



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

National Report of Norway to ICE 48

# All inclusive...?

The development of education







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# ALL INCLUSIVE ... ?

**Inclusive Education in Norway  
- Policy, Practice, Experiences and Challenges**

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

National Report of Norway

to

the UNESCO / IBE conference ICE 48:

*Inclusive education: The way of the future*

Geneva, 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008

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## **Preface**

A well educated population is the greatest asset of every nation. The education system organises the transfer of values and norms, knowledge and skills to new groups, it lays the foundation for social integration and economic growth and is vital to the development of a democratic and unified society. Education is also the individual right of every human being and shall ensure personal growth and intellectual development.

It is a great challenge to any education and training system to ensure optimal realisation of both individual and social potentials. This is particularly valid in a context of constant change and high level of migration, where education and training needs are changing and become increasingly diversified.

Norway has chosen to address this challenge by means of inclusive education. Our ambition is that the education system will give access to and accommodate optimal learning for *all* individuals in a friendly context that welcomes diversity.

National and international studies show that we have gone part of the way: policies, regulatory instruments and funding are carefully adapted to the ambitions, and our pupils score high on indicators of well-being and satisfaction with the social environment in school. On the other hand, the performance of our pupils in basic skills such as reading and math is below the OECD average, and too many students report that the teaching is not adapted to their learning needs and capabilities.

The causal relation between ones socio-economic situation and educational attainments is thoroughly established. As the current government is committed to improving the living conditions for the socially and economically vulnerable, we have to improve education and training in order to reduce inequalities.

Basic skills, such as reading, writing and math, constitute the fundament for all further learning, and hence for the education and job career of the individual throughout life. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 shows that early intervention is the most effective way to improve learning achievements. On this background my ministry has taken several new policy initiatives to increase the emphasis on basic skills in kindergarten and primary school, and to ensure early support intervention if so needed.

All young people deserve quality education according to their needs and capabilities. Sharing ideas, experiences and good practices of inclusive education may give a new boost to the global EFA efforts as well as to the individual countries. In this perspective, we submit the present document as the Norwegian national report to the ICE 48.

Oslo, October 2008

*Bård Vegar Solhjell, Minister of Education*

## **Acronyms and abbreviations**

ECCE	=	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	=	Education For All
FFO	=	Norwegian Federation of Organisations of Disabled People
ICT	=	Information and Communication Technology
MOER	=	Ministry of Education and Research
PPP	=	Public-Private Partnership
PPT	=	Pedagogical–Psychological Services
UDIR	=	Directorate of Education
VET	=	Vocational Education and Training

## **Executive Summary**

Inclusive education has been a central policy principle and goal in Norwegian education and training since the mid-seventies. The operational understanding of and approach to inclusive education is that every individual shall be provided optimal learning conditions in the regular learning context – *as far as possible*. Only in exceptional cases students receive instruction outside the regular learning context.

When reviewing inclusive education in Norway, one should be particularly aware of three groups that may be at risk of exclusion:

- The Sami population.
- The immigrant population.
- The disabled.

The present report looks into relevant aspects of education and training policy and its implementation at the various levels:

- Access, recruitment to and retaining in the various types of education and training.
- Practical implementation of inclusive education at different levels.
- Results, outcomes of education and training.

### ***Principles and goals in Norwegian education and training***

The Norwegian government presents the education and training policy in the following way:

“Every individual has a potential for learning, and the education system must ensure that this potential is utilised to the full amount, to the benefit of the individual and society. (..) The education system shall give all individuals the same opportunities to obtain knowledge, skills and attitudes that are important for being able to living a good life and become an active contributor in society.”

Equality and freedom of choice are basic political principles that lie at the heart of the education and training policy. All residents shall be ensured equal rights to education, irrespective of gender and economic, social, geographic and cultural factors. Accordingly:

- All education and training in the public domain, including higher education, is supplied free of charge; costs are covered by public budgets;<sup>1</sup>
- Every person that has completed ten years of compulsory education is entitled by law to three years of upper secondary general education or VET, by her or his own choice;
- The supply of education and training should be of high quality and broad enough to allow for a range of choices irrespective of geographical location and social factors;

Education and training is regarded a means for promoting equity, and for reducing inequalities, poverty and other forms of marginalization in society.

### ***Arrangements aimed at promoting inclusive education***

A number of specific measures that support and promote Inclusive Education are in operation, adapted to the various types of education and target groups. Some of them are under the auspices of other ministries than the MOER. The arrangements fall in four major categories: social-pedagogical, professional, financial and technical.

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<sup>1</sup> Children in kindergartens and pupils in private institutions pay a tuition fee.

*Social-pedagogical, including:*

- PPT - Pedagogical-psychological services at local level, providing diagnostic and counselling services to kindergartens and schools on adaptation of teaching for learners that experience a difficult social or educational situation.
- Social and vocational counselling services at institutional level.
- Needs-based priority entrance to upper secondary school.
- Follow-up service for dropouts and non-attendants at upper secondary level.

