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# UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL IN NORWAY: DISCOURSES ABOUT DROPOUT IN WHITE PAPERS

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## **Abstract**

*This article investigates how two White Papers from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, one from 1999 and one from 2017, articulate the concept of dropout. Bauman's concepts of strangers (Bauman, 1997) and retrotopia (Bauman, 2017) are used as a backdrop to support a broader understanding of the white papers' discourses. The article seeks to answer the following question: How has the concept of dropout been discursively articulated in political documents in Norway over two decades?*

## **Keywords**

*White papers, upper secondary school, early school leaving, dropout, discourse analysis*

## Introduction

The European Commission's (n.d.) *Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020* addresses common challenges among the EU nations within the educational field. It also provides a platform for cooperation and sharing best practices as well as working towards mutual goals for EU education policies. It is argued that upper secondary school education is the minimum level of education needed to find work that provides sufficient income and to participate fully in society (European Commission, 2017, p. 56). One of the benchmarks for education in the EU's 2020 strategy is that the number of early school leavers aged 18 to 24 should be below 10%. This goal is within reach as the EU average rate was 10.7% in 2017, an achievement considered a "remarkable success" (European Commission, 2017, p. 57).

Norway has also exhibited a positive trend in terms of the number of students who complete upper secondary school within five years, increasing this metric from 70% for students who began upper secondary school in 1994 (Statistics Norway, 2004) to 74.5% for students who began in 2012 (Statistics Norway, 2018). Nevertheless, these numbers indicate that Norway has a higher number of early school leavers than the average for EU member countries. Traditionally, and still, the educational system in Norway is built on the principle of *felleskolen* or *enhetsskolen* (Tjeldvoll, 2009), which has been translated as "the comprehensive school" by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (n.d.). The comprehensive school is a school for all students, embracing their diverse backgrounds and abilities. Furthermore, the principle of "adapted education within the community of students is a basic premise of the comprehensive school for all" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, n.d.). Considering that these points are basic visions for the Norwegian educational system, it is puzzling that more than one-fourth of Norwegian upper secondary school students are school leavers and do not complete their education within five years.

In Norway, the 3 years of upper secondary education are not obligatory, but all young people have the right to attend upper secondary school after fulfilling their 10 years of primary school. Therefore, most 16-year-olds continue school. When applying for upper secondary school, students must choose between a three-year academic course of study and a vocational course of study. The vocational path consists of either two years at school plus two years of apprenticeship or two years in their chosen vocational path plus one year of academic studies, which may qualify them for higher education. All students who quit school before completing their educational course of study are considered early school leavers.

One way to better understand the notions which politicians express about education is to study their policy documents. This article explores two

Norwegian white papers that address upper secondary school education. It is valuable to gain insight into white papers as their content influences school documents and frameworks. Thus, this analysis contributes to a better understanding of educational practice.

Though Norwegian white papers do not use the term “early school leaver/leaving,” the action of leaving school before completing the upper secondary level is referred to as (when translated into English) *dropout*. Therefore, this article analyses Norwegian white papers’ focus on school dropout, with Norwegian terms as the focal point. The two examined white papers were written 18 years apart from one another, and analysing them tells us something about how dropout has been conceptualized across two different decades.

It is important to understand white papers’ discourses to identify how certain concepts are created and recreated at certain times, which leads to an understanding of the context in which the concepts are articulated. I find two of Bauman’s (1997, 2017) concepts helpful in adding to my comprehension of the discourses in their given context. Bauman is preoccupied with changing society and, furthermore, what these changes do to social structures and individual relations. Thus, his concepts create a backdrop that helps me connect the white papers’ discursive construction of the concept of dropout to society. This article aims to answer the following question: How has the concept of dropout been discursively articulated in political documents in Norway over two decades?

### **Theoretical framework**

To analyse discourses about dropout in Norwegian white papers, I have chosen two white papers from two different decades. I use discourse analysis as both a theory and a method. I view discourse analysis in this dual light because it theoretically introduces some principles that are important when conducting a discourse analysis, such as the *role of language* (Cruikshank, 2012) and the *context* (Villadsen, 2017). To create a better understanding of the latter, I incorporate concepts introduced by Bauman. Bauman’s writing about societal changes and development allow me to better understand the shifts in the world around me, adding to my understanding of the constructed discourses in the white papers.

