

Rhetoric, oracy and citizenship: curricular innovations from Scotland, Slovenia and Norway

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Abstract

This article positions rhetoric as a bridge between oracy and citizenship education. The first comparative curricular study of Scotland, Slovenia and Norway, it demonstrates shared policy aims and practical challenges in the delivery of oracy and citizenship education in these three nations. We argue that the study of rhetoric equips young learners with the skills to think critically, listen actively and speak strategically. But rhetoric goes further than existing policy ambitions for oracy; it includes civic training, and cultivates skills for democratic deliberation and participation in society. Rhetoric empowers young people with the knowledge and skills to construct compelling arguments, and deconstruct the arguments of others, thereby cultivating eloquent and critical citizens. We explore the motivations for the teaching of rhetoric (to learners aged 7–16) in each national educational system, which range from significant coverage (Slovenia) to scant reference (Scotland), with Norway representing the middle ground, and we assess the importance of ancient teachings of rhetoric in contemporary classrooms. We outline the policy and curricular challenges associated with training teachers to teach rhetoric and share testimonies from both staff and students regarding their learning experiences with something which is ‘new’ to many, yet ‘ancient’ to some.

Key words: oracy, rhetoric, citizenship, Scotland, Slovenia, Norway

Ancient rhetoric and contemporary oracy education

Using rhetoric as a form of oracy education is not a modern concept. Speaking skills were honed in ancient schools of rhetoric before being practised in a variety of public spaces, from Greek democratic assemblies to Roman courts of law, and these ancient techniques for constructing and deconstructing arguments

are ‘just as relevant and vital in the 21st-century classroom’ (Earnshaw, 2016, p. 16).

Today, the term ‘rhetoric’ is often associated with the absence of truth. It is synonymous with politicians, broadcasters and advertising moguls who use ‘empty rhetoric’ to ‘spin’ their words and obscure meaning. Rhetoric’s nature, meaning and purpose has been contested since its ancient origins. For the philosopher Plato in 4th century BCE Greece, rhetoric was the ‘art of enchanting the soul’ (*Phaedrus* 271d, Plato, 1999). Plato’s pupil Aristotle reframed rhetoric’s meaning as the faculty of ‘finding out in each case the existing means of persuasion’ (*Rhetoric* 1.1355b25–26, Aristotle, 1926). For the Roman orator Cicero, rhetoric was simply ‘speech designed to persuade’ but also ‘one of the supreme virtues’ (*De Oratore* 3.14.54–55, Cicero, 1948) and the Roman schoolteacher Quintilian, who wrote a rhetorical handbook, defined it as ‘the art of speaking well’ (*Institutio Oratoria* 2.14.5, Quintilian, 1980). Ancient didactic models, including preparatory exercises and declamations, systematically developed oral, reading and writing literacies. Ancient rhetorical education centred on the formation of the self (*paideia*, in Greek), and its primary goal was to instil ‘in its students a habit of effective expression’ (Murphy, 2020, p. 41).

The most important element of ancient rhetoric was not the formula itself (which includes description, contextual explanation, statement of key points, refutation of opponent’s argument, summary) but the choices that affect the deployment of this formula. These choices exemplify critical thinking and critical literacy: what to say, what order to say it in, how best to communicate the message with words (via lexical choice but also using rhetorical devices and vocal variation), together with non-verbal communicative factors such as gestures, eye-contact and performance. The outcome of these choices could now be called ‘oracy’, the vocal expression of a structured and reasoned thought process. Indeed, modern concepts of oracy focus on the spoken language as a means ‘to articulate ideas,

develop understanding and engage with others through spoken language' (Voice 21, Oracy Benchmarks, p. 3). Ancient rhetoric, however, was a much broader concept, a discipline intertwining speaking, reading and writing skills as inseparable elements of an orator's mastery, with its main educational aim the formation of an orator-citizen, framed by such notions as Greek *paideia* and Latin *humanitas*.

A closer observation of the four oracy strands outlined in The Cambridge Oracy Skills Framework shows that rhetoric is present in the category of "linguistic skills" and described as a 'speaker's use of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, to enhance or clarify meaning' (Cambridge Papers, 2018, p. 5). Such a definition sustains the reductive view of rhetoric as mere lexical choices rather than as a form of social behaviour, which was an integral part of ancient rhetorical education (Žmavc, 2021). Many principles and notions that belong to the rhetorical system are in fact reflected in the strands of the Framework, yet their rhetorical heritage is not sufficiently recognised. For example, in the description of the Physical skills we can discern the rhetorical concept of *actio* (i.e. 'delivery' where gesture, expression and motion are all important), in the Cognitive skills the concept of *inventio* (the art of finding your argument) with *logos* (using logical reasoning to be persuasive) can be identified, and in the Social and Emotional Skills *ethos* and *pathos* (which, together with *logos*, form the Aristotelian triad of persuasive techniques, using appeals to character and emotion) also come forth.