*Professional, including:*

- Formal involvement of parents, cooperation school – home.
- Homework support arrangements.
- Deviating education paths and assessment arrangements.
- Entrance to higher education based on assessment of formal education and work experience.
- System for validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.
- “Second chance” arrangements for early school leavers.

*Financial, including:*

- Subsidised loans and grants to learners organised through the State Education Loan Fund.
- Financial support through various arrangements to families with weak economy.
- Tax relief to companies that invest in education of staff.
- Subsidised adult education arrangements.

*Technical, including:*

- Free provision of necessary technical equipment to learners with specific needs.
- Free transport.
- Physical adaptation of all schools to ensure universal access.

***Experiences, Outcomes, Challenges***

The report shows that the national framework of Norwegian education and training, including policy, strategies, regulations, funding and administrative arrangements, to a large extent is in compliance with major inclusive education principles. All children, pupils, students and adult learners are – on equal terms - legally entitled to access to appropriate education and training. Instruction shall be adapted to the needs of the learners within the regular learning context.

On the other hand, there are weaknesses in the practical implementation of the inclusive education principles and goals. The quality of Norwegian kindergartens is high and the ECCE attendance is far above most other OECD countries. But there are still some children that are denied a place in kindergarten and hence are not allowed to benefiting from the ECCE. Many children from immigrant families do not attend despite the importance of early Norwegian language stimulation and social and mental preparation for a satisfactory learning progress in basic education. A legal right to a place in kindergarten will be implemented from 2010. But there is a shortage of professional pre-school teachers.

In general, institutions and teachers in basic education succeed in establishing and maintaining a positive social environment. Schools and teachers in general provide adapted

instruction, but there are indications that many teachers lack necessary competencies in this area and that adaptation could be improved. The existing diagnostic and support system for adapted and special education represents an important competence and could possibly be used more efficiently.

National and international tests show that Norwegian pupils in basic education do not perform at the expected level. Too many of them do not acquire the necessary basic skills at an early stage. This implies that too many pupils with weak school results are let through compulsory school and face severe problems and dropout when entering upper secondary education and training. Since linguistic minority students tend to score lower than linguistic majority students, and students with highly educated parents tend to get better results in basic education than learners who have parents with little education, some have argued that the education system to some degree contributes to reproducing social inequalities.

### ***Recent reforms and other policy initiatives to address the challenges***

Several policy initiatives have been designed and introduced over the last years and months to address the identified challenges. Reforms, Strategies and Action plans include:

- ECCE Reform.
- Knowledge Promotion Reform.
- Quality Reform in higher education.
- Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning.
- Measures on language stimulation: “Make room for reading”, “Languages Open Doors”, “Equal education in practice” and “Languages Build Bridges”.
- Initiatives for improving the learning environment.
- Entrepreneurship education strategy.
- Strategy for art and culture in education: Creative Learning.
- Strategic plan for strengthening of Mathematics, Science and Technology.
- Action Plan for Gender Equality in ECCE and Basic Education.
- Renewed focus on Quality in Basic Education.

It is still too early to expect visible effects of these initiatives on school results and the high dropout rate in upper secondary education and training.

The particularly high dropout rate in upper secondary VET causes serious worries. A public committee is investigating whether policy changes and targeted measures in this part of the system could improve the performance.

Two other committees are looking into the broad issues of teacher training and special education, respectively. It is expected that their reports will initiate major changes to the aim of strengthening adapted and special education at early stages of education and training.

The government has appointed a committee for equal education for linguistic minorities in kindergartens, schools and higher education institutions and is also considering how compulsory education can be made more practical in order to meet the needs of and stimulate the development of talents of those with a less theoretical orientation.

# **PART 1: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – THE NORWEGIAN CASE**

## **1 Introduction**

The greatest asset of every nation is the combined knowledge and skills of its citizens. This is secured by quality education. The education and training system organises and coordinates the transfer of values and attitudes, norms, knowledge and skills to new population groups and new generations. It equips the individual learners for future life in the family, local community and production. Hence education and training is the foundation for economic and social growth, and vital to the development of a democratic society.

Whilst recognising the importance of successful education, there are obvious and significant challenges related to the designing and operation of a relevant education system at a satisfactory quality level: Technologies and markets are global and change continuously and rapidly, and migration contributes to an increasingly heterogeneous population. This means that education and training needs are changing and becoming more diversified. Inclusive education has been held forward as a relevant approach to meet this challenge.

This report will present the Norwegian approach to and experiences with inclusive education.

### **1.1 Inclusive education – the general concept**

“Inclusive education” has a positive connotation as the opposite to “exclusion”. It implies that all individuals have general access to education.

Inclusive Education goes beyond physical integration. In an inclusive education system, every learner is part of what could be called a “learning community” with other peer learners that participate actively on equal terms. Relevant education and training of good quality is provided to all individuals, regardless of their personal features and social, cultural, economic and geographical factors. It is based on the fundamental principles of *equity* and *education as a human right*. Every individual – slow and fast learners alike - is given the opportunity to learn to his or her full potential in terms of pace and level, and is actively participating in the organisation and implementation of the learning process.

