, VB
Parentheses indicate information retrieved from the additional material/interviews and not the manifesto			

In Chapter 2, no specific expectations were formulated regarding how the parties’ nativism would affect this matter. However, as the findings show, some statements on this matter are

coded as nativism. These statements are concerned with the relationship to the EU and European integration. The statements can be interpreted as ‘nativism’, as they prefer decisions to be made on the national level rather than on the European level. This was not elaborated in the theoretical framework, but PRRPs are often associated with anti-globalization policies. Within nativism, the central idea is that “the nation-state should remain as culturally and ethnically homogenous as possible (Jupskås and Jungar, 2014, p. 219), and it is not surprising that some parties express their skepticism toward European or transnational influence. Further, some parties promote increased tuition fees for international students, which can be interpreted as a form of “welfare chauvinism” because it is a policy that aims to limit this particular welfare benefits to include only the “native” population while excluding foreigners. On the one hand, this could be seen as a more socioeconomic issue. However, given that it only concerns international students, it is more closely related to the steering of the sector, as increased student mobility within Europe is one of the critical goals of European cooperation regarding education.

Further, we find that a few parties want to close Islamic schools. This can be an expression of nativism, as it is a policy that targets only Islamic schools and not religious schools in general. The findings from the additional material from SD are particularly interesting, as SD highlights that who runs schools is a subordinate matter; what matters is the quality. However, SD wants tight legislation that prevents financiers with links to Islamism from running schools. One can argue that Islamism is different from Islamic schools in general, but again, it is striking that the party only mentions this particular religion. Further, these three parties' statements also have overlap with authoritarianism, as it seems like the parties distrust these particular kinds of institutions. However, the solution is not to tighten the state control over these institutions but rather to shut them down.

As outlined in Chapter 2, based on authoritarianism, the parties were expected to distrust the educational institutions to govern themselves and, thus, favor control and centralized systems. However, based on the populist part of the ideology, the parties were expected to favor decentralization, as they are skeptical toward “experts”: The people know what is best, not the experts. Therefore, the parties were expected to distrust the “experts” and prefer “the people,” that is, the teachers or the institutions, to govern themselves. In other words, the expectations derived from authoritarianism and populism were contradictory. Based on the findings, it is not possible to draw any meaningful conclusions in either direction. One of the main reasons

for this is that we lack comparable information on the status quo in the systems. Further, it can be quite challenging to define what “centralization” and “decentralization” really are without information on the status quo. For example, if a party mentions that they favor national exams, which is already an integrated part of many of the systems, this could be interpreted as centralization, but saying that this is a statement related to “authoritarianism” would be to stretch it. There are a few examples of “centralization” that could be linked to authoritarianism. However, these are related to specific areas and cannot be interpreted as supporting centralized systems in general. For example, AFD-N mainly wants to prevent the institutions from conducting gender research. However, at a later point in the manifesto, they state that the universities must be free to decide the nature and scope of their courses and that freedom of research and teaching are essential prerequisites for scientific progress. This can indicate that they do not necessarily wish the state to detail manage the universities but rather prevent them from conducting gender research.

Regarding the two other parties, it is clear that they want more control over the specific areas they mention (teacher training and schools), but it is hard to argue that they favor centralization in general. However, when we take the additional material into account, we find that SD has more positions aiming at increased centralization, as they want the state to conduct more controls at schools. Further, they want the state to take over “dysfunctional schools.” In combination with the fact that they want the schools to have a state leadership, it seems like the party distrusts educational institutions to steer themselves. Further, one of the findings from the interviews is that FRP wants to execute more control over HE institutions, as they want to demand the institutions offer certain studies that are regarded as useful to society. They want this prioritizing to be reflected in the funding: Institutions that educate people the “society needs” should receive more funding than the institutions that educate people that are not needed. This is particularly interesting, as FRP is one of the parties that promote institutional autonomy in their manifesto, and also in the interview underlines that the HE institutions should have much autonomy. This indicates that the party wants to control some specific areas but does not necessarily promote more control or centralization in general.

Further, two other parties have included statements regarding more institutional autonomy, as well. The expectation was that the populism of the parties would lead the parties to favor decentralization, as they “distrust” the “experts” and “elites” to steer the institutions—“the

people” know what is best. Even though there are a few parties that favor institutional autonomy, this is not necessarily derived from the distrust of experts and elites. FPÖ states that the parents should be more involved in decision-making processes, and this can, on the one hand, be interpreted as populism, whereas the parents are seen as representatives of “the people” and not the teachers and institutions as expected. On the other hand, this can also be an expression of a more traditional economic “right” position, as it gives the parents more choice and power to decide. SVP-N’s position illustrates a weakness of the theoretical framework in analyzing positions regarding centralization/decentralization; Is decision-making at the regional level a matter of centralization or decentralization? On the one hand, it can be viewed as decentralization as it is not an issue for the national government, but on the other hand, it does not necessarily include more autonomy for the institutions but for the regional government. In other words, it can also be interpreted as a matter of centralization. This example illustrates how difficult it is to say something meaningful on this matter without comparable information on the status quo of the institutional setups.

