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Mobilising international student mobility: Exploring policy enactments in teacher education in Norway

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Abstract

This article analyses the internationalisation of higher education through the lens of student mobility, by exploring how mobility is realised in contexts that are shaped by different needs, purposes and actors. Drawing on interview data, this article explores perceptions and practices of student mobility as understood and described by a range of actors in three teacher education programmes in Norway. Findings show that mobility is mainly understood in terms of its professional relevance for students' future teaching practice, but that this understanding increasingly competes with both academic and bureaucratic purposes. These different understandings are, in turn, found to create tensions in enactments of mobility, notably with regard to how different types of mobility are approached, how faculty and staff engage with mobility, and how the mobility agenda is constrained by student demands for mobility. The analysis suggests that (a) both programme-specific and more general contextual factors influence the enactments of mobility and that (b) the preconditions for internationalisation may vary across higher education contexts—a point that is rarely addressed by policymakers.

1 | INTRODUCTION

International student mobility is one of many activities subsumed under the broader concept of internationalisation in higher education; yet, a highly visible and politically prioritised activity (Fumasoli, 2020). Mobility has

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largely been studied in relation to wider European or national policy frameworks, or in terms of students' motivations and opportunities for participation (Brooks, 2018). Unlike other studies, this article explores mobility as a distinct aspect of internationalisation policies realised through the ground-level practices of those actors who are involved in teaching and organising education. It proposes that mobility is understood and practiced in relation to the specific needs, purposes and actors within particular study programmes. Situating the study in the context of teacher education, this article foregrounds professional higher education as a generally understudied venue for engaging with policies for internationalisation. As such, this is an interesting case, because it has emerged as a field of particular interest for European policymakers over the past decades. In the context of internationalisation and student mobility in particular, policy discourse often assumes teachers to have a multiplier effect for fostering a European dimension in education, and shaping future mobile individuals; that is, teachers who have been mobile themselves can inspire pupils (Zgaga, 2013). Yet, teacher education is also oriented towards specific professional goals linked to the context for future professional practice, which is often national by nature (Zgaga, 2008). This creates needs and conditions for internationalisation which potentially differ from those of the traditional disciplines (Leask & Bridge, 2013), and which may also influence how mobility is approached. Drawing on the framework of policy enactment (Maguire et al, 2012), and interview data, the article seeks to explore (a) how student mobility is interpreted and enacted by various policy actors in these three programmes, (b) how programme-specific contextual factors shape such policy enactments, and (c) how these findings relate to the stated aims of mobility policies.

2 | GROUND-LEVEL ACTORS' PERSPECTIVES ON STUDENT MOBILITY

This article is concerned with outward short-term mobility, including credit mobility (taking place within exchange programmes) and international practicums, which are supervised teaching placements at local schools in the destination country. These are the main types of mobility in Norwegian teacher education for primary and lower secondary education (hereafter referred to as *teacher education*). To this date, the drivers and effects of short-term mobility have largely been explored from overall policy approaches (e.g., Dvir & Yemini, 2017; Rivza & Teichler, 2007), or student-centred approaches (e.g., Beerkens et al, 2015; van Mol, 2014). Such perspectives tend to obscure the institutions and actors who also play an important role in processes of student mobility (Brooks, 2018; Courtois, 2018). From this starting point, a range of scholarly contributions on what characterises mobility and how its translation into practice may be shaped by actors and contexts form the backdrop for the analysis and discussion pursued in this article.

There are various rationales for student mobility relating it to both economic, academic, social and cultural as well as political purposes, implying that the intentions and purposes of mobility may vary between students, governments, higher education institutions and teachers (Rivza & Teichler, 2007). Yet, more scholars have observed a drift from academic and socio-cultural rationales towards economic rationales including employability (Brooks, 2018; Courtois, 2018, 2019; Dvir & Yemini, 2017). However, in Norway, the main rationale is to enhance the quality of higher education—a generally academic rationale (Sin et al, 2019). While it is difficult to ascertain clear and specific student outcomes of mobility, much evidence points to short-term mobility as a potential opportunity for *learning from contrast*, which can increase students' international understanding, abilities to reflect, personal confidence and maturity. These benefits may in turn influence students' academic and general competencies (Cardwell, 2019; Teichler, 2017). Notably, for teacher education, much research centres around social and cultural purposes of mobility, and demonstrates how undertaking periods of practice teaching abroad can develop students' intercultural competence, which is often seen as a professional necessity for teaching in increasingly diverse classrooms (Cushner & Mahon, 2016).