In addition to the obvious parallels in this framework between ancient and modern conceptions of rhetoric, it is stated that one of oracy's goals is 'to prepare young people with a set of skills that equips them for full participation in democratic processes and life in general' (Cambridge Papers, 2018, p. 4), a much closer reflection of the ancient holistic approach to rhetoric. We therefore advocate for the implementation of ancient rhetoric in modern oracy education because it offers a thorough, systematic approach to the teaching of communication by integrating speaking, writing, critical listening, reading, and body language with content knowledge. We believe that such a holistic perspective may be *alluded* to as a modern aim of oracy but is not currently captured in classroom oracy models. Quintilian taught that true knowledge of the topic under discussion was a prerequisite for the orator to successfully persuade; otherwise, he would be a fraud. Learning rhetoric alone does not equip a student to persuade others on matters of civic importance: learners need to have engaged with the relevant socio-economic, political, literary and historical issues pursuant to that issue. Rhetoric must, therefore, be seen as one element of a broader curriculum in contemporary education.

Introducing three national contexts

It is important to highlight that there is some divergence between the conception of rhetoric in the educational policy of the three national contexts presented here. The Slovenian model builds mainly on classical rhetoric. The Norwegian and Scottish examples show broader curricular frameworks of key competencies, which have oracy at their core combined with elements from the European tradition of classical rhetoric and *paideia*. This article does not set out to document and analyse the observed classroom practice of rhetorical teaching in three national contexts; rather, it presents the educational policy drivers and curriculum design principles which have influenced teachers' professional learning and practice. Uniting all three examples is the positive impact of using classical rhetoric to teach oracy and citizenship within diverse international curricular structures.

In Slovenia, following National Curriculum Reform in 1999, rhetoric became a compulsory-elective subject in the 9th grade (for learners aged 14–15).¹ In 2006, the official textbook (Zidar Gale et al., 2006) was published. In secondary schools, learners encounter oracy in Slovenian and modern languages lessons but rhetorical and communication skills as learning topics are arbitrarily scattered through different subject curricula (Žmavc, 2019). Based on the aims and goals stated in these curricula, students are expected to adopt relatively complex concepts of reasoning, persuasion, and eloquent speech via basic guidelines and apply them to activities without prior and systematic learning of their use, and without engaging in the broader educational goal of developing 'a personal culture or *paideia*' (Miller, 2007, p. 196).

Paideia, the ancient Greek ideal to educate citizens to fully form themselves, is aligned with oracy as a key competence in the Norwegian curriculum (Berge, 2005, 2007; Kaldahl, 2020b). It is exemplified via the use of rhetoric for expression in civic culture. Oracy is a core competence in the Norwegian Framework for Key Competencies where it is defined as creating meaning through listening and speaking. Learners should 'listen and respond to others while being conscious of their recipients' (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training [UDIR], 2012, p. 6). Oracy is conceptualised in the Norwegian curriculum as 'in many ways, a revitalising of the classical school of rhetoric's pedagogical thinking, where the goal was to educate young people who could be active citizens and

¹The 1990 reforms introduced a 9-year elementary education programme and rhetoric was deemed by all Parliamentary parties to be politically acceptable content for the elective curriculum. There are 455 primary schools in Slovenia, which must implement rhetoric in their curriculum in the 9th grade when at least eight pupils nominate to study it.

express themselves through both oral and written civic utterances' (Berge, 2005, p. 18, Kaldahl's translation). However, policy does not always reflect practice and research shows that the policy intentions of the Norwegian Curriculum with respect to oracy are largely unfulfilled because teachers struggle with the assessment and teaching of oracy, and they lack education in rhetoric (Kaldahl, 2019, 2020a, 2022).

In 2010, the Scottish government introduced *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE), a suite of policy documents which sought to create a broad and balanced curriculum for learners aged 3–18. It emphasised that pupils should be given opportunities to 'think and talk together, to discuss ideas, analyse and solve problems' (Education Scotland, 2009) in order to develop four key capacities - the ability to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Oracy is assessed for all students (via a pass/fail) as part of Literacy Skills and rhetoric is studied formally by (the few) students who choose Latin in the secondary phase. Both communication and citizenship are at the heart of the curriculum to develop skills for learning, life and work (Education Scotland, 2021).