To summarize, we do not find support for either of the expectations regarding centralization and decentralization within authoritarianism and populism. The findings indicate that their positions on centralization/decentralization are not necessarily derived from their ideology, as we do not find any clear patterns regarding their positions. VB states that centralization is not a goal in itself but a means to get things done, and this statement indicates that, at least for VB, centralization/decentralization is not necessarily a matter linked to ideology.

Centralization and decentralization are tools to achieve certain things. How these tools are used is highly dependent on the status quo and the national context. Further, it is also possible that different aspects of the ideology (populism and authoritarianism) play out differently in different contexts, or on different levels of education, as the example from FRP illustrates.

The second aspect of populism within the governing dimension is the expectation that the skepticism toward elites and experts leads to a demand for reduced bureaucracy within schools and in the sector in general. The reasoning behind this expectation is that bureaucracy within schools often is associated with reporting or documentation requirements. Again, this is a matter where we expect the parties to claim that “the people,” that is, the teachers, know what is best, and not the “experts” or “elites.” Eight of the parties have statements that aim for reduced bureaucracy within the education system, and all of these parties want the teachers to be able to focus on “what is important,” However, even though this can be linked to populism,



it does not necessarily have to be, as this has been a central issue for other parties as well, not just PRRPs. The populist argument makes sense, but it is possible that other factors outside the parties' ideology also influence their position on this issue.

Within the “other” category, four parties (FPÖ, SD, FRP, and VB) are concerned with making the teaching profession more attractive. Making the teaching profession more attractive can be seen as a means to increase schools' quality and does not necessarily fit into the theoretical framework. However, a related finding from the interviews that has not previously been discussed is related to the teacher's ideological beliefs. Both VB and FRP indicate that it is a problem that the majority of teachers are leftists. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, this can also be one reason why the content dimension is particularly important for the parties.

## **5.2 Importance of education policies**

This section addresses the second research question: (2) How important are education policies for the populist radical right parties, and to what extent does the importance vary between mainstreamed and not-mainstreamed parties?

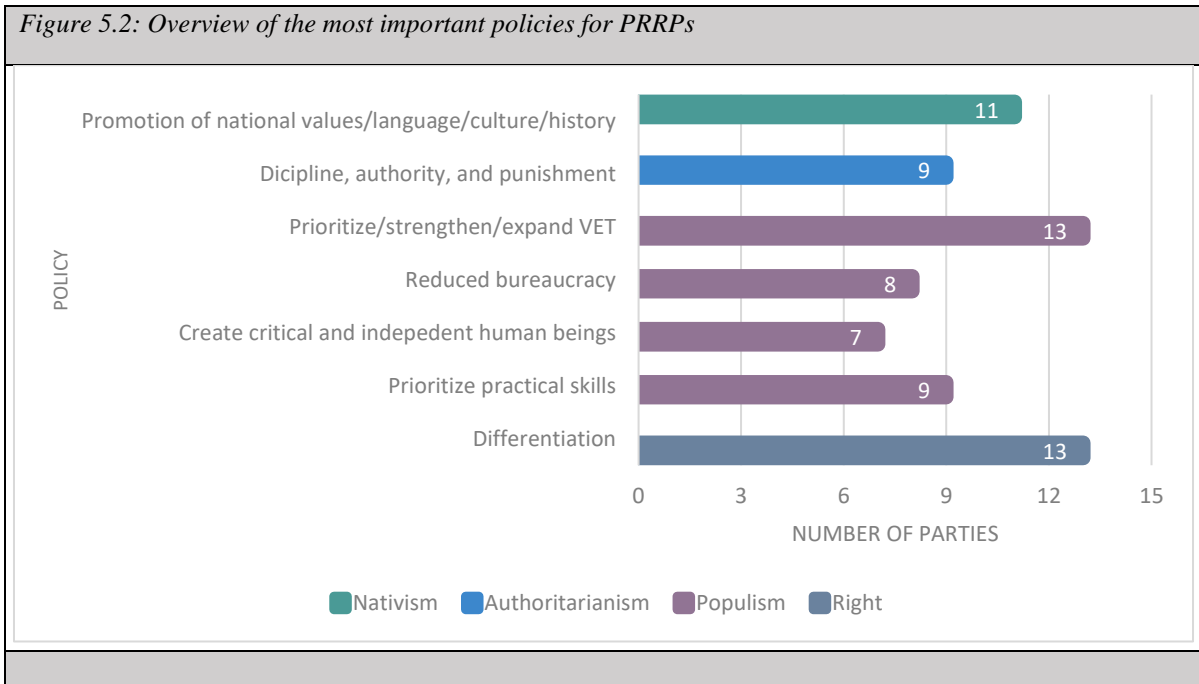
The existing literature on partisan preferences and education policy argue that positions are formed as an inverse U shape, where the traditional mainstream parties “own” the issue of education and the extreme parties on the right, including the radical right, are issue-ignorers (Ansell, 2010; Busemeyer, Franzmann and Garritzmann, 2013). Education may be of less importance for these parties than for the traditional mainstream parties, but the findings in this study significantly nuances this picture. The parties do care about education, as we find a significant number of positions and patterns regarding education policies. In other words, this study shows that the PRRPs are far away from being “issue-ignorers.”