How mobility is understood, valued and approached from the perspectives of higher education often leaves the perspectives of ground-level staff unexplored, although they are involved in both counselling, organising and

administration (Courtois, 2019). Just as internationalisation processes are known to be influenced by the engagement of faculty and staff (Dewey & Duff, 2009), it is reasonable to assume that staff who see the value of student mobility will engage in the various tasks associated with it (Bridger, 2015). However, if the administrative burdens associated with internationalisation are too excessive, or if the institutional rationales are experienced as too detached from ground-level needs and practices, it can lead to disengagement among staff (Dewey & Duff, 2009; Hunter & Sparnon, 2018). In this vein, some studies have discussed how practitioners experience an instrumentalisation of mobility, due to how it is being commercialised and approached as part of internationalisation strategies, thus eroding the learning purpose of mobility (Castro et al, 2016; Courtois, 2018, 2019). According to Castro et al. (2016), this entails that it is left up to practitioners to re-position mobility as a pedagogic activity, which can be challenging if this is not being met by institutional strategies (Castro et al, 2016).

Given that internationalisation processes are context-dependent and mediated through "the unique interactions between disciplinary, institutional, national and global contexts" (Leask & Bridge, 2013, p. 96), how mobility is understood and approached will likely also vary across contexts. As for teacher education, its structure and content are known to vary greatly both in Europe and beyond. In Norway, for instance, it is governed through national regulations and guidelines, and is pedagogically built on a rather unique Scandinavian model (Munthe & Rogne, 2016). Such differences are known to challenge the integration of enrolment periods abroad into the home programme. Presumably, this is one reason why students in teacher education across Europe are generally underrepresented in exchange mobility such as Erasmus+ (Vögtle, 2019; Zgaga, 2008). Yet, it is highly likely that more practically oriented types of mobility are experienced as fitting better into teacher education programmes structure-wise and in terms of perceived professional relevance in professional higher education (Knight, 2012).

3 | NATIONAL POLICY EXPECTATIONS FOR INCREASING STUDENT MOBILITY

Since the turn of the millennium, student mobility has been a high priority on the political agenda in Norway, strongly influenced by both EU and Bologna priorities. Hence, Norway is committed to the ambition that 20% of all graduating students should have stayed abroad for a*minimum of three months* (typically through exchange programmes) at graduation in 2020, with a long-term objective of increasing this number to 50% (Ministry of Education & Research, 2017). Recently, it has even been discussed whether mobility should be made obligatory. The ambition to increase this particular type of mobility is associated with the performance-based component of higher education funding. While the dominant policy rationale for mobility is quality enhancement, what this means in practice is rarely articulated by the authorities (Wiers-Jenssen, 2019). In addition to this, mobility for teacher students is framed by a socio-cultural rationale for developing students' intercultural competences (Ministry of Education & Research, 2009). As supervised teaching practice forms a considerable part of teacher education, student mobility is also provided as international practicums in addition to exchange mobility. While the Erasmus programme also supports doing teaching practice in another European country, in Norwegian teacher education, such practicums are mainly undertaken in African countries that have English as one of the main languages, and countries where faculty and staff members have personal networks. Hence, at graduation in 2017, more than 15% of teacher students had participated in international mobility, such as practicums (DIKU & NOKUT, 2018). Yet, it is often problematised by the authorities that their participation in exchange mobility is too limited—at graduation in 2017, around 6% of all teacher students had undertaken an exchange stay.[1] Among other things, this has led the national authorities to establish a new funding scheme (NOTED) aimed at increasing internationalisation and student mobility between partner institutions, following the latest reform in 2017 which extended teacher education programmes for primary and lower secondary education to 5-year integrated master's studies.