#### *White papers as discourses*

A white paper is a report from the political leader of a government that is presented to the parliament. The report includes plans from different fields, such as education. Some, particularly those concerning international affairs, are annual reports, while others are presented on an irregular basis to create a backdrop for discussions in parliament, such as before preparing suggestions

for reforms and new laws (Gisle, 2016). White papers are political documents, and their political focus not only shifts with changes in political parties, but is also influenced by other changes in society. These factors impact each white paper's focus and the formulations and discussion of different terms.

As white papers concerning education instruct the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, traces from the white papers can be found in different national documents concerning education and training, such as the national curriculum and framework for education (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). Some white papers concerning the field of education focus on the system as a whole, from kindergarten through to adult and lifelong education. Others focus on certain stages of education, such as upper secondary school. The white papers are numbered across departments and topics, starting at 1 for each new session of parliament. This means that, within one political department, older white papers often have higher numbers than newer ones because of the system of consecutive numbering. This applies for the white papers in this article, where the older one has the higher number.

Many research studies on dropout refer to white papers (see, for instance, Blossing, Imsen, & Moos, 2014; Markussen, 2010), but only to a single or few reports that exemplify or argue a certain point. To my knowledge, no other study has compared white papers, analysed discourses, and examined a particular topic and how this topic has been formulated in reports over a time span of a number of years.

Inspired by Ahl (2004), the reading of the white papers is done from a social constructionist perspective, which implies that "language is seen as constitutive of social reality" (p. 72). The two white papers examined in this article reflect certain ideas about one aspect within the educational system, a part of the experienced social reality. Ahl (2004, p. 203) lists five different text analysis techniques, which I drew on to determine the type of analysis to use in my work on the white papers to address the question raised in the introduction. Inspired by Foucault (1972), discourses are constructed by statements and make fields of "truth" inside, for example, education. Discourses will, therefore, reveal what is right/wrong, accepted/not accepted, and included/excluded in the educational field. The white papers' frequency of word use and use of the same terms in diverse contexts show what politicians define as focal points and consider most important for ongoing and future policy within the educational field.

The "field of a discourse study is society as it occurs in language" (Cruikshank, 2012, p. 40). Thus, language not only reveals what we know about the field but actually "brings reality into existence" (Cruikshank, 2012, p. 40). This helps us to understand how to unpack discourses. Cruikshank (2012) established that discourse analysis positions language as having a "basic and primary role

in the making of society” (p. 40). This provides an entrance point to investigate how the concept of dropout is constructed from reading the two white papers. The texts are part of the context that reflects how society understands dropout; thus, they show how this concept is conceptualized in society.

A total of eight white papers addressing upper secondary school, including some examining the concept of dropout, were published between 1999 and 2017. In this article, I have chosen to analyse two of these: one published in 1999 and one published in 2017. Why did I choose these two white papers? The topic of dropout was first mentioned in a Norwegian Official Report in 1991 (Blegen, 1991). This official report was followed by the new national curriculum in 1994, called Reform '94. White paper no. 32 (1998–99), *Videregående opplæring* [Upper secondary school], was the first white paper to be published after Reform '94 and also the first white paper to examine dropout as a topic. Therefore, the white paper from 1999 is appropriate for this analysis. My other choice was a white paper from 2017, white paper no. 21 (2016–2017), *Lærebyst—tidlig innsats og kvalitet i skolen* [Lust to learn—Early effort and quality in school]. This paper is the most recent to formulate policies about upper secondary school.

By selecting these two white papers, the study focuses on white papers that mark the first inclusion of the term dropout in relation to upper secondary school and the most recent inclusion of this subject in white papers. Thus, this choice of papers creates an opportunity to analyse discourses concerning dropout in education policy over 18 years.

*Backdrop: Two of Bauman's concepts—strangers and retrotopia*

Zygmunt Bauman's (2012) writing about society in the post-modern era, what he calls the era of liquid modernity, creates a backdrop for discussing the white papers in a broader sense. In addition to using discourse analysis to examine the white papers themselves, I will try to understand the contents of the texts using two of Bauman's terms. This may add new elements to the discussion. Exploring the white papers' discourses on dropout in connection to Bauman's (1997, 2017) terms *strangers* and *retrotopia* creates an opportunity to present an understanding of discourse analyses in line with Cruickshank's (2012) idea of linking discourse analysis to what goes on in society.