Inclusive Education is not a final and stable condition, but rather a constant *process* whereby societies strive to remove obstacles and accommodate optimal learning for each and all individuals. The permanent dynamics pertain to the facts that people in the system are continuously being substituted, that individuals within the system and their learning needs change over time and that the social, cultural and economic context which often defines learning needs, is in constant development.

A prerequisite for successful implementation of Inclusive Education is that the education system – and the individual teachers and trainers within that system - welcomes diversity, and addresses and responds adequately to the specific needs of the individual learners. This complies with the principle of “equality in treatment”: Provision of optimal learning opportunities to each and every learner.

In order to avoid physical and social segregation, individuals would only in extreme cases be taken out from the normal learning context. Thus, special education provided in separate institutions in general fall outside the strict denotation of “inclusive education”.

It seems unlikely that there will ever be found a perfectly inclusive education system complying with all criteria above. But many countries have put inclusive education on the political agenda and taken important steps in that direction. Norway is one of them.

## 1.2 Inclusive education in the Norwegian context

In Norway the principle of inclusive education was introduced with the implementation of new laws in compulsory and upper secondary education in 1976, and further developed in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>2</sup> The first Act on Child Day Care Institutions of 1975 also emphasised the importance of inclusive care and education for small children, and gave children with disabilities priority access to kindergartens.

The operational understanding of and approach to inclusive education in Norway is that every individual shall be provided optimal learning conditions in the regular learning context – *as far as possible*. Adapted education is a principle, but not an individual right. In practical life it will always be necessary to consider and find a reasonable balance between costs and benefits to various affected parties: the individual learner (needs and learning conditions), the institutions and the greater society (money, social responsibility), the teacher (qualifications, working conditions, available resources), and fellow children, pupils and students (learning conditions, social environment, security).

No individuals shall be excluded. But what is the right thing to do if the provision of optimal learning conditions to one learner inevitably will imply reduced learning opportunities for several other students? In some practical cases, the principle relating to learning arena is being disregarded. Some students need to receive all or parts of the teaching outside the normal classroom, in a specially adapted environment. This applies e.g. to learners with particular medical problems, deaf-blind learners, individuals that represent a physical threat to other students and staff, or persons that by their behaviour seriously reduce the learning opportunities for several other fellow students. In such cases, one will have to assess whether special education in a segregated learning context represents the best solution, all aspects and interests considered. Provided the student receives education adapted to her / his abilities, one might even with some right argue that this solution follows the principle of inclusive education part of the way, if not in the strict interpretation of the concept.

When reviewing inclusive education in Norway, one should in particular consider the situation for the following groups that might be at risk of exclusion:

- *The Sami population.* The Sami are one of the largest indigenous people of Europe, traditionally inhabiting northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. The Sami population, which has its own Parliament and national flag, has been estimated to be between 85,000 and 135,000 across the whole Nordic region, roughly half of them living in Norway, including Oslo. The Sami language, which belongs to the Finno-Ugric family, is recognised as an official language. Sami pupils in basic education are legally entitled to receive instruction and textbooks in their own languages. An estimated 10 000 people today have Sami as their home language; most of them live in the three northernmost counties.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dalen 2006

<sup>3</sup> See: [http://www.reisenett.no/norway/facts/culture\\_science/sami.html](http://www.reisenett.no/norway/facts/culture_science/sami.html);  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sami\\_people#Culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sami_people#Culture)

- *The immigrant population.* The immigrant population in 2008 totals 460 000, or almost ten per cent of the total population. It consists of people with two foreign-born parents: 381 000 first-generation immigrants who have moved to Norway and 79 000 descendents, i.e. people who were born in Norway of two parents with a different country of origin. They come from 213 different countries and independent regions, as refugees, labour immigrants, to study or through family reunion. 246 000 come from Turkey and countries in Asia, Africa and South America. Westerners make up around one third of the immigrant population. They are primarily labour immigrants (some with families), are often well-educated and high earners and differ greatly from the non-western immigrants with regard to most living condition indicators.<sup>4</sup> All Norwegian municipalities are home to immigrants. Oslo has the largest proportion of immigrants with 25 per cent, or 140 000 people. Half of all first-generation immigrants from Africa, Asia (including Turkey), Eastern Europe and South and Central America arrived in Norway as refugees.<sup>5</sup>
- *People with defined disabilities – physical, mental or multiple challenges.* It is difficult to find accurate statistics on this group, partly due to the different ways of defining “disability”: In many cases, “disabled” individuals will not be disabled but function very well if material and social conditions are being duly adapted. In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Research (MOER) gave financial support to adaptation of conditions for 5 900 children in kindergartens. In 2005, 25 per cent of students in higher education stated that they suffered from “long-term illness” that was hampering their study activities. In the 2nd quarter 2007, some 495 000 people or slightly above 15 per cent of the population aged 16-66, reported to have a disability, defined as: “long-term health problems that may limit everyday life”. 45.3 per cent of the disabled persons had a job, whilst 2.4 per cent were unemployed. Thus, about 48 per cent of the disabled persons were economically active, compared to 77 per cent of the total population aged 16-66. The correlation between education level and level of economic activity is significant: Whilst only 30 per cent of those with compulsory education as the highest education attainment are economically active, the corresponding figure is as high as 70 per cent for those with a tertiary education of more than four years.<sup>6</sup>