Benefits of rhetoric: self, civic and global

Oracy was highlighted as a global education priority by the World Economic Forum in 2017 (McKenna, 2017). In 2019, the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) based in Westminster, UK, launched a national inquiry to understand better the state of oracy education in British schools. Holmes-Henderson was an expert advisor to this group, co-conducted research with the APPG's secretariat, oracy charity Voice 21 and formed a policy partnership for the authorship of the *Speak for Change* Inquiry final report. One example of good oracy practice listed therein describes 'structuring ideas verbally, the choice of vocabulary or use of rhetorical devices or the understanding of audience and use of tonal variation' (Oracy APPG, 2021, p. 6). In the same report, Professor Robin Alexander (University of Cambridge) maintains that 'talk is a fundamental prerequisite for democratic engagement' (Oracy APPG, 2021, p. 24).

The feedback from all three countries supports Alexander's hypothesis: in Scotland, 'rhetoric has the potential to empower students, make them more critically literate, build their confidence' (Holmes-Henderson, 2013, p. 90) and help them come to know and 'value their potential for positive action' (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002, p. 12). Rhetoric can 'give a voice to the traditionally underrepresented and marginalised groups in society thereby improving

equality and inclusion within deliberative democracy' (Holmes-Henderson, 2013, p. 94). Likewise, Slovenian research shows that teachers and students recognise rhetoric and argumentation as curricular areas which positively impact the quality of teaching in all subjects, encourage classroom communication, and improve interpersonal relationships (Žmavc, 2011, pp. 93–95). In Norway, as in ancient Greece, the policies' intentions are that oracy serves as a precondition for 'lifelong learning and for active participation in working and civic life' (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2012, p. 6).

Norwegian curriculum policy builds on *paidea*, conceptualising self-worth as a quality which develops through the accumulation of social respect within learning contexts and civic environments. Thus, students who feel they deserve to be respected and heard by others cultivate respect for themselves and become good listeners who give others respect in return (Johansen, 2019, p. 384; Kaldahl, 2020b). Furthermore, these policies are built on the pedagogical belief that students whose identity has been formed in educational environments where democratic values abound, are more likely to display democratic values in their attitudes and competencies (Stray and Sætra, 2018).

In order to better understand the scope of rhetorical education in the three nations, McLaughlin's conceptualisation of citizenship is useful. McLaughlin (1992, p. 236) identifies that 'much of the ambiguity and tension contained within the concept of citizenship can be roughly mapped in terms of minimal and maximal interpretations of the notion ... identity, virtues, political involvement and social prerequisites. In terms of identity, a minimal interpretation of citizenship centres on the legal status granted to a citizen. A maximal interpretation sees identity manifest itself as the conscious membership of community and a shared commitment to democratic culture. In this sense, identity 'is dynamic rather than static in that it is seen as a matter for continuing debate and redefinition' (McLaughlin 1992, p. 236). The virtues required by a citizen within a minimal conception are primarily local and immediate in character. This might involve helping others through the demonstration of public-spiritedness, for example, by participating in a neighbourhood watch initiative.

Interpreted maximally, the citizen has a responsibility to seek social justice for all. In a minimal interpretation of citizenship, political involvement extends only to the exercise of individual voting rights whereas the maximal interpretation requires full participation in democracy. Social prerequisites concern the extent to which citizenship is seen as an 'egalitarian status in terms of theory and intention' (McLaughlin 1992, p. 237) in which case a minimal interpretation is content that citizenship is granted and a maximal one is

concerned that social disadvantages of various kinds must be considered if that status is to be achieved 'in any real and meaningful sense' (McLaughlin 1992, p. 237). In the ancient past, proficiency in rhetoric was inextricably linked to active and participatory conceptions of citizenship; in the modern world, both curriculum standards and the realities of a media-driven culture mean there is an intractable connection between proficiency in self-expression and preparation for active involvement in one's own community, be it face-to-face or digitally. As Robinson highlights, 'everything we communicate via the internet is potentially part of a global conversation' (Robinson, 2016, p. 101).

Millard and Menzies note that 'in their systematic review of studies on citizenship education, Deakin Crick et al. (2004) suggest that skills such as negotiating, constructing arguments, debating, and listening to, and building on, the ideas of others play a fundamental role in citizenship education and, therefore, in teaching young people how to be active citizens' (2016, p. 34). Moreover, 'Andrews (1994) goes further by suggesting that democracy can function only if young people learn to argue effectively. Pupil interviewees recognised oracy-based activities' role in empowering them, arguing that such activities enhanced their ability to engage with each other and collectively build upon ideas. They also highlighted the social benefits of oracy and suggested that it forms the basis of their ability to challenge stereotypes and engage with new or different opinions' (Millard and Menzies, 2016, p. 35).

