



COLLECTION

## Career Education in the Nordic Countries

Career education, as educational activities, aimed at supporting students' career development, is implemented in all Nordic countries through various strategies. However, there are disparities in its implementation and practice. Some countries provide many activities but do not refer to career education as a uniting principle. While previous analysis shows that Nordic countries are leading in developing valued career education activities, national evaluations reveal that less than half of schools offer systematic career education. This special issue examines career education in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as cross-national perspectives including Greenland and Faroe Islands, to gain new insights into strengths and weaknesses. It explores career education policies, curriculum, work experience programs, and more in the contexts of the Nordic education systems.



Collection Nordic CareerEd



**Centre for Learning Environment**  
Norwegian Centre for Learning Environment  
and Behavioural Research in Education

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# Discourses in the Development of Career Guidance and Career Education in Norwegian Schools Since 1990

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# Introduction

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- Career guidance has been delivered through the compulsory school system
- Forms the background for the emergence of career education
- The development of career guidance and career education is characterised by different discourses, as proposed in political documents, research, curricula, and evaluation reports.



# Aim

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- This article examines which discourses appear in the development of career guidance and the rise of career education in lower and secondary schools in Norway since the 1990s.
- The purpose is to shed light on the meaning-making that takes place in legal and political debates and practices related to career guidance and career education in the Norwegian context.
- This can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the discourses that have imprinted this development.





# Research question

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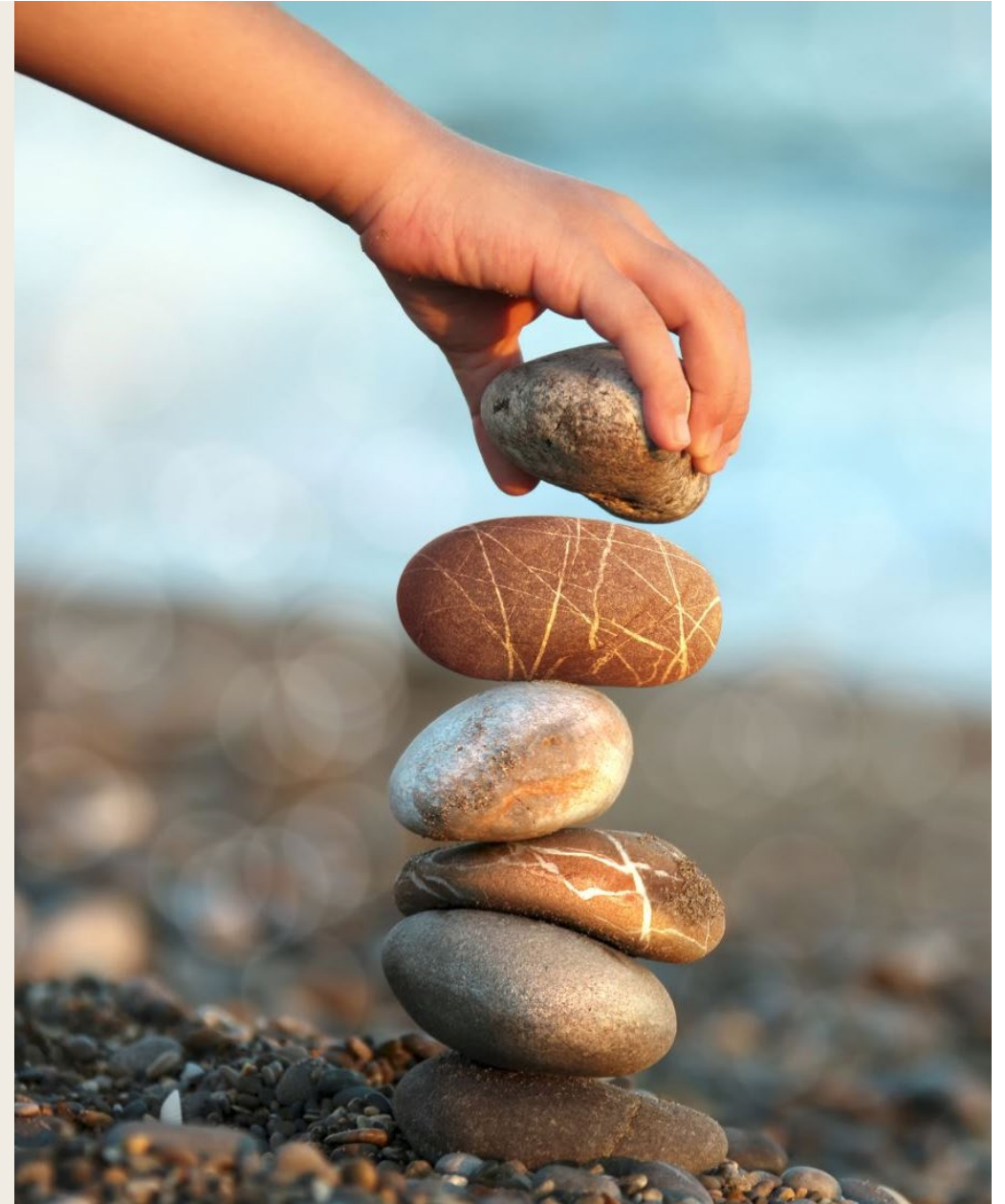
- Which discourses can be identified in the development of career guidance and career education in Norwegian schools since 1990?