I argue that, in his writing, Bauman comments on contemporary society; thus, I have made use of terms to which he refers that align with the publication of the white papers. The term *strangers* (Bauman, 1997, p. 17) is used to describe individuals who do not fit regular societal patterns. Those who cross the boundary of what is expected and disobey set lines “turn into strangers” (Bauman, 1997, p. 17). Bauman (1997, p. 34) connects the notion of *strangers* to globalization and migration and their effects on nation states, such as polarization and exclusion. Though Bauman's term *strangers* refers

to people on the margins of a society characterized by certain expectations that they are unable to follow or live up to, the term may also be useful in a discussion about how white papers describe the topic of school dropout. As stressed by the European Commission (2015), upper secondary school dropout “leads to reduced employment opportunities and increased likelihood of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion” (p. 6). For many, social exclusion may be experienced as feeling like a stranger outside of one’s own community.

Bauman’s (2017) second term is *retrotopia*, which is also the title of one of his last works. Bauman (2017) defines *retrotopia* as “visions located in the lost/stolen/abandoned but undead past” (p. 5) that are sought to reestablish stability and trustworthiness by replacing the post-modern idea of progress and individuality. There is a need for people to view one another with mutual respect and to grant one another equality of status (Bauman, 2017, p. 166) as a starting point for dialogue. This creates an opportunity for brighter futures as “[m]ore than at any other time, we—human inhabitants of the Earth—are in the either/or situation: we face joining either hands, or common graves” (Bauman, 2017, p. 167). Though this is a rather dystopic statement about the current situation and what the future holds, it is useful for shedding light on contemporary society.

## Methods

### *Discourse analysis*

Discourse means that the language we use is structured in different ways according to the situations in which we find ourselves, or, more specifically, “a discourse [is] a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002, p. 1). Discourse analyses connect language with specific contexts in given historical settings (Villadsen, 2017). Statements, formulations, words, and uses of terms, whether in talk or text, affect how we describe and create our lives and what we “believe in.” Furthermore, all are formed by our historical and cultural setting, which shapes how we understand the world (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). In this study, this means that the content of the white papers must be read and analysed in relation to the settings in which they were produced.

Moreover, discourse analysis includes consideration of the role that language plays on the making of society. In this article, this refers to how the formulations in the white papers about upper secondary school have informed and shaped society in the educational field. Additionally, it is important to consider the historical context of when language is produced and how it forms the very discourse production. The two white papers were produced 18 years apart and differ simply because they were written in different historical settings (Villadsen, 2017).

I read and analysed the documents with the aim of highlighting how they raise the issue of dropout from, and completion of, upper secondary school. Both documents discuss many factors affecting education. The first paper is concerned solely with upper secondary school, as it reports on Reform '94, while the most recent deals with the entirety of education from kindergarten through upper secondary school (K–13), focusing only partially on upper secondary school dropout. Furthermore, the first white paper describes the state or, more specifically, the results of the reform, while the second analyses the situation it describes and suggests how it may be resolved. Thus, the papers take two different approaches to discursive constructions of the concept of dropout, which I will elaborate further in the discussion below.

*The analysis—Step by step*

Initially, I searched the two white papers for the word dropout, as the English term is sometimes used in Norwegian language. I also searched for the words *frafall* (dropout in Norwegian) and *bortvalg* (quitting by choice). All of these terms are used in Norway for the same phenomenon. Eriksen (2010) and Markussen (2009) use the term *bortvalg* to express that young people who quit school make the decision themselves, thus pursuing an action which empowers them. Therefore, it is interesting to see whether both of these terms were mentioned in the white papers. Furthermore, I searched for the words *fullføre* (to complete/completes) and *fullføring/gjennomstrømming* (completion), as these words are commonly used in connection to comments or debates about dropout.<sup>1</sup> Following the initial word search, I considered as significant the number of times a certain term was mentioned. If the term dropout (in its different variations) was used numerous times in one white paper and zero times in another, the first white paper may have had a greater focus on dropout than the other, based merely on the frequency of word usage.