4 | ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The policy enactment framework (Maguire et al, 2012) was used to guide the analysis. This approach emphasises how policies emerge through the translations made by individuals involved in everyday practices of teaching and organising education. Given that official policy texts on student mobility are generally descriptive rather than prescriptive in nature, this framework takes as a starting point the possibility of complexity and differences in policy implementation, and as such provides useful analytical lenses for exploring how mobility is understood and approached. The study on which this article reports approached mobility from the perspective of what actors involved in its realisation understands it to be, rather than presupposing the existence of an authoritative, official understanding. Mobility is understood as a "policy object" (Sin, 2014). The policy object is "what actors involved in policy formulation and enactment believe it is, highly dependent on contextual circumstances. And what they believe it is influences how they enact policy and its outcomes" (Sin, 2014, p. 437). Hence, this perspective can bring analytical attention to the core concepts proposed by policy texts, which are seen as having no objective existence until they are enacted and embedded in practices. Exploring the policy object as part of the enactment perspective both requires consideration of what the actors understand the policy object to be (the ontology), and what it becomes when being enacted (enacted ontology) (Sin, 2014, p. 437). To explore these *enacted ontologies*, the policy enactment framework proposes that both the *interpretive*, *material* and *discursive* dimensions of policy need attention. The interpretive dimension foregrounds the role of actors with different motivations and responsibilities in "putting policy into practice" (Maguire et al, 2012, p. 49), while the discursive dimension shapes and narrows the room for policy responses through producing certain constructions of what phenomena such as internationalisation and mobility "ought" to be (Maguire et al, 2012, p. 74). The material dimension, the context in which policy is supposed to work, is understood as a set of objective conditions marked by "the different cultures, histories, traditions and communities of practices that co-exist" (Maguire et al, 2012, p. 5) within education institutions. Context thus not only serves as general background which *sets the scene* for policy enactments, but acts also as both constraints, pressures and enablers (Maguire et al, 2012, p. 19). A range of contextual factors are proposed as crucial to this, which relate to *situated*, *material*, *professional* and *external* aspects, including things such as an institution's ethos and mission, location, size and history, material conditions (buildings, budgets), teacher values, and pressures from external context (Maguire et al, 2012, p. 20). These contextual dimensions are employed as analytical tools in the present study in a way that allows for an exploration of both programme specific and general teacher education contextual factors influencing enactments. Table 1 illustrates associations between these analytical concepts and features of interviews and other data analysed.

TABLE 1 Analytical framework

Analytical concepts	Identification in the data
Ontology of the policy object	• What is understood by student mobility? • Which purpose(s) of mobility are described, and to whom/what is that purpose related? (The student, staff members, the program, the institution, schools, society?) • Which contextual factors are being actualised in relation to the above?
Dimensions of policy enactments • The interpretive: actors • The material: context • The discursive: possibilities and constraints	• Which actions does the interviewee perform in relation to mobility? • Which approach to mobility is perceived as supportive of the purpose(s) of mobility? Which approach is described as *actually* taken? • What is the relative influence of the four contextual factors on the approaches to mobility? (professional commitments, mobility infrastructure, resources spent, external demands, types of students etc.?) • What kind of constraints and tensions are associated with enactment?

Source: Author.

5 | METHODS AND DATA

The study draws on 20 semi-structured interviews to explore how mobility is understood and enacted in three teacher education programmes in Norway. These were selected using criteria such as size, geography and publicly available data on mobility. All interviews were conducted between January and May 2020; some took place in person at the institutions, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most took place via online communication from home (Zoom, Teams, Skype). The programmes are anonymised by referring to them as programmes A, B and C; overall characteristics and an overview of participants can be found in Table 2. Interviewees were all involved in internationalisation and mobility activities on a day-to-day basis, most of them as academic staff with teaching and research responsibilities. But policy actors tasked with enacting mobility at other levels of the programme were also interviewed; thus, administrative staff provided background knowledge—facts and figures on mobility—while programme management provided perspectives on strategies and priorities. As it turned out, those most engaged in internationalisation were also keen to participate in the study, which resulted in an uneven number of interviewees across the programmes; as such, this constitutes a limitation to the study, as particularly distanced or critical voices may have been missed.

Following the analytical framework, key questions that guided the interviews and analysis included the following. *How is the interviewee involved in working with mobility? How is the purpose and value of mobility understood? Which approach to mobility is seen as supportive of this, which approach is taken? How does mobility relate to other internationalisation activities? Are there any obstacles associated with this work?* Moreover, the four contextual dimensions were also covered explicitly by asking, for instance, how the work with internationalisation and mobility was organised (situated) and supported with resources (material), experienced support from colleagues to the work of the interviewee (professional), and the impact of national and institutional policy expectations (external).