# Policy Developments Since the 1990s

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- 1994 – Reform 94 – Statutory right to three years of upper secondary education
- 2002 – OECD report 2002 – Sheds light on several shortcomings
- 2006 – LK06 – New curricula in all subjects
- 2008 – Introduction of the subject “Educational choice”
- 2009 – A more specified regulation to the Educational act on guidance in school is introduced
- 2016 – NOU 2016:7 ‘Norway in transition – career guidance for individuals and society’
- 2020 – Educational reform on completion



# Method

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- Content analysis (Patton, 2015)
- Thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006)
- Three phases:
  - Initially, the first author collected and synthesized reports, evaluations, research articles, policy documents and curriculum
  - Second phase, the second author focused on verifying and elucidating what appears to be emergent, applying a more deductive approach to data collection and analysis
  - Final phase, the authors discussed the literature overview together and various discursive concepts were tested to discuss the data.
- Drawing on thematic analysis, with the aim of interpreting meaning and connections, we identified thematic discourses as specific patterns of shared meaning regarding a particular subject.

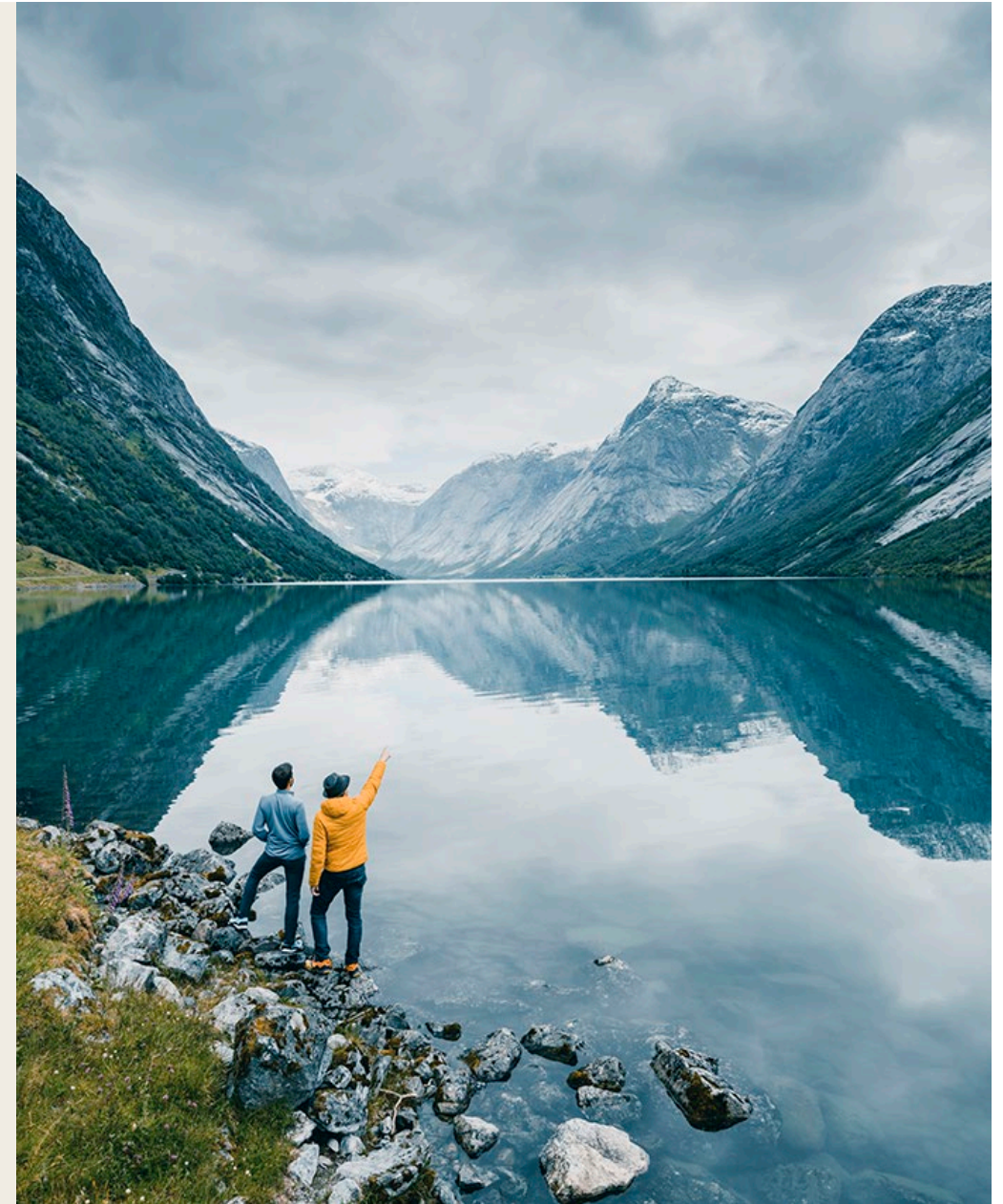
Documents	Number
Policy documents	8
Research reports	14
Laws and regulations	2
Books	1
Book sections	3
Doctoral theses	5
Journal articles	5
Total	38



# Findings and Discussion

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- The following discourses of career guidance and career education in Norwegian schools were identified:
  - (1) completion
  - (2) gender equality
  - (3) resources
  - (4) professionalisation and quality
  - (5) whole school's responsibility.