Following this first step, I moved on from the word count to an in-depth reading to explore how the topic of interest was contextualized in the two white papers. To examine how the dropout discourses were articulated, it was necessary to look at the language itself, including the word choices and how these choices created various representations and understandings of the topic (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). Specifically, I investigated when dropout was mentioned explicitly or implicitly, conducting repeated readings and noting the terms to which the concept was connected as well as checking for patterns when the terms were referenced or repeated.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Statistics Norway. (2018). Completion rates of pupils in upper secondary education. Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.



## Findings and discussion of findings

### *A holistic reading of the papers*

As indicated by the titles, *Videregående opplæring* [Upper secondary school] and *Lærelyst—tidlig innsats og kvalitet i skolen* [Lust to learn—Early effort and quality in school], the two white papers have different aims and perspectives. Nevertheless, they both refer to upper secondary school dropout or completion rates to largely the same extent. Though the texts differ significantly in size—the first having 260 pages and the second 110 pages—they reference the terms of interest approximately the same number of times.

The 1999 white paper includes the English word dropout or the verb to drop out zero times, while the 2017 white paper mentions the verb once. Neither white paper uses the term *bortvalg* (quitting by choice), the term often preferred by researchers (Eriksen, 2010; Markussen, 2009). However, the Norwegian term *frafall* (dropout) is used 11 times in the white paper from 1999 and 10 times in the one from 2017. The term *fullføre* (to complete/completes) is used 45 times in the first white paper and 22 in the white paper from 2017. Finally, the last term, *fullføring/gjennomstrømming* (completion), is used 53 times in the white paper from 1999 and 2 times in the most recent white paper. Why is the word count significant? In sum, it shows the frequency of use of various terms related to upper secondary school dropout, including dropout, complete, and completion. This, again, indicates that both white papers address the topic of school dropout. This suggests that the theme is of enduring interest, even though the papers were written 18 years apart.

However, as mentioned in the Methods section above, word count does not offer a clear picture of how the discourses are revealed. What creates better insight into how these white papers raise the issue of dropout is a summary of each paper, examining how the words create units and themes as the discourses appear.

### *Discourse about Dropout and Reform Enthusiasm*

The older white paper, no. 32 (1998–99) *Videregående opplæring* [Upper secondary school] from 1999, summarizes and assesses the new curriculum, Reform '94, and suggests possible changes to the reform. One chapter of this white paper focuses on upper secondary school completion rates, and it is in this chapter that the terms *frafall* (dropout) and *gjennomstrømming* (completion) are found. I limit the discussion to these two terms, choosing *gjennomstrømming* (completion) because it is mentioned the most times and because it indicates a positive outcome of the reform. Instead of focusing on how many students quit school, this term emphasizes how many students complete school.

The document links the high completion rate to the new reform and the new organization of upper secondary school, including, in particular,

the vocational courses of study. The situation before the reform is described as being negative, particularly for certain vocational paths. The document says that, “the weak completion rate was most vivid in courses of study that led to craft certificates and courses of study with a majority of female students” (White paper no. 32, 1998–99, Section 2.4, my translation). The document also claimed that the reform had been a success, stating that “it is clear that the reform has led to a considerably higher completion rate for the cohorts” (White paper no. 32, 1998–99, Section 2.4, my translation). The white paper includes positive descriptions of the enhanced completion rate for vocational courses of study. This discourse of praising high completion rates may be understood as a tribute to the implementation of Reform ’94.

The same section also shows a change in completion rates before and after Reform ’94 and stresses that completion rates rose as expected after Reform ’94. This is particularly clear for the vocational courses of study, as “three years after the reform, completion rates and progression at vocational courses of study had increased by approximately 100% compared to those before the reform” (White paper no. 32, 1998–99, Section 2.4, my translation). Only 17% of ordinary students with a right to complete upper secondary school within five years were no longer attending school after four years, and “a large portion of this group likely has regular jobs” (White paper no. 32, 1998–99, Section 2.4, my translation).

To summarize, the white paper describes the changes stemming from the reform in positive terms. In addition to the quotes above, other examples include “the total completion is greatly improved” and “the completion rate ... has seen a significant improvement after Reform ’94” was implemented (White paper no. 32, 1998–99, Ch. 2.4, my translation). The discourse presents a positive attitude toward Reform ’94 and its achievements with respect to the increased completion rate. The discourse presents solutions and success through reform. This discourse may be understood as enthusiastic towards the implementation of the reform and the resulting completion rate; therefore, I term it *Discourse about Dropout and Reform Enthusiasm*.