Citizenship education in Scotland, Slovenia and Norway

As already outlined, one of the four capacities at the core of Scotland's CfE is 'responsible citizenship'. Learners are expected to 'develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it; understand different beliefs and cultures; make informed choices and decisions; evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues; develop informed, ethical views of complex issues' (Education Scotland, 2009). Additionally, they should develop a 'commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life' (Education Scotland, 2009). Participation comes from confidence, not only by building knowledge but also by practising self-expression.

Within the current curriculum framework, all Scottish teachers are required to educate 'effective communicators' and 'responsible citizens'. But teachers of classical languages bring a unique

perspective to this task. By teaching rhetoric via Latin, one teacher reflected that 'it equips students with heightened awareness of the impact of subliminal and non-verbal techniques (for example, hand gestures, voice variation and speaker to audience eye contact) used to persuade' (Holmes-Henderson, 2013, p. 69). These non-verbal signals are essential features of communication and require an additional layer of critical literacy. Furthermore, introducing debate into the classroom has, as one student described, developed skills that 'have been transferable to all aspects of learning. The ability to not only structure an argument and to follow through with analysis, but moreover to be able to stand up in front of a class or an audience or a room full of people and present a logical and informed argument has opened up so many opportunities for me' (Douglas Academy student, Education Scotland National Improvement Hub, 2021).

Practising oracy therefore encourages participation in debates and ensures that pupils' views can be voiced and heard and their arguments developed, moving them closer towards political literacy which, in turn, is central to citizenship education for all Scottish students.

Teachers of rhetoric, whether in Latin or in English, are not just teaching diverse viewpoints and difficult notions but they are equipping learners with the competencies to talk about challenging issues, deepening their engagement with the world around them and reflecting on their own beliefs and values. In such a maximal interpretation of citizenship education, school classrooms become the site of democratic deliberation between diversely positioned future-citizens, facilitated by critical argumentation, narrative imagination and emotional engagement. Oracy provides the speech and listening training but rhetoric provides the critical and civic skills (Holmes-Henderson, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2020; Holmes-Henderson and Tempest, 2018).

Civic/citizenship education has been taught in Slovenian primary and secondary schools for more than 20 years as a compulsory subject, an elective subject and via cross-curricular projects. The subject's aims follow the general European agenda, which emphasises 'the need to help students develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in four broad competence areas: (1) interacting effectively and constructively with others; (2) thinking critically; (3) acting in a socially responsible manner; and (4) acting democratically' (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017, p. 9). What seems to be missing in the European curriculum policy ambition is the explicit 'linguistic dimension' of these four competence areas. Such a dimension would include developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values in the context of persuasive and eloquent speaking. The new Slovenian model of rhetorical lessons is designed to bridge this gap in understanding

the role of language in the context of citizenship education. In this regard, Slovenian citizenship education at the curriculum level incorporates classical rhetoric as an essential part of the neo-humanist ideal of liberal education (e.g. Dainville and Sans, 2016; Danisch, 2015; Ferry, 2017; Kock and Villadsen, 2012, 2017; Miller, 2007; Rutten and Soetaert, 2013). The concept of rhetorical education creating active citizens with a range of specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that support their participation in 21st century public life is underpinned by conceptualisations of citizenship education that warn against instrumentalised ways of teaching a particular kind of citizenship (i.e. being a “good citizen”). They also call for a more contextualised approach to the ‘different ways in which young people actually learn democratic citizenship’ (Biesta and Lawy, 2006, p. 75) to be able to critically examine all forms of social and political life. The Slovenian model places the Humanities at the centre of educating students to become competent, critical, empathetic and democratic citizens (Nussbaum, 2010).

Citizenship education in the Norwegian curriculum is framed around *paideia*, which is accomplished through the introduction of key competencies in the curriculum in 2006 (Berge, 2007), and later in the 2020 revised curriculum by highlighting democracy and citizenship, public health and life skills, to stimulate creative and critical innovation and sustainable change and development in the world. Students are expected to create good arguments, deconstruct arguments and detect persuasive influence through critical thinking, thereby becoming critical citizens with agency. Teachers’ mandates are to assist in each student’s personal development as well as to enable them to become global citizens who will flourish as skilled and thoughtful workers.