Even though it is clear that education is a more important area than previously assumed, the findings indicate that some areas are more important for the parties than others. The dimension with the most coded material—and thus most positions—is the content dimension, which indicates that the content dimension is particularly important for these parties. The content dimension is closely linked to values and ideas, and it is clear that the parties' want to influence this dimension. Further, the parties are also concerned with the socioeconomic dimension. The governing of the educational institutions seems to be of less importance, as

the parties have fewer positions on this matter. This indicates that the matters of centralization and decentralization and the governing of the sector are less important than expected. This is an interesting finding, as a previous study conducted by Jungblut (2016) investigated party families' preferences regarding redistribution and governance of higher education and found that PRRPs have few preferences on this matter. The findings of this thesis are in line with this. This illustrates an important point: Education is a more important issue for PRRPs than previously assumed, but there are matters within education that are more important than others.

The number of parties holding a position can work to measure what areas are the most important for the family. How many statements and positions the parties have in their manifesto varies. There are no positions that all parties share, but there is at the same time little disagreement among the parties, as there are few contradictory statements. In other words, when a party does not hold a position, it is usually because the specific matter is not mentioned in the manifesto. Building on the assumption that the parties choose to include the matters they find most important in the manifesto, we can use the number of parties holding each position to say something about what the most important issues for the party family as a whole are. The policies mentioned by half (7/15) or more of the parties are illustrated in Figure 5.2. Within the content dimension, the most important issues are the promotion of national values, language, culture and/or history, discipline, authority, and punishment, creating critical and independent human beings, in addition to a strong focus on practical skills. Four out of the eight most important areas are within the content dimension. Further, within the socioeconomic dimension, we find that the most important issues are prioritizing, strengthening, or expanding VET, and differentiation. Within the final dimension, there is only one policy: Reduced bureaucracy. As previously mentioned, it can be discussed whether the ideology or other factors influence this policy.

Figure 5.2: Overview of the most important policies for PRRPs



When asked what the most important areas within education are, both FRP and VB state that the uplifting of labor-oriented training and VET is one of the most important, which is in line with the findings from the manifestos illustrated in Figure 5.2. Further, VB also highlights differentiation and improving the quality and keeping teachers, whereas the last one is highly connected to the status quo and context in the Flemish community. This also illustrates an important point: Even though it is clear that a large number of the parties share some preferences, there might be context-specific matters that are equally important to each of the parties. However, the findings from the interviews indicate that the positions in the manifesto are valid, as both the parties state that they are more or less ineluctable.

Further, there also seem to be differences between the parties regarding *how* important education policies are. The expectation was that education would be more important to parties labeled as mainstreamed and less important for the not-mainstreamed parties, but we do not find evidence that supports this. As described in Chapter 4, the parties vary regarding their emphasis on education in their manifesto. Even though this is not necessarily a good measure for the importance of education, we could have expected that the mainstreamed parties would have a more significant relative emphasis on education in their manifesto. As Figure 4.2 illustrates, this is not the case: We do not find any patterns regarding mainstreamed and not-mainstreamed parties regarding how much emphasis they put on education or the different

positions. We could have expected that the mainstreamed parties would have less “radical” positions than not-mainstreamed parties, but the data show no such pattern. One of the few areas where there is a clear distinction between mainstreamed and not-mainstreamed parties is centralization and decentralization; All the parties that have policies aimed at increased control are not-mainstreamed, while all of the parties that mention increased institutional autonomy are mainstreamed. Further, the findings from the interviews can also indicate that mainstreamed and not-mainstreamed parties differ when it comes to the involvement of interest groups in the development of particular positions. However, we have data only for two parties regarding this matter. It could be other factors that determine to what degree a party involves interest groups, but it is conceivable that this is an area where the mainstreamed/not-mainstreamed distinction might have an influence, given that the mainstreamed party FRP has many contacts with these types of groups, while VB does not keep in touch or involve interest groups.