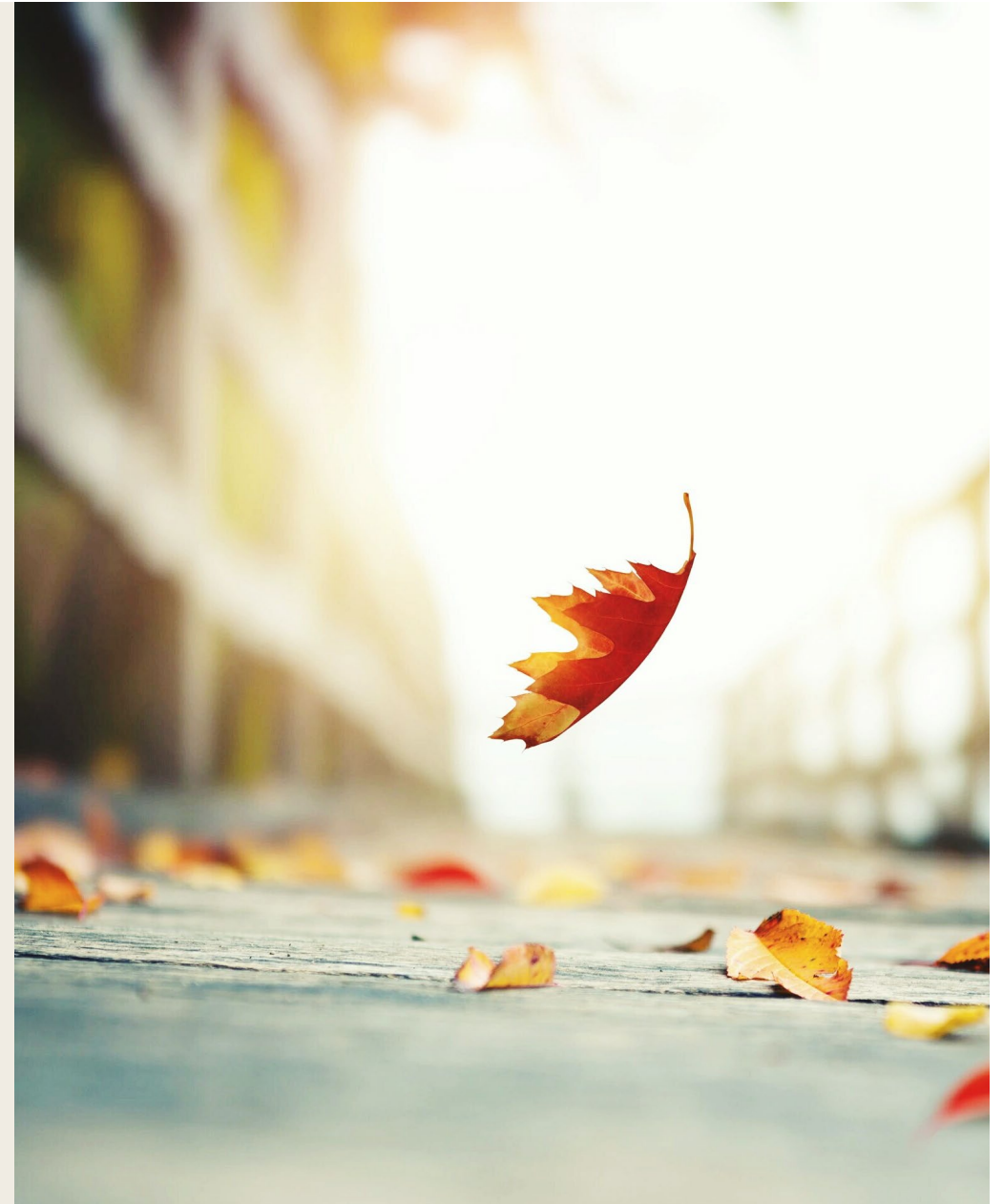




# The Completion Discourse

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- Reform 94: emphasized the completion of education
- LK06 (in Norwegian, Kunnskapsløftet) (Meld. St. 16 (2006–2007)) emphasises the transition to upper secondary school with the intent of preventing students from dropping out
- The regulation
- From early 2000s, the axis of educational policy development in schools and counselling services is dropout issues (Hernes, 2010)
- 'Good career guidance can contribute to fewer dropouts and fewer re-selections in both basic education and higher education' (NOU, 2016:7, p. 10).
- 2020: reform on completion is implemented (in Norwegian, Fullføringsreformen) (Meld. St. 21 (2020–2021))