Inclusive education relates to many different factors at the various levels:

*Political level, i.e. national, regional and local levels.* Decisions at these levels determine the framework for provisions, access and activities in the various parts of the education system. Whereas the overall education policy is always the fundament, legal acts and other formal regulations, budgets, provision structure and total system capacity, policy of teacher administration and training have implications for practices of the individual kindergarten / school and the individual teacher.

*Institutional level.* Institutions involved in education and training to a varying degree have autonomy in professional and budgetary matters. This means that the management and staff

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<sup>4</sup> Olsen, Bjørn 2007. URL: <http://www.ssb.no/vis/english/magazine/art-2007-04-03-01-en.html>

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Norway 2008. URL: [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/00/00/10/innvandring\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/00/00/10/innvandring_en/)

<sup>6</sup> Olsen and Van 2007. URL: [http://www.ssb.no/emner/06/01/rapp\\_funksjonshemmede/rapp\\_200740/rapp\\_200740.pdf](http://www.ssb.no/emner/06/01/rapp_funksjonshemmede/rapp_200740/rapp_200740.pdf)

make decisions regarding the internal allocation of resources and the level of professional and social services to the learners, recruitment and further training of teachers, as well as prioritisation between various strategic measures and activities. The latter can e.g. be campaigns or other social efforts aiming to create a friendly kindergarten / school environment, to reduce conflicts and bullying, or to ensure an optimal allocation of resources (time) for adaptation of teaching to learners' needs.

*Micro level, i.e. class, group and individual levels.* Whether or not the individual learner actually is given optimal learning opportunities, is directly and strongly influenced by several factors in the immediate learning environment, including:

- Teacher qualifications and motivation
- Personal relation between the teacher and the individual learner
- Personal relations among the learners, and their attitudes and behaviour
- Availability of relevant teaching aids and technical equipment
- Communication and collaboration between the teacher and the learners' families

### **1.3 Emphasis of presentation and structure of report**

Based on the operational review of the concept, the present report aims to answer the following questions relating to Norwegian education and training:

- What is the Norwegian policy with regard to Inclusive Education and how is this policy reflected in strategic plans, formal regulations, funding and administrative arrangements?
- To which degree, and how, is inclusive education being practiced in the various parts of Norwegian education and training?
- What are major experiences from the practicing of inclusive education in the Norwegian education system; is it successful in terms of goal achievements?
- What are major challenges with regard to further improvement of inclusive education in Norwegian education and training, and how is the education system responding to these challenges?

The answers to these questions can be found by taking a closer look at three main issues:

- *Access, recruitment to the various types of education.* Does everyone have the opportunity to attend? Have barriers to participation been removed? Are efforts being made to motivate the parents and learners and to make the relevant education alternatives attractive? Is sufficient counselling being provided regarding the various alternative training paths?
- *Implementation of education.* Is adapted education being provided to all students? Is the learning environment good enough to promote learning? Are the necessary efforts being made to prevent dropout? Are sufficient efforts being made to get those who drop out, back into the system?
- *Results, outcomes.* Are participation rates by different groups in the various parts of education satisfactory, or are some groups being excluded from taking part in the regular education settings? Are the learning outcomes for the various groups satisfactory, in terms of subject marks and results in international comparative tests? Is the dropout rate acceptably low and the completion rate sufficiently high in the various parts of education? Is the education system actually contributing to social equalisation, reduction of poverty and social disparities?

Particular attention will be given to the ECCE and basic education and training 1 – 13.

The report has two parts:

Part one, which represents the main report, comprises chapters 1 – 5. It gives an overview of inclusive education in Norway: Policy, implementation and experiences, as well as recent policy interventions.

Part two consists of chapters 6 – 9. They go in some more details through the various parts of the education and training system, presenting aspects relevant to inclusive education.

## **2 Education and Training in Norway: Structure, Policies and Tools**

### **2.1 Education and training in Norway - overview**

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is since 2005 part of the education system. A national framework plan <sup>7</sup> outlines the content and tasks of kindergartens. <sup>8</sup> Attendance is not compulsory. Kindergartens cater for children aged 0 – 5 years. Some 50 per cent of the kindergartens are privately owned and operated with public support, based on formal approval by the authorities. Financing is shared between the public and the parents; the latter cover 18 per cent of the total costs<sup>9</sup>.