Connecting the Discourse about Dropout and Reform Enthusiasm to Bauman’s term strangers creates an opening to understand the discourse in a larger context in relation to the world in which the discourse occurs. Bauman’s (1997) strangers considers those individuals who “do not fit the cognitive, moral, or aesthetic map of the world” (p. 17). Following Reform ’94, “the number of ... interruptions in students’ education are significantly reduced. This is in line with the objectives of Reform ’94” (White paper no. 32, 1998–99, Section 2.4, my translation). This objective may be understood as an initiative to avoid creating strangers (Bauman, 1997). The shifts initiated via the reform were necessary; otherwise, the changes would have represented a needless use of resources. Increasing completion rates among upper

secondary school students is a way to ensure that they fit the regular pattern of society. By completing an education and not crossing the boundary of societal expectations—that is, not dropping out of school—one does not turn into a stranger (Bauman, 1997, p. 17).

*The Discourse about Dropout and Factors Outside Upper Secondary School*

White paper no. 21 (2016–2017), *Lærelyst—tidlig innsats og kvalitet i skolen* [Lust to learn—Early effort and quality in school], is the most recent white paper concerning general education in Norway. Its focus is on enhancing the quality of education starting in kindergarten, with a special emphasis on basic skills. The verb *to drop out* is used once in the document, in its introduction: “beginning academic difficulties during the first years may grow and become significant when lower secondary school starts. In the worst case, this may lead to students losing their sense of achievement and motivation and dropping out of school” (White paper no. 21, 2016–2017, p. 6, my translation). Thus, dropout is connected to early effort, in the sense that work to prevent dropout must be initiated when students are in their first years. The word *fracfall* (dropout) is used 10 times in this white paper, first also in connection to early efforts. A chapter about kindergarten states that “a good transition [from kindergarten] in which children are included well early in their schooling may reduce dropout (*fracfall*) in upper secondary school” (White paper no. 21, 2016–2017, p. 45, my translation). One understanding may be that the factors that lead to students dropping out of upper secondary school are rooted in early education and have nothing to do with the experienced reality of upper secondary school.

This white paper has one section entitled “Assessment of quality,” and in this section *fracfall* (dropout) is connected to mental health issues:

The reasons that students do not experience academic progress in school may be many and diverse, and mental health issues are an important factor. A total of 42% of the students who do not complete upper secondary school say that the most important reason lies outside of school, and 1/5 of these explain dropout through mental health issues. (White paper no. 21, 2016–2017, p. 52, my translation)

In addition, the section includes a model that may be applied in practice to prevent dropout, the IKO model, which depends on identification, mapping, and follow-up (White paper no. 21, 2016–2017, p. 67, my translation). It also introduces an ongoing project regarding measures that may help schools in their work to reduce the number of dropouts. *Fracfall* (dropout) is mentioned twice more, but these mentions are in connection to school organization and teacher training colleges and so not relevant here. To conclude, this white paper refers to students’ perceptions of dropout as being rooted outside of school.

Gjennomstrømming (completion), which was used frequently in the other white paper, is not used in this second white paper at all. However, the word

fullføre (to complete/completes) is used 22 times. It is often connected to teacher education, a theme outside the present discussion. The paper includes some examples of descriptions of upper secondary school, mostly dealing with school quality. For example, it states:

If all upper secondary schools were as good as the best ones in making students complete school, 80% of pupils would have completed school ... such differences in quality among schools create great consequences for students [...] [R]esearchers find differences among upper secondary schools and how much that means for students to complete school. (White paper no. 21, 2016–2017, pp. 8–9, my translation)

Section 3 explores the quality of compulsory school (my translation), linking fullføre (to complete/completes) to how expensive it is if students do not complete. The section formulates this consideration as follows: “if the number of students who complete upper secondary school increased from 70% to 80%, it would mean a cost savings of between NOK 5.4 and 8.8 billion for each cohort” (White paper no. 21, 2016–2017, p. 16, my translation). As mentioned in the introduction, Norwegian statistics on dropout always refer to the number of students who complete school within five years. This white paper repeats that “if the time of measuring was set to 10 years after starting upper secondary school, statistics would show that the number of students who complete school is about 80%” (White paper no. 21, 2016–2017, p. 22, my translation). Another example of connecting completing school to school quality is the statement that “students’ academic results in compulsory school are strongly connected to how probable it is that they complete upper secondary school” (White paper no. 21, 2016–2017, p. 51, my translation). These quotes emphasize that the quality of primary schools is decisive in completion of upper secondary school and clearly express the economic issues connected to dropout. They present a what if scenario, which I find interesting, as a discursive shift.