# The Gender Equality Discourse

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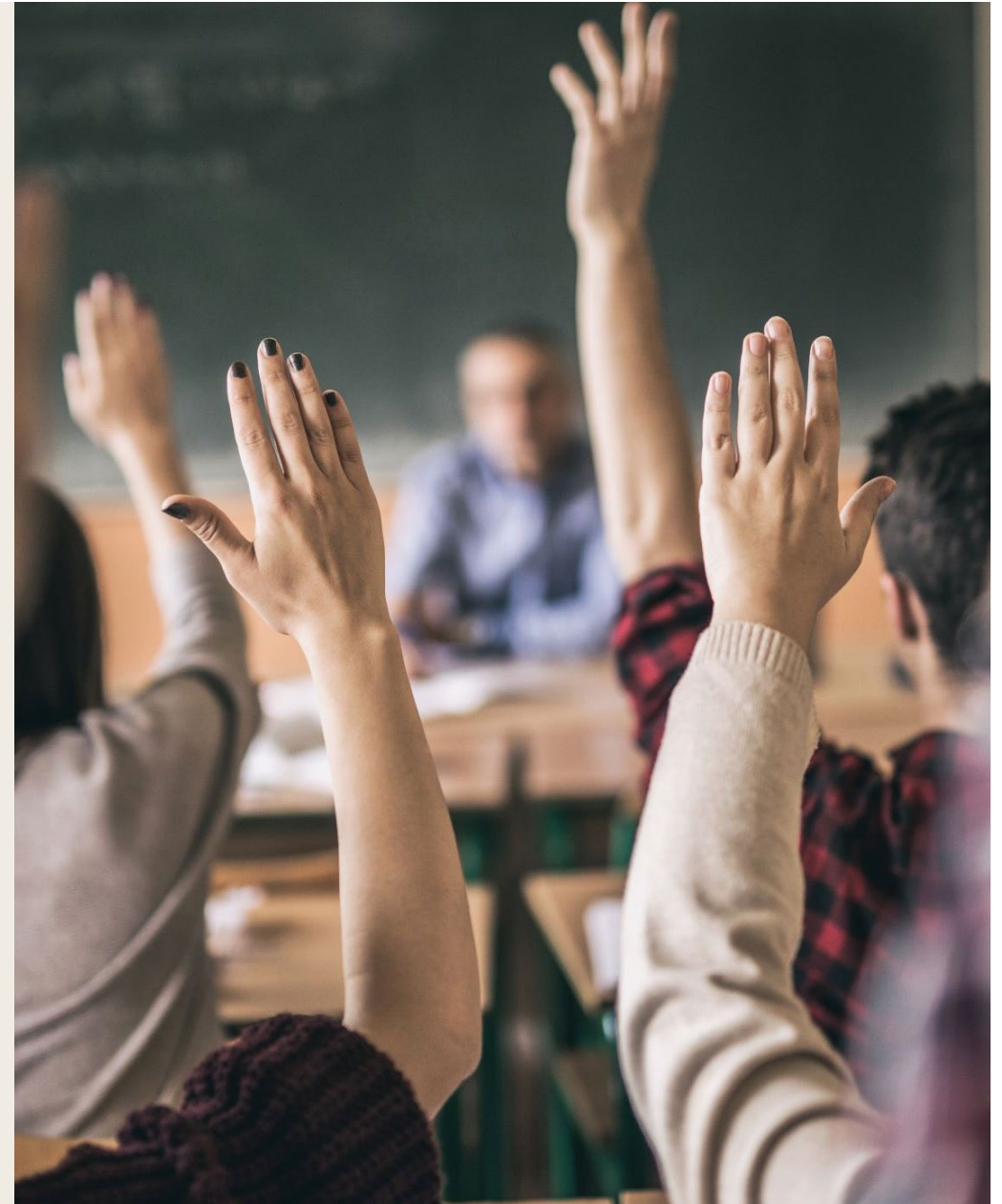
- In the 1990s, policy on counselling, emphasized career choices, and policy had a strong focus on gender and equality
- As a part of Reform 94, vocational counselling was linked to an equality perspective (Birkemo, 1997, s. 73).
- From 1997 to 2000, a project called 'Informed educational choices' was implemented in four counties (in Norwegian, Bevisste utdanningsvalg) (Buland & Havn, 2001).
- The regulation specifically notes that guidance should be given 'regardless of traditional gender roles' (Forskrift til opplæringslova, 2009).



# The Resources Discourse

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- In the last 30 years, expectations of what guidance in school must accomplish have increased.
- Counsellors have reported that resources for counselling have been insufficient and the tasks increasingly extensive (Buland et al., 2011; Buland et al., 2014; Buland et al., 2020; Mordal et al., 2015; Mordal et al., 2022; Teig, 2000).