Mainstream, basic education in Norway is 7 + 3 + 3 years – primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training – of which the first ten years are compulsory. It has a centralised framework with national curricula, financing and quality control. But the delivery of education and training is decentralised to a high number of providers.<sup>10</sup> The vast majority of students are enrolled in public education institutions. Both public and private providers of national education and training receive financial support from the government. They are subjected to national quality control and are obliged to organize examination and assessment according to national guidelines.

Entrants to upper secondary level can choose between 12 alternative education programmes. Three of them prepare primarily for further academic studies, whereas the other nine programmes are vocational.

Vocational Education and Training (VET), including apprenticeship, is a fully integrated part of upper secondary education and training. In general, upper secondary VET includes two years of school-based education with practical training in school workshops and short work placements in industry, followed by two years of formalised apprenticeship training and productive work in an enterprise or public institution. The training enterprises receive financial support of some NOK 4000 per month throughout the apprenticeship period. National curricula in upper secondary VET cover the school-based as well as the

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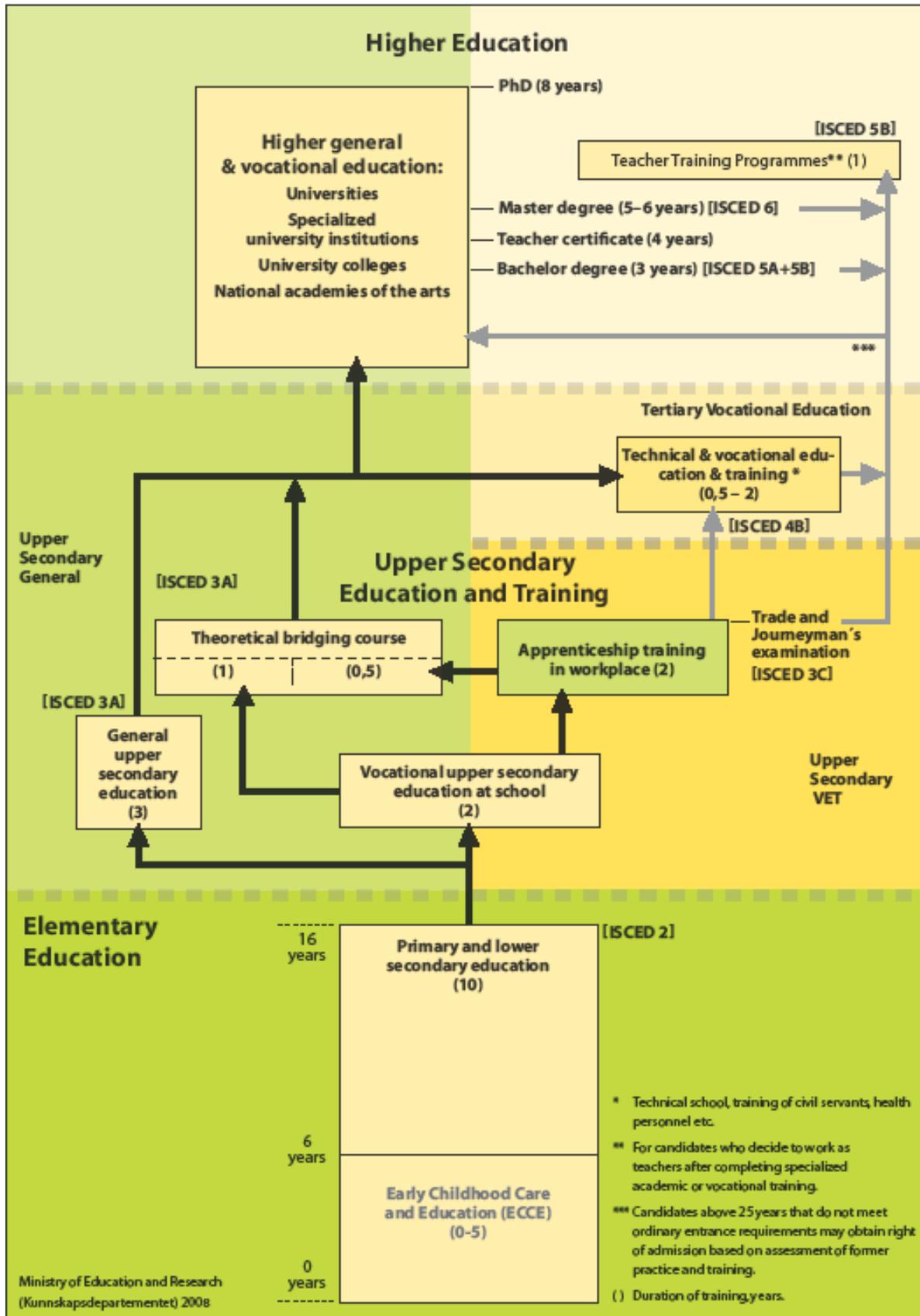
<sup>7</sup> Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks for Kindergartens (MOER 2006d).