TABLE 2 Overview of cases and interviewees

	Program A	Program B	Program C
Type of institution	(New) University	University college	(Old) University
Location	Urban	Rural	Urban, but remote
Size (number of students)	Large (1,000+)	Small (under 500)	Middle size (approximately 500)
Mobility levels/ students per year (relative to other TE programs) a. exchange mobility (official reports) b. international practicums (self-reports)	a. High, approximately 30 students b. Fewer than exchanges, approximately 15 students	a. High, approximately 15 students b. Balanced with exchanges, approximately 12 students	a. Low; a few students b. Significantly more than exchanges, approximately 40 students
Interviewees	Four teachers engaged in internationalisation	Four teachers engaged in internationalisation	Three teachers engaged in internationalisation
	International coordinator (academic)	International coordinator (academic)	Head of studies Head of studies
	International coordinator (administrative)	Adviser, International Office	Adviser, Department of Education
	Head of studies	Dean	(total: 5)
	Faculty adviser	(total: 7)	
	(total: 8)		

Source: Author.

The interview data are presented in detail in the findings. In addition, institutional and programme-specific documents and websites on mobility were also explored for contextualisation and comparison. As a general limitation of the analytical and methodological framework applied, it must be acknowledged that it is ultimately the voices of individual actors which come to represent the enactments of the programme. Thus, any claims made from the interview data should be understood to represent a *snapshot* of understandings and practices as perceived by interviewees at one point in time.

All interviews were conducted in Norwegian and subsequently transcribed verbatim; all extracts were translated into English with respect for the original phrasing. Next, they were coded with NVivo software, with the purpose of identifying patterns of themes, inspired by thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Hence, the analysis moved dialectically between the theoretical inspiration and explorative sensitivity to emerging themes. In line with the analytical framework, initial themes and subthemes were articulated as specific questions to guide the analysis, as illustrated in Table 1. Supported by the existing literature on the various purposes of student mobility, the first step of analysis identified three overall perceptions of mobility which both overlap and differ from those previously identified. Next, the thematic coding evolved around how interviewees addressed the three dimensions of policy, i.e., the role of individual actors, context, possibilities and constraints. As the analysis progressed, further themes emerged from the data on the basis of themes addressed in either a particularly similar or different way, such as: *What is the role of destination for the perceived value of mobility? How do students' motivations and desires for mobility influence the approaches taken? Which considerations guide or should guide how mobility is approached (strategy, staff interests, student desires?).* To structure the presentation of findings in the paper, emphasis is placed on how mobility is understood and what enables, shapes and constrains its subsequent enactments.

6 | FINDINGS

6.1 | Understanding mobility

This section presents the findings of how interviewees understand mobility as a policy object, before turning to accounts of its enactment. Three main conceptualisations of mobility emerge in the data, which are subsumed under the categories *professional*, *academic* and *bureaucratic* ontologies. Their characteristics, what is found to shape them, and their occurrence are summed up in Table 3.

While it is reasonable to believe that mobility could be conceptualised along similar dimensions in other higher education contexts, it is striking that almost all interviewees emphasised how aspects of personal development associated with mobility—almost inevitably—can transform into professionally relevant competences and skills for a future teacher. This can be explained by teacher education being a practice-oriented type of education, in which the purpose of mobility is made relevant in relation to a clearly demarcated context of professional practice. This is illustrated by the following statement from an international coordinator:

> What we see, and what school leaders say as well, they see a difference in those who have stayed abroad, they are often much more comfortable in the classroom, they have another self-confidence… The personal journey, the freeing of oneself, it somehow develops the personal qualifications which a teacher needs. So that is what I tell the students when we try to recruit them to go abroad, that they will become attractive in the labour market, exactly because they become more self-confident and used to make decisions on their own (online interview, March 2020, international coordinator, Programme B).

However, teacher education has also been through processes of academic drift over the past decades, where its integration into higher education has been accompanied by changes in teaching and learning expectations resulting

TABLE 3 *Ontologies* of mobility

Ontologies	Professional	Academic	Bureaucratic
Signifiers in the data	Mobility is a *personal* and *formative* experience which: • Prepares students professionally to teach in increasingly diverse classrooms By supporting students': • Independence • Self-confidence • Professional reflection • Intercultural understanding • Creativity	Mobility is an integrated *educational* activity which supports the program/faculty staff by: • Developing relevant research networks/ partnerships • Making the learning outcome of mobility transparent Mobility supports students in: • Getting acquainted with other pedagogies • Taking courses which do not exist at home institution	Mobility is an *indicator* of internationalisation which supports the program and institution in: • Building infrastructure and administrative routines • Setting aims for the work with internationalisation • Rendering internationalisation visible to an external context
Shaped by	Traditions of teacher education • Practice-orientation • Internationalisation as person/project-driven	Academic drift • Stronger research-orientation and international cooperation • Internationalisation as an integrated part of education and research	Internal and external pressures on increasing internationalisation • National and institutional incentives • "Policy language"
Occurrence across the programs	Predominant among all actors in all programs	Mainly in Program A Largely absent in Program B and C	Predominant among management and administration