Context 1: Scotland

In 2011, the Scottish Government sketched a vision of the skills vital for all learners to cultivate, focusing upon ‘the development of critical and creative thinking as well as competence in listening and talking, reading, writing and the personal, interpersonal and team-working skills which are so important in life and in the world of work’ (Education Scotland, 2011, p. 1). The latter point is particularly important since good communication skills consistently rank among qualities most valued in candidates by surveys of graduate employers (Bright Network Research Report, 2018, p. 5). In the Graduate Management Admission Council Corporate Recruiters Survey (2017), of the five top-ranked specific skills, four were communicative: oral communication, listening skills,

written communication, and presentation skills. As the Association for All Speech Impaired Children (UK) highlighted in their submission to the Oracy APPG Inquiry, ‘a lack of oracy skills ... means fewer employment opportunities and worse prospects’ (2019, p. 3).

There is an especial need for CfE to support progression into work since more than 25% of Scotland’s children are officially recognised as living in poverty, a figure likely to increase to 38% by 2030/31 (Scottish Government, 2018). Since CfE’s introduction, two developments have helped bridge the gap between policy ambition and employer needs. Firstly, new National Qualifications were introduced in 2013/14 in which listening and talking were assessed as part of the overall courses for Literacy and English. From 2017/18, as part of an effort to reduce over-assessment across all National Qualifications, separate internal assessments were removed from the qualifications for Literacy and English and replaced with Performance - a spoken language component. Learners are now assessed either through a spoken presentation or their performance within a class group discussion. These are marked internally on a pass/fail basis and schools’ assessment approaches are verified by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (Education Scotland, 2019, §27).

Speaking and listening have equal status to reading and writing in CfE. A striking percentage of Scottish teachers (78%), a far higher proportion than in the East of England (59%) or London (59%), believe that ‘oracy particularly benefits pupils with low prior attainment’, as well as those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Millard and Menzies, 2019, p. 41). Evidence from Education Scotland to the Oracy APPG Inquiry stated that: ‘successful learners use communication skills and are able to learn as part of a group, as well as independently; confident individuals are able to relate to others and communicate their beliefs and view of the world, ... and effective contributors are able to communicate in different ways in different settings and work well in partnership or in teams’ (Education Scotland, 2019, §10).

Oracy is ‘central to improving health and wellbeing outcomes and in terms of managing and resolving conflict ... the use of language to self regulate, to improve thinking and learning and therefore attainment and engagement in learning and employability skills.’ (Nicola McDonald, 2019, Dundee City Council, evidence to the APPG Inquiry).

The Dundee Improvement Project, part of The Scottish Attainment Challenge, chose oracy as its focus in 2017 and undertook a 2-year partnership with the national oracy charity Voice 21. The project

successfully improved teacher pedagogy, developed oracy in the classroom and raised attainment in speaking and listening, increasing confidence in students and creating progression pathways for listening and talking across all age levels. The Partnership Schools Programme focused on learning to talk and learning through talk, developing a consistent approach to discussion using cross-curricular guidelines and the Oracy Skills Framework (Voice 21 and University of Cambridge, 2018) to support presentational talk and group interviews for school leavers. The project also investigated the impact on pupil engagement of a pedagogical focus on speaking and listening.

Attainment data showed an improving trend over 4 years for children in primary schools; there is more work to be done in secondary schools. Holmes-Henderson suggests that, for optimal results, oracy education ought to be taught within a wider rhetorical framework. A key problem in Scotland, however, is that rhetoric is currently only taught formally via Latin, and Latin is not widely available on the curriculum. Examples from England where teachers have integrated rhetoric into their teaching of persuasive writing and speeches (see English Speaking Union and Voice 21, 2016; Hazell, 2020; Howard, 2020) underscore the benefit of allowing teachers flexibility to build oracy in their classrooms via a range of approaches. There are rich opportunities for experts, charities, Education Scotland, subject associations and the Royal Society of Edinburgh to collaborate on a package of rhetoric training and resources for Scottish teachers and students, linked to the experiences and outcomes of CfE.

Context 2: Slovenia

At the Educational Research Institute (ERI) in Ljubljana, extensive research into the theory and pedagogy of rhetoric and argumentation has been conducted since 2000. Because the majority of teachers had no previous knowledge about rhetoric and its pedagogy, Žagar and Žmavc developed an initial 20-hour programme of in-service training containing a combination of lectures with the main topics from theories of classical rhetoric, as well as workshops to apply this new knowledge to classroom practice. The training was organised as a three-day seminar and successfully continued until 2007 (with nearly 200 teachers trained) when public funding ceased. Since 2000, the number of primary schools in Slovenia with rhetoric as a subject has varied. In the last 7 years, the number of primary schools providing rhetoric lessons has remained encouragingly consistent (between 60 and 70), despite

strong competition in the group of elective subjects (including sports).