An interesting finding from the interviews is that the not-mainstreamed party VB rank education as one of the most important issues, while education is not an important issue for the mainstreamed party, FRP. In other words, this study finds no link between how mainstreamed a party is and how important education is for the party. There are likely other factors that determine how important education policies are for a party. The findings from the interviews identify some possible factors. Firstly, it can be a matter of resources and the number of elected MPs, such as for VB. However, this cannot be the only factor, as the mainstreamed party, FRP, has held a relatively large number of seats over the years but still does not rank education as an important issue. Second, VB highlights that decreasing PISA results have set education policies higher on the agenda in the Flemish community, and FRP highlights that their electorate is not concerned with education and that the other right-wing party, “Høyre,” has taken ownership of education. These statements indicate that the parties align their positions, including the importance of education, to meet voters’ preferences.

## **6 Implications and conclusions**

This final chapter summarizes the study's main findings. Additionally, the implications of the results will be discussed, both on a theoretical and an empirical level, and the question of how "radical" the PRRPs are when it comes to education policies will be addressed. Finally, avenues for further research will be presented.

### **6.1 Results**

This study aimed to provide knowledge on the PRRPs' positions on education, thereby filling a gap in the research literature. A theoretical framework and specific expectations were developed based on existing literature on education policies and the PRRPs' ideology. Two research questions were addressed by investigating 15 party manifestos, some additional material, and data collected through interviews. The first question set out to answer what positions the PRRPs hold regarding education policies and investigate to what extent these positions were reflections of the parties' core ideology. The study finds that the parties' positions, to a large degree, are reflections of their core ideology. Mudde (2007) claims that nativism is the ultimate core feature of the populist radical right, but when it comes to education, the findings of this study indicate that both authoritarianism and particularly populism also have a strong influence on their positions. In addition, the parties' positions also seem to be influenced by economic left-right positions, whereas the general trend is that the parties lean more toward the right. Further, there are some variations between the dimensions, whereas the link between ideology and positions is the strongest within the content dimension and weakest within the governing dimension.

Within the socioeconomic dimension, nearly all parties want to prioritize, strengthen, or expand VET. Education expansion can, according to Busemeyer (2015, p. 44), take two forms. The first one is expanding "access to higher levels of education for a wider share of the population," which is related to expanding access to higher education (HE). The second is "to expand the kinds of education more suited to the educational need for those formerly excluded," which is related to the role of vocational and educational training (VET). It is evident that the PRRPs are more concerned with the latter form of expansion. In addition, a large number of the parties want to prioritize study programs in HE aimed at "meeting the needs of society," which indicates that the parties have an instrumental approach toward HE.

Prioritizing VET and study programs that are “useful” are also policies that align with the interests of the parties’ constituents, as the voters of PRRPs tend to have low levels of educational attainment (Stubager, 2008).

Further, nearly all parties are favor differentiated education systems. This indicates that economic left-right positions also influence the parties’ preferences, and the general trend is that the parties lean more toward the right when it comes to education, particularly since they favor differentiated systems, which relates to the belief that “inequalities between people are natural and positive” (Mudde, 2017, p. 6). However, regarding the remaining left-right policies, the picture becomes more blurred, as it is not possible to draw a clear distinction between “centrist” and “right” parties. This could be because the material is too limited, but it could also be because these positions are influenced by factors other than ideology, such as the electorate (bottom-up approach). Further, we find positions that reflect both nativism and authoritarianism, but to a lesser degree than populism. These positions aim to limit the proportion of foreigners or immigrants in schools or classes and implement mechanisms in the grant systems both to punish and incentivize students.

The content dimension is the dimension where the parties’ ideology has the most substantial reflection in their positions. As described in Chapter 2, the cleavages that parties compete along are often summarized in two dimensions: a socioeconomic dimension (left versus right) and a cultural dimension (Betz & Immerfall 1998; Kitschelt 1994, 1997; Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, Dolezal, Bornschie, & Frey, 2006). The findings within the content dimension indicate that the parties are particularly concerned with competing along the cultural dimension within education. The parties’ nativism is reflected by promoting national values, language, culture, and/or history in schools, assimilation, and opposition against diversity and multiculturalism. In addition, some parties promote the use of national symbols within the education systems. Authoritarianism is reflected through the demand for stricter discipline in schools, the restoration of the teacher’s authority, preserving the parents’ right to decide on the upbringing, and the criticism of the teaching of liberal ideas, such as “liberal” sex education, feminist ideas, and/or issues regarding climate change. Finally, populism is reflected through a strong focus on practical skills, in addition to increased physical activity, a strong focus on natural sciences and technology, and the creation of critical and independent human beings.