<sup>8</sup> The name of pedagogical institutions of care and education for children aged 0 – 5.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Norway

<sup>10</sup> In 2006, nationally recognised education and training programs were delivered by 3131 Primary and Lower secondary schools, 453 Upper secondary schools and 70 Tertiary education institutions. In addition, more than 35 000 companies are involved in the training of apprentices

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apprenticeship part of the training programmes. The apprenticeship is finalised with a (mainly) practical examination for the Trade certificate.<sup>11</sup>

Tertiary vocational education is an alternative to higher education and is based on upper secondary education and training or equivalent knowledge and skills obtained through informal and non-formal learning. The education consists of a wide variety of vocational courses lasting from six months to two years, and delivered by a large number of private and public providers. Technical schools offer two years of training for a technician to students that possess a trade certificate.

Higher education and professional training is delivered by 38 public and 32 private institutions (2008). All the seven universities are public, whereas there are both public and private specialized university institutions and university colleges. With a few exceptions, the higher education institutions have a degree structure, grading system and quality assurance system aligned with other European countries, based on the levels of bachelor, master and PhD.<sup>12</sup> Some education programs still diverge from the main degree structure.

National investments in updating and further education for adults are significant. Adults have a statutory right to primary and secondary education and training, free of charge, delivered by the municipalities and counties, respectively. The social partners cooperate closely with the government to ensure that relevant Life-Long Learning (LLL) opportunities are available.

Around one quarter of the adult population participates in various types of work-related updating and further education and training annually. Universities and other higher education institutions, as well as a high number of non-profit and commercial providers deliver education according to national curricula on secondary and tertiary levels, as well as work and personally oriented courses. Full-time, part-time and evening courses, as well as internet-based teaching, are available to ensure flexible options.

## **2.2 Principles and Goals in Education and Training**

The Norwegian government formulates the overall role of education, and hence its own overall education policy goals, in the following way:

“Every individual has a potential for learning, and the education system must ensure that this potential is utilised to the full amount, to the benefit of the individual and society. (..) The education system shall give all individuals the same opportunities to obtain knowledge, skills and attitudes that are important for being able to living a good life and become an active contributor in society. The education system shall, at the earliest possible time help, stimulate, guide and motivate each individual for “stretching out” as far as possible to realise his or her learning potential – regardless of his or her background. (..) The education system should support each individual in formulating and realise their “life projects” to the benefit of the individual and the society.” (MOER 2006)<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In traditional crafts the certificate is called Journeyman’s certificate. In this report the term “trade certificate” covers both certificate types indiscriminately.

<sup>12</sup> PhD is offered only by the seven universities and a limited number of colleges.

<sup>13</sup> Report No. 16 (2006-2007) to the Storting, preface. Norwegian version

<http://www.regjeringen.no/Rpub/STM/20062007/016/PDFS/STM200620070016000DDDPDFS.pdf>

The Kindergarten Act states that the institutions shall take account of children's age, level of functioning, gender, and social, ethnic, and cultural background, including the language and culture of Sami children.<sup>14</sup>

In Norway, education is rights-based from the age of six. Every person is entitled to get the opportunity and necessary support to identify and develop her / his talents to the full potential, including theoretical, practical, cultural and social aspects. It is furthermore the responsibility of the education system to provide the various sectors of society with qualified, critical and constructive individuals that will actively support and contribute to the maintenance and further development of the democratic welfare society.

The Education Act states that teaching shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of the individual pupils and apprentices. Emphasis shall be placed on creating satisfactory forms of co-operation between teachers and pupils, between the school and the home, between the school and the workplace, and between apprentices and companies. All persons associated with school or with training establishments: "... shall make efforts to ensure that pupils and apprentices are not injured or exposed to offensive words or deeds"<sup>15</sup>

Education and training is viewed as a central means to achieve national social, economic, and regional policy goals. Hence, provision is considered a national, public responsibility and the education and training policy is shaped in the interface between cultural, economic and social distribution policies. Vocational education and training (VET) is strongly emphasized in mainstream education, as well as in a broader "Life-Long Learning" (LLL) perspective. Formulation of education and training policy, as well as the implementation of VET are inclusive processes that always comprise a wide variety of social partner organisations.

Equality and freedom of choice are basic political principles in Norway and lie at the heart also of the education and vocational training policy. All residents are to be ensured equal rights of access to quality education, irrespective of gender and economic, social, geographic and cultural background. Accordingly:

- All education and training in the public domain, including higher education, is supplied free of charge; costs are covered by public budgets;<sup>16</sup>
- Every person that has completed ten years of compulsory education is entitled by law to three years of upper secondary general education or VET, by her or his own choice;
- The supply of education and training should be of high quality and broad enough to allow for a range of choices irrespective of geographical location and social factors;

In a White Paper to the Storting<sup>17</sup> in 2006, the government expresses how education is regarded a means for promoting equity and reduce inequalities in society:<sup>18</sup>

"The Government will pursue an active policy to reduce the differences in society. Its goals are to diminish class distinctions, reduce economic inequity and combat poverty and other forms of marginalisation. Society must develop in a way in which power, benefits and

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<sup>14</sup> Kindergarten Act, Section 2, fourth paragraph

<sup>15</sup> Education act, section 1-2

<sup>16</sup> Children in kindergartens and pupils in private institutions pay a tuition fee.