Source: Author.

in increased emphasis on academic status and expectations for research (Smeby & Sutphen, 2015). As an implication of this, an academic ontology of mobility seems to have become more prominent, not least with the recent extension into integrated master's programmes. In this view, mobility should not just be an isolated activity undertaken by students, but something which benefits and enhances the quality of the whole study programme by being an integrated part of the international research cooperation. Yet, this understanding of mobility was not widespread, but mainly expressed in Programme A, which is located in an institution which recently went from being a university college to a university, and in this process, responsibilities for mobility were dispersed across the departments in the programme in order to support academic mobility. Hence, professional and academic ontology are clearly also related to which kind of mobility is being discussed, i.e., international practicums or exchange mobility, which are anchored in two competing traditions of teacher education, namely its practice-orientation and its academic function.

Closely related to the academic ontology, yet different in terms of how it presupposes the function of mobility, the bureaucratic ontology conceptualises mobility as an *objectifiable* activity which renders internationalisation visible to an external context. It is shaped by the national policy discourse on increasing mobility, as well as the national and institutional incentives associated with it. Thus, a commitment to increasing the level of mobility in the programmes, is stated in the publicly available strategies of Programme A and B, while in Programme C, the aim is to develop more pre-approved mobility agreements, i.e., ultimately to foster more international exchanges. While interviewees generally agreed that mobility should not be seen as equivalent to internationalisation, when asked about whether the professional value they ascribe to mobility could be realised *without* physical mobility, many were doubtful.

6.2 | Trajectories and tensions in understandings of mobility between professional, academic and bureaucratic perspectives

Drawing on the above findings of policy actors' understanding of student mobility as a policy object, this section turns to their accounts of enactments, from which three patterns emerge across the cases, (a) enactments vary with different types of mobility and how they are approached in the programme, (b) enactments are largely *enabled* through the dedication of a few staff members, and (c) enactments are *constrained* by other institution and programme specific agendas as well as student demands for mobility.

6.2.1 | Ontologies materialising in enactments of different types of mobility

As demonstrated above, professional and academic ontologies are related to the two dominant types of mobility in teacher education. While each programme had a long history with organising international practicums, the programmes now also have to provide opportunities for students to participate in academic exchange mobility. As practicums abroad typically only last for 4–6 weeks, they have been comparatively easier to realise in a rather inflexible study programme. Exchange mobility, on the other hand, is more challenging to integrate into the programme due to different structures and academic calendars, which is further complicated by all three programmes offering just one semester during which it is possible to go abroad. Also, interviewees explained that English-taught courses are generally rare in teacher education in Europe (e.g., of the three programmes, only Programme B provided courses in English). More substantially, while many see a clear relationship between international practicums and their professional value, the link between exchange mobility and academic value seems much trickier to pin down. As courses in teacher education in Norway are structured around school subjects, and not a specific academic discipline, it is challenging to find substitute courses abroad for credit mobility. These concerns were expressed by several participants and are illustrated in the following extract from an interview with a science teacher with international responsibilities:

> I have to approve students' learning agreements and make sure that those courses provide something which we can say is roughly equal to science. We don't always get there. But the students also gain many other competences from going on exchange, so we have to be large with that (online interview, March 2020, teacher with international responsibilities, Programme A).

Interestingly, as indicated above, this means that interviewees discussing exchange mobility often return to the professional value of mobility, emphasising how, either way, standing on one's own feet in unknown territory—also in a university abroad—will be a valuable experience for the individual student, which can be of professional relevance later on. In that vein, the academic content of the mobility experience seems to be deemed less important than the actual experience of travelling somewhere. Yet, as noted, the academic ontology is closely linked with the bureaucratic ontology, which implies that it is exchange mobility which officially adds value to programmes, whereby the tradition of international practicums has come to (formally) lose some of its status as an internationalisation activity. This consequence was particularly evident in Programme C, where the main type of mobility was international practicums, as described by a teacher with many years of experience in arranging practicums:

> When the management, the faculties and the departments have dialogue meetings, internationalisation is always part of the discussion […] Like, what did you do to foster internationalisation, how many students did you send abroad? And what has been annoying is that mobility under 2.5 months has not counted in the budgets […] because we have had quite a lot of students on international practicums which have not paid off as a single dime! (Online interview, April 2020, teacher, Programme C).