Regarding the governing of the sector and issues related to the relationship between the state and the sector, we find fewer positions, and these positions are to a lesser extent linked to the parties' ideology. Some parties are critical of European cooperation on education and want to decide more on the national level, and some parties want increased fees for international students. Also, a few parties state that they want to close Islamic schools. All of these three positions are reflections of nativism. We find some examples of authoritarianism, as some parties want the state to control certain areas, but there is no clear pattern on what the parties want to control and how this control should be executed. Further, we also find that some parties want to preserve or increase the schools' autonomy, but it is highly debatable if this reflects populism, as the positions are not necessarily rooted in a general distrust of elites or experts. The findings regarding the governing of the sector are in line with the previous research by Jungblut (2016), who also finds that anti-establishment parties at the right fringe of the political spectrum (radical right parties) have few formulated preferences on this matter. Finally, we find that a large number of the parties want to reduce the bureaucracy within the systems. This could be an expression of populism, but as previously discussed, this position may be rooted in something outside the parties' core ideology.

The second research question addressed how important education policies are for these parties and to what extent the importance varies between mainstreamed and not-mainstreamed parties. The findings show that education policies are more important to the PRRPs than previous research assumes. Both Ansell (2010) and Busemeyer, Franzmann, and Garritzmann (2013) argue that partisan positions on education are formed as an inverse U shape, meaning that the traditional mainstream parties "own" the issue of education and the extreme parties on the right (and left), including the radical right, are issue-ignorers. Compared to mainstream parties, education might be of lesser importance for the PRRPs, but based on the findings of this study, it is clear that the PRRPs, in general, are far from being issue-ignorers. This might indicate that the first implication of the moderation-inclusion thesis holds; it states that inclusion into the electoral game has a moderating effect and that parties, over time, will abandon the narrow profiles they originally were founded on (Akkerman, de Lange & Rooduijn, 2016; Downs, 1957). However, we do not find support for the second implication of this thesis, as we do not find any particular differences between parties that have been included in government (here labeled as mainstreamed) and those who have not, neither when it comes to how much emphasis the parties have on education, the importance of education, or when it comes to how "radical" their positions are. As discussed in Chapter 5, the only areas

where there are clear distinctions between “mainstreamed” and “not-mainstreamed” parties are regarding centralization and decentralization and the involvement of interest groups. We do not find any patterns that indicate that education is more important for mainstreamed parties than not-mainstreamed parties. The findings from the interviews indicate the opposite, as a not-mainstreamed party rated education as one of the most important issues, while a mainstreamed party did not. Thus, it is likely that how important education policy is for a party is determined by factors other than mainstreaming. The findings from the interviews indicate that the parties align their emphasis on education to fit the electorate and their voters’ preferences. Thus, it is likely that this is a more important factor in explaining differences between parties when it comes to importance.

Some areas within education seem to be more important than others. The content dimension seems to be particularly important for these parties. This dimension is closely linked to values and ideas, and it is clear that the parties have a particular interest in influencing these. The most important issues within this dimension are the promotion of national values, language, culture and/or history, discipline, authority, and punishment, creating critical and independent human beings, in addition to a strong focus on practical skills. Within the socioeconomic dimension, we find that both VET and differentiated systems are essential for the parties. Finally, reducing bureaucracy is a particularly important policy related to the governing dimension. However, the governing of the sector seems to be less important than assumed, as the parties, in general, have few positions.

## **6.2 Implications**

This study has both theoretical and empirical implications. On a theoretical level, this study has shown that party positions on education can be mapped meaningfully by a theoretical framework building on a top-down approach, focusing on the parties’ ideology. Combining literature from both the fields of education and PRRPs is a potentially innovative approach and has proven to be meaningful in mapping the parties’ positions. The introduction of a new dimension concerned with the content of education has been a particularly innovative approach. This study shows that PRRPs can be studied in the same way as other authors such as Busemeyer, Franzmann, & Garritzmann (2013) and Ansell (2010) do it with “mainstream” parties, namely by using expectations anchored in their core ideologies. Further, dividing



areas of education into three dimensions has also proven to be useful, as these three dimensions cover the most prominent aspects of education policies. This shows that parties might have different preferences regarding different sectors of education, which can be linked to specific policy dynamics in parts of the educational system as well as the percentage of people who participate in a given educational sector (e.g., HE is not as crucial as VET may be because PRRPs electorate is more present in VET).