<sup>17</sup> The Norwegian Parliament.

<sup>18</sup> MOER 2006: Report No. 16 (2006-2007) to the Storting. English summary

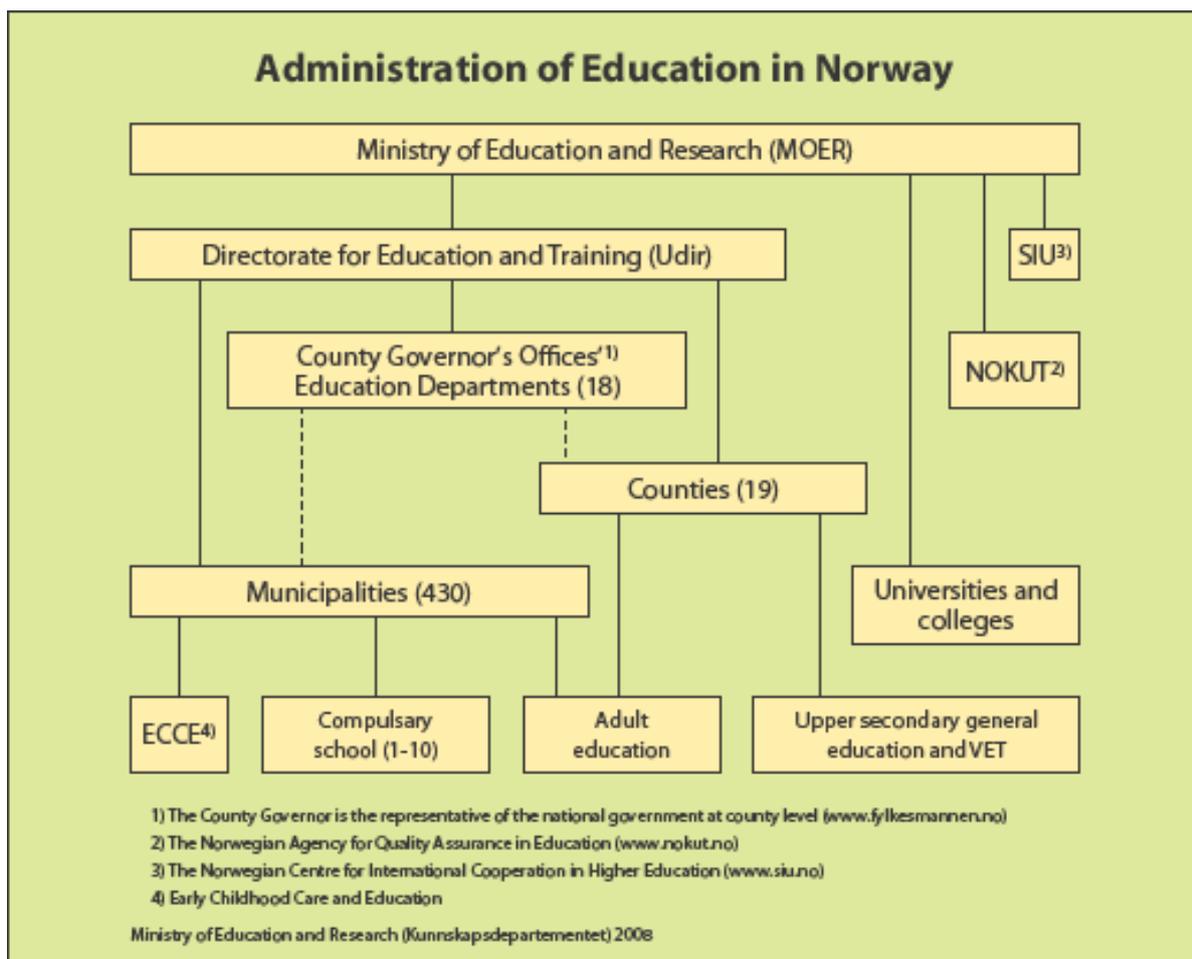
([http://www.regjeringen.no/Rpub/STM/20062007/016EN/PDFS/STM200620070016000EN\\_PDFS.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/Rpub/STM/20062007/016EN/PDFS/STM200620070016000EN_PDFS.pdf))

obligations are distributed in the fairest possible way. (...)When social inequality increases, efforts to combat the differences must be intensified in the education system.”

### 2.3 Administration and delivery

The MOER has overall responsibility for national policy development and administration of ECCE, mainstream education and vocational training at all levels. Administrative responsibilities are mandated to the two government agencies, Directorate for Education and Training (UDIR) and Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT).