This example demonstrates that enactments of mobility are both shaped and constrained by the pedagogical traditions and distinct structure of teacher education, which materialise differently in programme specific approaches to mobility. Yet, the bureaucratic ontology which is part of the national and institutional policy discourse also seems to shape enactments of mobility significantly, by narrowing down what is the *right* kind of mobility—which is somewhat different from how it has historically been approached. Clearly, this does not mean that the programmes completely adapt their approaches to the official policy discourse, but that the discourse contributes to concerns to increase the numbers and enforce the bureaucratic ontology, at least on the level of management, and to the frustration of many faculty and staff members. As argued above, faculty and staff can distance themselves from internationalisation if the institutional rationales are experienced as too detached from ground-level needs and practices (Dewey & Duff, 2009; Hunter & Sparnon, 2018). This is potentially a very pertinent challenge in teacher education, where the professional commitment to internationalisation is already largely individualised, as will be elaborated in the following section.

6.2.2 | Enactments enabled by individual actors

Clearly, it is difficult to separate the overall approach taken to internationalisation from that taken to mobility. Thus, while internationalisation has traditionally been project-based and run by a few dedicated faculty and staff members, today all seem to pursue a more integrated approach. Yet, comparing the programmes' infrastructure for mobility, it is evident that despite their different ways of approaching internationalisation, the dedication of a few or more individuals among the staff seems to remain crucial, as they take on responsibilities for organising, supervising and promoting both exchange mobility and international practicums with varying degrees of formalisation. Table 4 provides a comparison between the programmes' overall approaches and how they presuppose the role of individual actors.

Notably, this comparison sheds light on the challenges associated with moving from an individualised to a broad professional commitment to working with internationalisation, as more interviewees across the programmes

TABLE 4 Overall approaches and the role of individuals accordingly

Program	A	B	C
Coordination and infrastructure for mobility	High degree of formalisation; clear division of tasks between administrative/ academic staff, including an overall international coordinator with 30% dedicated time and specialised international officer	Moderate degree of formalisation; main responsibility held by international coordinator with 30% dedicated time, some administrative support from general international office	Low degree of formalisation; no formal coordination of mobility tasks, most are coordinated by general study administration or dedicated staff involved in isolated projects
Role of individual actors	Relative; incentivised through formal responsibilities	Important; a few dedicated individuals, the work of international coordinator exceeds the formal workload	Crucial; highly dependent on the voluntary work of individuals

Source: Author.

experienced that their enthusiasm for internationalisation is not always equally shared among colleagues. The professional cultures of the programmes, and programme specific needs, contribute as important contextual factors for articulating how individual roles were experienced by interviewees. For instance, in Programme A, taking on formal responsibility as an international coordinator in a department does not in itself seem to be a very attractive task; more of these actors explain how no one else wanted to do it, but that they were motivated because they glimpsed a potential opportunity to travel and engage in new networks themselves. Yet, they experienced that working with mobility is also an extremely time-consuming task. These tensions are illustrated by the following excerpt:

> I have pulled my hair and thought, oh wow, what a job I took on! In the beginning, it came with strategic funds, so many people actually went abroad and looked into places. I think people found that interesting, but I think they will cut back on the budgets again, and then I don't know how interesting people will really feel it is [...]. (Online interview, March 2020, teacher with international responsibilities, Programme A).

In contrast to this, in Programme C, the university's international office has the only formal responsibility for mobility, which means that within the programmes, the work with mobility is significantly more dependent on a few individuals, compared to Programme A and B. More of the interviewees in Programme C described their work as more or less voluntary, even though their role has gained more legitimacy, as internationalisation has come in more strongly as an external demand, as illustrated in the following:

> Much of this is about a lot of work which you are neither acknowledged for or paid for in any way [...] That is the negative part about internationalisation, there are many who put so much work into it but are never acknowledged for it. On the contrary, they are often met with a sort of suspicion that they are only going to Zambia [destination for practicums] to get a tan for instance [...] So, it has really had a great impact that we have opened more up for internationalisation, or more pressure put on it from above" (Online interview, April 2020, teacher, Programme C).