Mapping PRRPs' positions on education is particularly interesting, given that these parties have gained significantly increased influence in Western European democracies. Previous research has detected that the PRRPs challenge several aspects of liberal democracies, such as minority rights and the rule of law, and their social policies are often characterized by welfare chauvinism (Nordensvard and Ketola, 2014; Afonso, 2015; Afonso & Papadopoulos, 2015; Otjes et al., 2018; Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013). This thesis discovers an additional aspect of liberal democracies that these parties challenge, namely education. Firstly, liberal education systems are characterized by multicultural education (Hallstead, 1996, p. 26), which is “concerned with preparing children for life in a pluralist society by encouraging them to respect those whose beliefs and values differ from their own, to see diversity as a source of enrichment and to be open to a variety of ways of looking at the world.” The nativism of the PRRPs clearly challenges this idea, as they are opposed to diversity and multiculturalism, and highlight that national values, the national language, the national culture, and/or the national history should be promoted in school.

Second, in the 1960s, the Western European systems took the first steps away from behaviorism (Illeris, 2019), which is an approach to learning where reward and punishment—external motivations—are seen as driving forces for learning. Since the 1980s, education in liberal systems has been associated with a socio-cultural view on learning, which highlights that learning is fundamentally social; teachers play an essential role in learning processes by encouraging the individual student, and there is a strong focus on student participation and inclusion (Dysthe, 2001; Illeris, 2018). The PRRPs challenge this as they promote discipline, authority, and punishment. These statements can be associated with a behavioristic approach and seen as conflicting with the approaches currently influencing the education systems.

Thirdly, many parties are critical toward liberal ideas in general, such as gender studies and gender ideology, “liberal” sex education, and/or issues regarding climate change. Finally,

many parties express that the education systems should create critical human beings who can think independently. In authoritarian regimes, this could have been interpreted as a liberal idea, but in the context of liberal Western European education, these statements have a more reactionary touch, as they can be interpreted as an expression of general distrust. We know that public employees, including teachers, tend to vote for left-wing parties (Rattsø & Sørensen, 2016), and the Western European education systems are characterized by liberal ideas (Halstead, 1996). It is thus not unlikely that the PRRPs, to some degree, distrust the systems and the teachers, which could also explain why both the content dimension is particularly important in general and why the idea of creating “critical and independent human beings” is so prominent. To conclude, there is no doubt that the PRRPs represent interests and preferences that are not compatible with the liberal education systems we find in Western Europe today.

Even though it is clear that some aspects of the parties’ positions can be viewed as quite “radical,” as they challenge the liberal systems and the positions and consensus among the more established parties, it is also clear that other aspects of their positions are considerably less “radical,” as they have much in common with established right-wing parties. Busemeyer, Garritzmann, and Neimanns (2020) have explored how public opinion affects policy-making in education and how the electorate's opinions can work as indications of where the parties place themselves on different matters regarding education. The findings are that traditional right-wing individuals support a differentiated approach and tracked education systems, private provision, and greater parental choice, all of which are policies that the PRRPs share. Further, Busemeyer, Garritzmann, and Neimanns (2020) find that left-wing individuals are skeptical of the government prioritizing enrollment in VET relative to higher education, while the reverse is true for right-wing individuals, and as this study has shown, the PRRPs. This shows that the PRRPs also have positions that are likely to converge with the policies of more traditional and established right-wing parties. In other words, the PRRPs have “radical” positions on some matters regarding education, but less so on others. The “radical” positions that challenge the traditional mainstream and the established liberal systems are particularly influential within the content dimension, which is closely linked to the values and ideas shaping the systems and teaching. On the socioeconomic dimension, the general trend is that the parties are less “radical,” as they, to a large degree, have common ground with traditional right-wing parties.

The existing research on partisan preferences and education focuses mainly on the economic left-right distinction and the aspects of educational expansion and limitation (Ansell 2010; Garritzmann and Seng, 2016; Jakobi, 2011). This study shows that there is much more to be discussed regarding partisan preferences and education by investigating these previously overlooked parties. This thesis adds something new, as it shows that ideology is an essential driver for educational policies for the PRRPs. Further, when studying the PRRPs' positions, a new conflict dimension regarding education is discovered: Among the established parties, there has been consensus regarding the liberal model, but the populist radical right politicizes and challenge the consensus on this issue.

### **6.3 Limitations and further research**

There are several options for further research that can build on the results of this thesis. One option is to test whether the theoretical framework is replicable when investigating PRRPs' positions on education outside the Western European context. The findings of this study can work as hypotheses that can be tested both on the included parties that we lack information on but also other PRRPs and PRRPs outside Western Europe. This would lead to extended empirical results that could claim a level of external validity beyond that sought in this study.