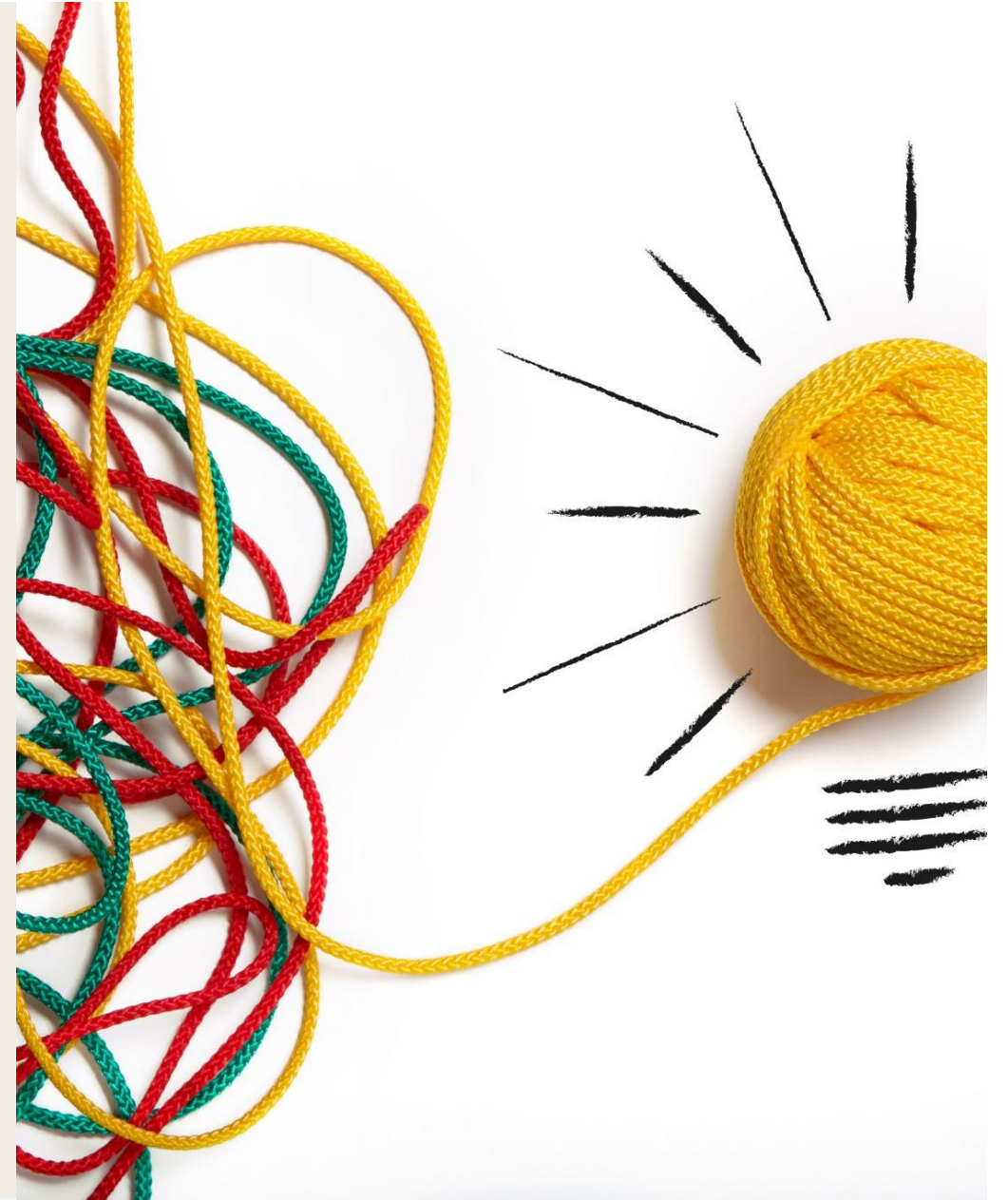




# The Professionalisation and Quality Discourse

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- An increased focus on quality on professionalisation of career guidance practice
- OECD indicating shortcomings
- NOU 2016:7
  - Several proposes on how to enhance quality and professionalisation
- National Quality Framework
- Developing competence standard