These two examples are illustrative of how the programmes' approaches to mobility were in practice highly dependent on individuals, but also that the individualised commitment may work as a constraint to enacting policy goals. It can be argued that this reflects the fact that neither internationalisation nor mobility necessarily form part of a

common approach, or commitment, to thinking about teacher education—which is, arguably, what is expected in the official policy discourse that articulates quality enhancement as the main rationale. The findings suggest that there is indeed a locally defined need for internationalisation, and that student mobility was perceived to support internationalisation. However, a range of tensions clearly arise from individualised commitments, as they were found to be a somewhat vulnerable way of engaging with both internationalisation and mobility, yet also crucial for their enactment. However, an ongoing development aimed at fostering broader engagement among staff in all three programmes was observed. Yet, given the ambition of getting more students to go abroad, it would seem that a certain alignment between institutional and programme strategies and staff ambitions is crucial for fostering a long-term engagement in the work with mobility.

6.2.3 | Enactments constrained by other agendas and student desires

As part of their approaches to mobility, each programme had some sort of strategy or priorities regarding which destinations for mobility were encouraged. These, in turn, are influenced by factors such as the national and institutional policy discourse promoting intra-European and intra-Nordic (Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and Finland) mobility, institutional commitments to reducing environmental impact, and for some, academic concerns about relevant research partners. While such priorities work as constraints to how mobility is enacted, priorities are also shaped by how students respond to them. Thus, a common experience in all programmes was that student demands for mobility do not always correspond with the ambitions of programme leadership nor faculty and staff. This is illustrated by the following statement from a dean:

> First of all, there are funds in the Erasmus+ programme, and it is study credit rewarding. So, economically, this is quite important for us. Second, something which has become more prominent in the past years is that we have to think more about the environment… But it is a dilemma, because first of all, we want students to go abroad, and we are very happy with everyone who go abroad, but we see that most of them travel to exotic places like the US and Australia, and that makes a huge CO_2-imprint. So, we do succeed in getting students to go abroad, but at the same time we don't succeed in terms of thinking more green […] (Online interview, March 2020, Dean of faculty, Programme B).

Several interviewees indicated that students often desired specific destinations where English is the first language; however, this was also seen as motivated more by social aspects rather than educational purposes. This seemed to be a tension that was experienced by several study participants. Adding to this tension, it was not clear whether the professional value of mobility legitimised any choice of destination, or if the interviewees should take a clearer position on where it would be beneficial for students to go, for instance by developing pre-approved offers for mobility. While all three programmes aim to do the latter, more interviewees suspect that if the currently most popular destinations were to be excluded, mobility levels would in turn decrease. Moreover, the vast majority of teacher students never actually go abroad, which participants described as linked to general student characteristics; they are often very tied to their home and family relations, and not taking much risk. This is reflected in that teacher education is considered a "safe" educational choice. In this vein, some interviewees felt that any destination is as good as the other, as long as students go abroad. As such, students were perceived— as a contextual factor—to constrain how mobility is enacted. Such tensions are illustrated in the following excerpt:

> People say that I speak on behalf of the students, I am kind of a student representative. Because I think that if we are to increase mobility, we must ask ourselves, what is it that the students want? Because they want to go far away! We can be adults and say 'you learn a lot from going to Sweden

as well!', but I think that we need to have an offer which is in demand, you know (Interview, February 2020, international coordinator, Programme A).

Hence, while interviewees on the one hand insisted on the professional relevance of mobility, it can also be argued that a certain instrumentalisation of mobility is discernible, which stems from an appreciation of the mobility experience *in itself*, and not necessarily *in relation to something* besides its professional relevance. As such, this points to a fundamental tension between whether mobility should be understood to serve a means to other ends, or whether it is wanted just for the sake of mobility, as also discussed by Courtois (2018, 2019). Notably, the analysis suggests that this tension is very pertinent in the context of teacher education where students do not frequently aspire to mobility, and the actually mobile students are therefore particularly valuable in relation to the more instrumental understanding of mobility.

7 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

By approaching internationalisation through the lens of student mobility, this article has shed light on how mobility is understood, approached and constrained by students, staff and faculty at three teacher education programmes in Norway. The analysis found competing understandings of mobility, which evidently position it—as a part of the internationalisation process—somewhat complexly between being an external demand and an internal need of teacher education. By suggesting that mobility lends itself to many interpretations related to the needs for internationalisation, the article contributes to expanding our understanding of higher education internationalisation processes and potential challenges associated with it.