Further, even though the PRRPs are not issue-ignorers, there is a big question that should be answered: We do not know whether the focus on education is window dressing or an issue they genuinely care about (or something in between). As previously pointed out, education is “an archetypical crowd-pleaser” (Ansell, 2010, p. 136), meaning that education is an issue that the large majority of the electorate finds important despite ideological orientations. Thus, the parties may address this issue because they know that it is something the electorate cares about. A second option that could lead to additional insights on PRRPs and education is to study parties that have gained power, parties elected to office. A central question that this type of study could give insights on is: What policies do the parties implement and prioritize, and what happens when they are forced to negotiate and make compromises? If the parties have to start making policy trade-offs in government, where does that leave the importance of education? Do the parties care about education in their manifesto because it is regarded as a “crowd-pleaser,” or do they find it important even when forced to prioritize?

An interesting finding regarding the theoretical framework is linked to the interplay between populism and authoritarianism. This issue has been overlooked in the literature this study builds on. The findings from this study indicate that the parties both distrust and trust authorities: Authorities should be trusted, respected, and obeyed, but only the “correct” ones. Further research could thus investigate how this interplay unfolds, both within education and within other policy areas. Furthermore, even though this study has shown that a top-down approach is meaningful, as many of the parties’ positions are reflections of their ideology, there are some areas where it could be useful to apply other approaches and concepts. This study has identified some positions that cannot be traced directly to the parties' core ideology, and it is thus likely that a bottom-up approach could help explain some of the parties' positions, such as how the economic left-right positions influence the parties' positions and the importance of education. Further, positions on centralization and decentralization do not seem to be directly linked to the parties’ ideology. This is also an area that is highly dependent on the status quo, and it would be interesting to investigate how the positions regarding this matter play out when the context is considered. Given that this is an area where context and status quo is of high importance, one can assume that other theories, such as historical institutionalism, including path dependency and feedback effects, would be helpful. Taking the status quo and the national context, as well as the party competition, into consideration could also help explain differences between parties in other areas.

This study has found some general patterns regarding the parties’ positions, but there is still much we do not know, given that the parties do not mention all aspects in their manifesto. The additional material from SD also illustrates the value of leaning on more material than just the manifesto, as a significant number of positions and statements that were not included in the manifesto were found. Thus, a possible avenue for further research is to investigate the same research questions but with additional types of data. As shown in Chapter 4, some parties do not include much in their manifesto, and the theoretical framework developed here can thus be used to gain more in-depth knowledge about these parties’ positions. One could include longitudinal data and other material besides manifestos, such as parliamentary debates, statements given to the media, posts on social media, or other material published by the parties, to strengthen the study's validity. When it comes to the importance of education vis-à-vis other issues, both interviews and surveys are likely good sources of data. To investigate this, the parties must be forced to make trade-offs—if not, the answer will likely be that all issues are important. In other words, it is not easy to retrieve this information from other

sources than representatives from the parties. However, this study's experience is that several challenges arise when one aims to interview representatives from these parties. Language can be an issue when conducting interviews in comparative studies in general, but this issue is perhaps even more significant when investigating nationalist parties. Further, “populist radical right” is a term that is widespread in the academic literature but not necessarily a term with which the parties themselves identify. Some parties or representatives might want to avoid being put in the same box as other PRRPs. Finally, these parties inherit a general mistrust of university-educated elites and experts (Scott, 2020, p. 58), perhaps making them less willing to participate in these types of studies. In other words, conducting interviews or surveys might be an ideal source of data to investigate the importance of education vis-à-vis other issues in theory, but it is important to be aware of the practical challenges of such an approach.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Overview of parties in government

Country	Party	Cabinet	Composition	Period
Austria	FPÖ	Schüssel I	ÖVP-FPÖ	2000-2005
	FPÖ	Kurz I	ÖVP-FPÖ	2017-2019
Denmark	DF	A.F.R Rasmussen I	V-KF (DF)	2001-2005
	DF	A.F.R Rasmussen II	V-KF (DF)	2005-2007
	DF	A.F.R Rasmussen III	V-KF (DF)	2007-2009
	DF	L.L.R Rasmussen I	V-KF (DF)	2009-2011
	DF	L.L.R Rasmussen II	V-(DF)	2015- 2016
	DF	L.L.R Rasmussen II	V-KF-LA (DF)	2016-2019
	Finland	PS	Sipila II	KESK-KOK-PS
Italy	LN	Berlusconi I	FI-AN-LN-CCD-UCD	1994-1994
	LN	Berlusconi II/III	FI-AN-LN	2001-2006
	LN	Berlusconi IV	PdL-LN-MpA	2008-2011
	LN	Conte I	M5S-LN	2018-2019
	LN	Draghi	M5S-LN-PD-FI-IV-Art.1	2021-
Netherlands	PVV	Rutte I	VVD-CDA (PVV)	2010-2012
Norway	FRP	Solberg I	H-FRP (V from 2018, KRF from 2019)	2013-2020
Switzerland	SVP	-	-	2003-2007
	SVP	-	-	2007-2011
	SVP	-	-	2011- 2015
	SVP	-	-	2019-