Two other examples stress the white paper’s focus on quality. First, “completing school has a number of positive effects on the life chances (*livsjanser*) of children and young people ... services from outside the school should therefore work to increase the probability of students completing their education” (White paper no. 21, 2016–2017, p. 54, my translation). The notion of quality is important in the white paper, and completing school is strongly connected to arguments addressing the quality of primary schools and education as well as personal issues and the quality of services outside of school.

In summary, this white paper presents a discourse in which responsibility for and measures to prevent dropout are largely placed outside the upper secondary school itself. Factors include early efforts to ensure students’ academic level, students’ mental health issues rooted outside school, and the quality of other services that help students. Furthermore, the discourse is dominated by references to what ifs. For instance, if statistics were measured after 10 years, rather than 5, the number of dropouts would have been 10%

lower. Similarly, if 10% fewer students dropped out, it would have saved the Norwegian state billions. This discourse naturally emphasizes the importance of reducing dropout, but it may also negatively impact those who work in upper secondary school and do their best to help students complete school.

Bauman (2017) discusses what the world has become in the 21st century and suggests retrotopia: that we return to the “visions located in the lost/stolen/abandoned but undead past” (p. 5) to regain a stable society based on trust. The insecurity of the post-modern world might affect students, as it is factors in the outside world that may lead to dropout. Bauman (2017) describes our time as “an age of disruptions and discrepancies” (p. 153), as is also reflected in this white paper. Upper secondary school dropout is not described as stemming primarily from issues within this school level. Rather, it is explained by factors outside upper secondary school. The white paper points out the challenges created by upper secondary school dropout, both on a personal level for the students and on a systemic level for the nation’s economy. Part of the challenge for the system, according to Bauman (2017), is its “institutionalized incapacity and instrumental indolence” (p. 154). Since the focus on upper secondary school dropout has lasted two decades in Norway, and the number of dropouts seems to be remaining high, is it possible that the phenomenon must be explained by outside factors that the school does not control? Bauman’s (2017) retrotopia suggests a return to the past. This could imply a return to finding reasons for and looking for solutions to reduce dropout within the upper secondary school.

### **Concluding remarks**

The aim of this paper was to answer the following question: How has the concept of “dropout” been discursively articulated in political documents in Norway over two decades?

Both white papers include aspects of dropout. The theme is important to politicians and therefore a topic of concern. As white papers decide the direction of policies within the educational field, it is interesting to explore these formal reports and try to understand whether or how their content affects education policy.

The discourse has shifted from Discourse about Dropout and Reform Enthusiasm, in which dropout was connected to school-related issues and, more specifically, the reform that changed the structure of the vocational course of study to enhance the completion rate, to one that considers outside issues. Furthermore, the discourse has shifted from a focus on measures put into action in upper secondary school for upper secondary school students to one that argues that completion of upper secondary school depends on measures enacted already from kindergarten.

The analysis shows that there has been a shift in the discourse over the past 18 years. The discourse of the most recent white paper, termed *Discourse about Dropout and Factors Outside Upper Secondary School*, is that the reasons for upper secondary school dropout may be found outside school. Moreover, early efforts and quality are key to increasing the number of students who complete upper secondary school. I find that Bauman's (2017) retrotopia is relevant here. Bauman (2017) defined retrotopia as a return to the past's more stable and trustworthy existence. In the most recent white paper, dropout is discursively articulated as connected to factors outside upper secondary school. I find it easier to debate this understanding of dropout when I support my arguments with help from Bauman. By returning to the past's construction of dropout, we may also find ways to prevent dropout within upper secondary school.

In future, dropout in upper secondary school will continue to be a core concern in education. Completing school is crucial both for students on a personal level and for the state, as school completion helps to create active, working citizens who participate fully in society.

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