In 2018, encouraged by the third National Curricular Reform, ERI started a 3-year project *Developing theoretical bases and practical guidelines for teaching rhetoric in primary and secondary schools* to demonstrate the potential of teaching rhetoric in primary school as a source of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are essential for modern citizenship education. The project was funded by the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport with the following goals: (1) analyse the learning and teaching of rhetoric in primary and secondary schools via feedback from teachers and observation of their classroom practices; (2) design new models for teaching rhetoric as a cross-curricular topic with emphasis on active citizenship education; (3) provide a series of new in-service training with professional support for teachers.

We present here only the results relevant to the scope of this article. The 1999 subject-curriculum (Žagar et al., 1999) was designed for a 32-hour annual course on rhetoric (1 hour per week). The general aim of the course was to introduce the main concepts of classical rhetoric and argumentation and to teach students how to independently, coherently, and critically form and orally present their opinions on a range of topics (some personal, others socio-political). A thorough analysis of the learning goals, contents, standards, together with the results of the panel discussion of experts revealed that the 1999 rhetoric curriculum was too demanding.²

Three issues that were discussed had a significant influence on the development of the new model:

- 1 The only section of the course which all teachers and pupils completed as intended was the oral presentation
- 2 Many teachers admitted that they struggled to comprehend all the rhetorical subject matter so omitted the more complex objectives and topics. The intricacies of argumentation were highlighted as particularly problematic and teachers requested supporting guidance.
- 3 Rhetoric was not recognised as a cross-curricular topic, integral to school culture that promoted diversity of speakers and ideas. It did not connect students and teachers in active engagement.

Based on contemporary directions for curriculum design that emphasise a process-based approach while promoting the value of learning content (Jank and

²In December 2018, a panel of 20 experienced teachers of rhetoric in primary school answered a three-part questionnaire about their success in achieving learning objectives, implementing and organising lessons, and discussed their practice as part of the curriculum review process.

Meyer, 2006; Klafki, 2010; Štefanc, 2012), the following innovations were developed:

- a A clearly defined goal for rhetorical education in primary school, focused on the preparation and performance of speech, grounded in the theories of rhetoric, argumentation and non-verbal communication.
- b Adaptation of content that reflected the process-oriented idea of rhetoric with a systematic and gradual approach to learning rhetorical principles including new learning objectives and topics that encouraged pupils' motivation, and which built on their previous experience in speaking, the dynamics of the school year, and pupils' interests during rhetoric lessons.
- c Special attention was paid to auditory and visual elements of speech and performance.
- d Design of a final 5-hour module (i.e. *Rhetoric and active citizenship*) with objectives which linked directly to other subjects and/or school and local activities. Pupils could choose where and how they applied rhetorical principles. By enabling their active participation in different public contexts at the end of the course, the importance of responding critically to current social phenomena was prioritised.

The draft of the revised subject curriculum was presented in March 2019 at a two-day teacher in-service training to (approximately) the same group of teachers who attended the 2018 December panel. The new concept of the process-oriented model of teaching rhetoric and the practical information about its implementation were very well-received. The official version of the subject curriculum (Žmavc et al., 2019) was formally approved by the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in November 2019 and implementation began in September 2020. Since then, Žmavc has provided in-service training for teachers (at the time of writing, 50 teachers have been trained), where a comprehensive presentation of the new subject curriculum has been accompanied by workshops addressing new knowledge in the field of rhetorical pedagogy, argumentation, non-verbal communication and curricular planning.

Context 3: Norway

Norwegian teachers have taught and assessed oracy since 1883 (Aksnes, 2016), but it only became one of the five key competencies in the Norwegian curriculum in the Promotion of Knowledge Curriculum in 2006 (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006), joining reading, writing, numeracy and ICT. National tests were introduced with the curriculum in 2006, but students' oracy is not tested and measured

in these tests; in the National Quality Assessment System (NKVS), oracy is completely overlooked (Berge, 2022).³ However, teachers are still expected to arrange oral exams, (which usually include a prepared presentation) and give separate oral grades in some subjects, for example, L1 (a speaker's first language). Norwegian National Research Centres with research on all key competencies except for oracy were established (Berge, 2007), thus there has been no systematic approach to researching oracy in Norway. This is one of the reasons why Norway has not yet developed assessment criteria based on pre-existing norms for assessing what constitutes good quality oracy; in other words, good oral quality indicators are lacking (Kaldahl, 2020b, 2022).