*Source: Akkerman, de Lange & Rooduijn (2016). Updated with information between 2016–2021*



## **Appendix 2: Interview guide**

### **Relevance of education policy**

1. What role does education policy play for your party?
  - How important is education for your party compared to other policy areas?
2. What are the most important issues for your party regarding education policy? Why?
3. Have your positions on education policy changed over time, or has it been stable? Why/how?
4. Has the importance of education policy changed over time? Why/how?

### **Relevance of the manifesto**

5. What role do the manifesto and the position in the manifesto play for your daily work in the parliament?
  - How are actual policies and positions developed?
  - Is the manifesto important when developing actual policies or positions?
  - Is it followed?
6. Which actors have been involved in the development of your education policies?
  - Do you have any contact with any interest groups in the sector?
  - Do you keep in contact with interest groups or trade unions beyond the formation of the manifesto?

### **Education policies**

7. What do you think are the main goals of the education system?
  - What is it that the education system should produce or achieve?
8. Are there some levels or areas of education that are more important to you (the party) than others? Which levels/areas would you prioritize? Why?
9. How should the educational sector be steered? How should the relationship between the state and the schools and universities be? (Centralization/decentralization). Why?
  - Who should decide what?
  - How should the sector be funded?
  - Balance between private actors and the state
10. What are the most important learning objectives within the school?
  - What are the most important topics or subjects? Why?
  - Are there any topic or subjects that should not be taught?

### **Concluding remarks:**

Are there some things you think I should have asked about, which I did not? Do you have any comments on any of the questions? Is there anything you would like to add?

Is it okay if I contact you at a later point if there should be more questions or need for clarification?

### Appendix 3: Examples of coded material

Code	Example of coded statements
<b>Socioeconomic dimension</b>	
Nativism	Restrictive limitation of the proportion of foreigners in school classes in order not to endanger the learning success of Austrian children. (FPÖ)
Authoritarianism	Calls for incentives for student loans instead of scholarships and wants the scholarships to be consistently reclaimed when students drop out. (SVP-N)
Populism	Massively develop work-study contracts (apprenticeship contract, professionalization contract) in the craft industry, the public and private sectors and make vocational training more efficient, less opaque and less expensive (RN)
L-R position: Left	Smaller class and group sizes. Group sizes in primary schools must be reduced. Grades 1–4 should aim for a maximum size of 18 students and subsequent classes of 24 students. (PS)
L-R position: Right	The gradual abolition of different school types and the development towards uniform standard schools must be stopped. Only through a differentiated but permeable school system is real, targeted individual support to be provided within the scope of the school's possibilities and offers. (AFD-NRW)
<b>Autonomy-control dimension: Content</b>	
Nativism	The importance of Finnishness, Finnish values and culture to be emphasized in schools. We consider it important that schools promote Finnish values and culture and emphasize the importance of Finnishness. Schools will continue to host Christmas parties and sing <i>Den blomstertid nu kommer</i> . (PS)
Authoritarianism	The appropriate behaviour of pupils can only be enforced if the teachers have appropriate measures at their disposal, and enforcement thereof is not constantly questioned. Truancy, apathetic mentality, lack of discipline, bullying and violence at school cannot be tolerated and must be punished appropriately and with involvement of the guardians. (AFD-N)
Populism	Indoctrination of young minds is wrong. What we must give them is the desire and capacity to think freely for themselves. (UKIP)
<b>Autonomy-control dimension: Governing of educational institutions</b>	
Nativism	It is shocking when the Swiss taxpayer finances the training of thousands of foreign students who leave our country after completing their studies and use their training for the benefit of another business location. Therefore, the tuition fees for foreign students are significantly higher. The SVP defends itself against wasteful participation in EU education and research programs that are remote from citizens and businesses. (SVP-Z)

Authoritarianism	Teacher training courses should be given a radical overhaul and re-focussed on training educators to use successful traditional teaching methods that focus on facts and excellence rather than post-modern, deconstructive and relativistic methods. (UKIP)
Populism	Teachers must be able to concentrate on what is important by cutting down on bureaucratic assessments and appraisals. (UKIP)
<b>Other</b>	
	Making teaching professions more attractive is an important measure for the FPÖ in order to cope with the prevailing youth unemployment. (FPÖ)