Given that the official policy rationale for mobility in Norway is to enhance the quality of education, it is striking how individuals mainly associate mobility with personal experiences that can transform into professional development; or, what previous literature suggested as the opportunity to learn from contrast (Cardwell, 2019; Teichler, 2017). Evidently then, quality is not necessarily only about what students learn academically or professionally when going abroad but can be achieved through the mobility experience *itself*. In the interplay with a bureaucratic understanding of mobility, it is suggested that there are indeed factors leading to what could be called a mobility drift—a promotion of mobility for the sake of mobility, as also found in other studies (Castro et al, 2016; Courtois, 2018; Teichler, 2017). Yet, the present study suggests that actors contribute somewhat to this instrumentalisation by promoting an idea according to which all or most mobility is good mobility, as long as teacher students, who are perceived as less inclined to engage in mobility, actually go abroad. More generally, however, it is suggested that an increasing bureaucratisation of mobility can have critical implications for teacher education, where commitment to, and responsibility for, internationalisation largely relies on individual faculty and staff members. In light of Bridger's (2015, p. 51) point that increased participation in mobility requires the engagement of all academic staff, this could thus be an even more pertinent challenge in teacher education in order to enable enactments of mobility.

Hence, while the findings suggest that it is indeed possible to foster exchange mobility in teacher education, its integration into the programme seems to require institutional support and resources (time and money), the prioritisation of which for internationalisation may not be possible in programmes with smaller numbers of students. Thus, to actually realise the aims of increasing mobility (intra-European in particular) would presumably require more staff engagement, more resources, and more discussions of how to support quality in mobility experiences. As such, it can be speculated whether this would in turn lead to a displacement of focus on outward mobility at the expense of internationalisation activities which benefit all students. In sum, on the basis of the study on which this article reports, it is proposed that enactments of mobility are both shaped and constrained by (a) how mobility is prioritised and supported with resources as part of the overall approach to internationalisation, as well as (b) the professional culture of commitment to internationalisation among faculty and staff.

The relationship between destinations to which programmes can support student mobility and students' preferences for destinations also constrain enactments of mobility. In this vein, intra-European mobility was not a very common phenomenon, despite being a stated aim in both national, institutional and programme strategies in all three programmes. Besides issues of different structures in European teacher education, language is clearly also a challenge which is rarely explicitly addressed by policymakers. Student demand was focused to destinations where English was spoken which constrains the ambitions for European mobility. Evidently, there could also be a missed potential of providing opportunities for teaching practice placements within the Erasmus programme. In addition to associated opportunities for funding and reduced environmental impact, European teaching placements could presumably also ease some ethical concerns about arranging practicums in developing countries—several interviewees addressed concerns regarding how to maintain equality between partners in these practicums.

Yet, European school systems are also very different in terms of curriculum, professional requirements for teachers etc. (Zgaga, 2008). In particular, the challenge of language could also be a barrier to this, as not all pupils in lower secondary and primary education have sufficient language skills to be taught in English. This may make it more difficult for a Norwegian teacher student to undertake teaching practice in school systems beyond the Nordic countries, compared to, for instance, a business student doing an internship in an international firm. However, it may be argued that for future language teachers, it might be particularly relevant to have teaching placements within Europe. While a policy solution might be to support language courses for teacher students, there is a risk that this might prolong students' education, which would presumably in turn be a barrier to mobility. Thus, it seems that policies aimed at supporting a European dimension of education need to be aligned with more practical concerns of the various languages and structures in education systems, if this type of mobility for teacher students is to be supported. Moreover, this would require new forms of cooperation between European teacher education institutions in order to provide opportunities for student supervision, which again may not be similar across Europe. Thus, despite the stronger policy push for intra-European mobility, this study sheds light on some challenges associated with it, which are not easily solved.

Furthermore, the current national policy discourse in Norway strongly incentivises and promotes exchange mobility as desirable, which is argued to contribute to making other ways of engaging with internationalisation, which may be closer to the needs of teacher education, invisible. In line with this, it can be argued that policies seeking more students to go abroad from a rationale of quality enhancement should consider how to allow for definitions of quality in relation to a particular field of education, and how this can be aligned with an increase in mobility levels. This article contributes to a critical discussion about whether higher education student mobility should be a means to other ends, whether personal, academic or professional, or if mobility is wanted just for the sake of mobility, which is what official policy discourse seems to currently promote. The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that without such discussions there is a risk that the pedagogic and formative opportunities associated with mobility may get lost along the way.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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ENDNOTE

[1] For comparison, the average level in social science and law was 23%, in business and administration 20%

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