At the same time, teachers have lacked the same access to courses and education in oracy compared to the other key competencies (Berge, 2007, 2022; Kaldahl, 2020b, 2022). Whilst all teachers were formerly responsible for teaching and assessing oracy, after curriculum revision in 2020, L1-Norwegian teachers have been given the main responsibility for oracy. Oral exams are high stakes examinations, which take place locally and have traditionally been an assessed conversation (Berge, 2022; Kaldahl, 2019). The results are based on holistic impressions; teachers say that they have an unclear understanding of what standard they should expect (Kaldahl, 2020b, p. 78). Hence, by placing the onus of oral assessment on individual teachers, students are subjected to a poorly defined and moderated system, the results of which have consequences for their admission to further education and vocational pathways.

Kaldahl's field-based empirical research with approximately 500 teachers of tenth-grade students (aged 15–16) exposes variation in teachers' assessment on the quality of oracy in seven different school subjects on the high stakes oral exams, but also within the same subject, which is likely to have consequences for students when applying for admission to high schools.⁴ When asking the students of these teachers about the conceptualisation, teaching and assessment of oracy, the results indicate that students rely on experience or common knowledge of oracy rather than their exposure to systematic teaching of oracy (Kaldahl, 2020a). This issue must be addressed in teacher education and professional development (Kaldahl, 2020b),

³The NKVS has not been revised since 2003. To better support teachers in the teaching and assessment of oracy, it would have been favourable if the NKVS had been revised at the same time as the curriculum reforms in 2006 and 2020.

⁴In Norway, summative oral exams are mandatory in several subjects at the end of junior high school and determine the GPA and the high school to which students then progress. Similarly, oral exams at high school determine GPA and university destinations, and at university level, many subjects are tested by oral examinations.

especially since oracy and rhetoric have become even more central to the fulfilment of *paideia* in the revised curriculum with oral presentations, argumentation, critical thinking, ‘life mastery skills’, and rhetoric all explicitly mentioned in the curriculum. The presentation of rhetoric in the textbooks which support the Norwegian curriculum is a basic form of critical text analysis relying heavily on persuasive techniques to analyse commercials or texts (Bakken, 2019). Despite the rhetorical renaissance in the curriculum, very few teachers feel confident enough in their own subject knowledge to teach rhetoric. Policy intentions are simply not borne out in practice: research demonstrates that oracy and rhetoric are prioritised in neither school nor in teacher education (Kaldahl, 2020b, 2022).

It is unsurprising, then, that Norwegian teachers need explicit training in rhetoric and the assessment of oracy. By doing so, teachers will be better equipped to teach and assess oracy across the curriculum as well as in their subject discipline. This focus on oracy has the potential to positively impact school culture. The new guidelines for teacher education in Norway now require a Master’s degree and Kaldahl has made recommendations for a Master’s programme in oracy and rhetoric to amplify an oracy culture in schools (Kaldahl, 2020b, 2022). If such a course is not possible, teachers must be able to access modules within their Master’s degree which provide adequate subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise on oracy and rhetoric.

Kaldahl’s (2020b) research suggests that systematic oracy education with a rhetorical foundation not only gives students confidence to perform speeches but generates *paideia*. In doing so, it lays the groundwork for rhetorical agency and full participation in a democracy for students from all cross-sections of society.

What scope is there for linguistic and cultural diversity within the rhetorical framework?

Ancient concepts and models of rhetorical education remind us that developing the ability to speak well is a complex, long-term process. It is realised gradually and formed by developing speaking and listening, as well as growing ethical awareness, knowledge and appreciation of literature, art and history. To practise the art of classical rhetoric requires ‘developing the humane knowledge needed to understand one’s self and others as social, political, and cultural beings. Along with self-knowledge comes the knowledge of how to live – practical wisdom’ (Miller, 2007, p. 196). In the context of today’s global, multilingual and multicultural societies, knowledge of how to live well with

each other provides new ways for thinking and talking about diversity and [in]equality.

Therefore, modern oracy education should be seen as a means of creating and nurturing 21st century citizen-orators who have extensive rhetorical skills. Modern training that follows these two ideas should build on ancient models of rhetorical instruction but needs to go further by integrating global and cross-cultural perspectives with digital technologies as important features of democratic education for teachers and learners. This requires a reconceptualisation of classical rhetorical theory and the consideration of new developments in post-classical rhetorics, modern theories of argumentation, literary criticism as well as multilingualism and multimodalities.