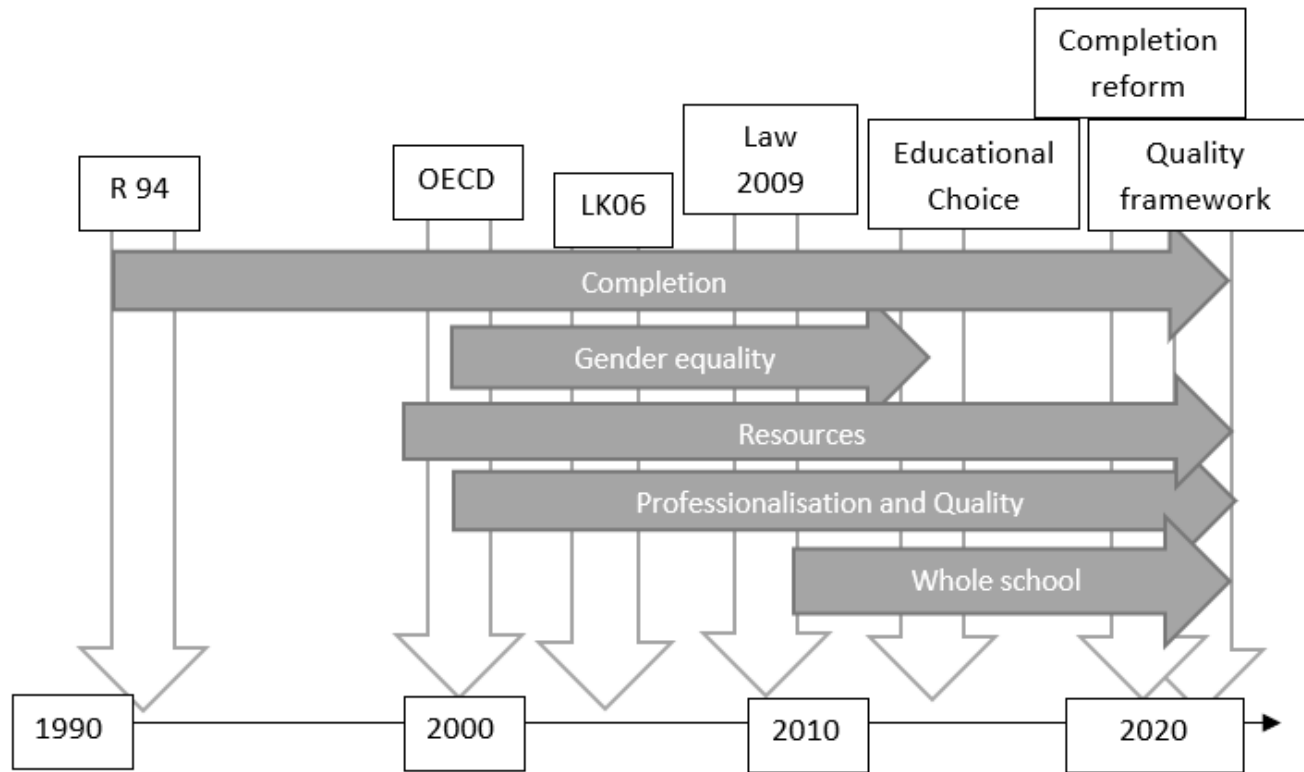
# The Whole School's Responsibility Discourse

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- Political guidelines on how career guidance should be the task and responsibility of the entire school
- Career guidance should not be the counsellor's responsibility alone, but a collective responsibility in the schools



Figure 1:  
Discourses in the  
Development of  
Career Guidance  
and Career  
Education in  
Norway Since 1990





# Conclusion

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- The historical lines illustrate how career guidance and education in schools relates to ongoing educational policy developments
- The discourses on **education completion** and **gender equality** have a solid viewpoint of the output of career guidance and education
- The **professionalisation and quality, resources, and whole school's responsibility** discourses are more rooted in the development of career guidance with a proactive focus on quality in career guidance and education.
- The **gender equality** is no longer a discourse that is high on the agenda, and the **education completion** is on the agenda as an overall framework for the whole school system.
- In contrast, the **professionalisation and quality, resources, and whole school's responsibility** discourses are very much in play today, thereby framing policy and practice development.



# Emergence of Career Education

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- The identified discourses elucidate the background for the emergence of career education
- The curriculum for the subject of educational choice has been adapted in parallel with policy developments
  - 2008: choice and completion of secondary education
  - 2015: included gender and equality perspectives as well
  - 2020: career competence skills were also incorporated
    - can be understood from a professionalisation perspective
- No real increase in allocation of resources (NOU, 2016:7).
  - The introduction of compulsory career education in 2008 can be regarded as an additional resource that supports career guidance.
  - However, this ideology is challenged by the insufficient implementation of the subject (Røise, 2022).





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