As a result, the pedagogical process in all three countries is moving away from just ‘winning’ the argument to ‘doing’ democracy. Learners of different ages increasingly practise engaging with each other not only critically, but also with empathy. Contributors to the Oracy APPG Inquiry highlighted oracy’s role in: ‘strengthening democratic participation and political literacy; helping young people negotiate difficult conversations and empathise with alternative perspectives; and empowering young people to advocate for themselves’ (Oracy APPG, 2021, p. 24).

In the Norwegian curriculum links can be drawn between *paideia* and health and life competencies (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2019); Kaldahl (2020b) suggests that rhetoric is key to this link. As a tool for communicating feelings and voicing opinions, rhetoric enhances one’s ability to express emotions and develop healthy relationships. She advocates that language is a means of communication, while rhetorical awareness is about the choice and arrangement of words to persuade or affect the audience (Kaldahl, 2020b, pp. 93–95). This links to boundary-setting and respecting the boundaries of others which can be tied to the health and life competencies in the latest curriculum (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). Once students have the framework around which to build their argument, they can question the existing norms and effect positive change.

Kaldahl’s (2020a, 2022) research has suggested that teaching rhetoric in Norwegian schools narrows the disadvantage gap between students from different socio-economic populations. Rhetorical awareness in students and teachers seems to be key to create a better classroom environment, discourage bullying, and counteract negative forces such as xenophobia (Kaldahl, 2020b). But the school is the site for oracy learning, as was revealed by an interview with one Polish immigrant student in Kaldahl’s study: ‘I cannot practise oracy in front of my parents, since they are from Poland. They do not speak Norwegian, and I do

not get much help from them with homework. I usually practise on my own or in front of a classmate' (Kaldahl, 2020a, p. 202). Even among Norwegian-speaking interviewees, there was a feeling that, for some, oracy is learned and practised at school, not at home: 'if you do not come from a family where good oracy or conversations are in focus, then you do not know how to express yourself correctly in other contexts either' (Kaldahl, 2020a, p. 203). Rhetorical awareness includes knowledge of how language and power are interconnected and how to use different types of language, 'which provides power to some and for others power is taken away' (Kaldahl, 2020b, p. 94). The onus is on Norwegian teachers to ensure that rhetoric is used to 'level up' and amplify the voice of underrepresented members of the community.

Conclusion

Of the three nations discussed in this article, Slovenia has the most thoughtful and considered policy for rhetoric in contemporary education. In Norway, Kaldahl's research suggests that teaching oracy and rhetoric in school is the curricular vehicle to *paideia*, but the planning and implementation of teacher training and assessment frameworks have been insufficiently planned. Scotland's curricular conditions are conducive to a resurgence of rhetoric but the lack of explicit reference to rhetoric except in the Latin curriculum means that a great deal of advocacy is required at grassroots level to influence what is taught in classrooms.⁵

We make the following key recommendations for future work in this area:

- 1 The main priority in all three nations is teacher training. No expansion of rhetoric is possible in schools until teachers feel confident teaching the concepts and pedagogies of rhetoric. We are committed to further collaboration which develops a flexible teacher training model to 'upskill' professional educators in rhetoric. It is hoped that this model, which links rhetoric to oracy and citizenship, will be suitable for use internationally, in multiple policy environments.
- 2 Slovenia: More thoughtful curricular intersections between oracy and citizenship education are required, which promote student and teachers' linguistic awareness (Žmavc, 2011).

- 3 Norway: Firstly, in order to avoid negative washback effects on the curriculum, the prepared presentation part of the oral exam must be retained. By keeping the prepared presentation, teachers and students will be guided towards fulfilling the educational goals of the curriculum. Secondly, there is a need to explore Norwegian teachers' understanding of good-quality oracy in education and thereby build a more functional and sustainable age-specific oracy framework using teachers' experience-based knowledge. Thirdly, to improve the likelihood of the curriculum's intentions being implemented in practice, courses need to be developed to improve teachers' knowledge of oracy and rhetoric and to offer specific training in formative and summative assessment of oracy. Only by doing so will teachers' abilities to teach and assess oracy across the curriculum, as well as in their subject discipline, be strengthened (Kaldahl, 2022).
- 4 Scotland: Collaboration is vital, at national strategic level, between teachers of Classics (who teach rhetoric in Latin) and teachers of English, supported by subject associations, the General Teaching Council for Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and Education Scotland.

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⁵Latin is currently studied by around 1% of students aged 14–18 in Scotland (Imrie, 2019). Efforts are underway to expand access to Latin for younger learners, funded by charitable organisations, but these initiatives prioritise Latin language, etymology, literature and historical study, over rhetoric.

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