The 430 municipalities are responsible for organising the ECCE as well as primary and lower secondary education. Upper secondary general education (GE) and VET is the responsibility of the 19 counties. Both levels cater for both young people and adults. Kindergartens are owned either by the local authorities or different private companies, volunteer organisations etc. Public schools are owned and run by the municipalities and counties, respectively, but the costs are covered by the central government.<sup>19</sup> Both counties and municipalities report directly to the national level. A County Governor represents the government in each county. The County Governor’s education office controls the kindergartens, delivery and results of compulsory and upper secondary GE and VET, including adult education. UDIR is responsible for the development of curricula, national examinations and quality control at primary and secondary levels.



<sup>19</sup> Municipalities and counties receive a block grant from the government. Schools do not receive funding directly from the government.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) constitute the backbone of upper secondary VET. Employers' organizations and trade unions, individual companies and public institutions are major contributors to policy formation, curriculum development and operation of the system at national, county and local levels.<sup>20</sup> Social partner organisations and the industry hold the majority of seats in all the most influential bodies at national and county level. At local level, Training Offices owned by local enterprises and institutions recruit and supervise training enterprises during apprenticeship on behalf of the county authorities. They often provide training for company instructors and vocational theory classes to apprentices.

Public higher education institutions are owned by and organised directly under MOER and financed over its budget, but they have a high degree of professional and economic autonomy.

About 12.5 per cent of students in higher education attend private institutions. Most of these receive financial support from MOER provided they meet professional requirements and deliver study programs that comply with national standards. Approval and quality control of public and private institutions, programs and achievements is conducted by the autonomous agency NOKUT (<http://odin.dep.no/ufd/engelsk/index-b-n-a.html>).

## **2.4 Policy documents and other regulatory instruments**

Considering the division of responsibilities between central, regional and local levels, with decentralised responsibilities for delivery of services placed with hundreds of local authorities and private owners of institutions, a strong central unit is essential for quality assurance. Policy and other regulating documents must be clear as regards operating principles and objectives. The following documents are central in describing policy and regulating practice in national education:

*White papers, or Reports to the Storting*, are policy documents to the Parliament issued by the Ministry for discussion and decisions on national policies. Whenever major changes in education are prepared and proposed that have legal and/or budgetary implications, a white paper is normally presented with all relevant information about the rationale, possible alternative policies and estimated implications. White papers are in general the result of comprehensive participatory processes that include all major stakeholders, including parents and learners.

*Strategies and Action plans* are targeted Ministry documents developed within the framework of endorsed national policy, often on the basis of research findings that indicate changing needs or deficiencies in current policy implementation. They address specific areas of education and outline concrete actions, measures and responsibilities in implementation.

*Legal acts*, which are proposed by the Ministry and finally approved by the Parliament. In general, acts are designed as framework acts that need further detailing.

*Formal regulations* are linked directly to specific acts. In general, they contain a rather detailed elaboration on the various paragraphs of the Act and explain how the implementing body is expected to interpret and handle the relevant issues.

*Budgets*. All costs related to education in the public domain are covered by the central government. The size and orientation of the budget restricts and promotes specific activities

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<sup>20</sup> See MOER 2008 for more details.

and investments. Hence, budgets are a major policy tool. The financial stream goes from the Ministry to the owner of the institutions, i.e. in most cases municipalities and counties. These local political bodies receive block grants from the Government, comprising funds of an estimated size that is supposed to cover several sectors. But counties and municipalities have freedom to distribute money between the various policy areas and tasks. In ECCE the MOER provides earmarked grants for distribution to the owners through the County governors.

*Monitoring and assessment system.* In order to ensure that central policies work as intended, that formal regulations are followed and budgets spent according to intentions, it is necessary to have a system for monitoring and assessment of activities, developments and outcomes. In general, quality assurance is supposed to take place at each level of the system – institution, local authority / school owner, and at national level. UDIR, NOKUT and the County Governor have specific monitoring and supervising responsibilities on behalf of the Ministry (see above). In addition, the Ministry and UDIR have their own analysts that follow selected areas of education by using public statistics and independent research reports. Especially when implementing a new reform, the Ministry and UDIR commission specific in-depth studies to be conducted by external researchers. Findings are used for adjustments of policies, strategies, regulations or budgets.

## **2.5 Curricula and other guiding documents**

Curricula are national, regulatory instruments that supervise education providers as regards education content, hereby contributing to ensuring common certification standards and inform potential employers and other education institutions about the expected knowledge and skills levels of the candidates.

In Norway, curricula in the common meaning of the word are not found in ECCE. However, the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens<sup>21</sup> gives thematic direction to the activities in the kindergartens, if not to specific learning outcomes. The Framework Plan is further described in chapter 6.

Three documents guide activities in basic education and training:

*The Core Curriculum* constitutes the binding foundation and “common core” for all parts of basic education and training at all levels. It describes the fundamental values and principles of a democratic education system and the role of education in society as a whole, taking the various types of individual, human needs and rights as the general point of departure.

*The Quality Framework* establishes the responsibility for education and training establishments to organise and adapt the teaching processes for the pupils’ and apprentices’ optimal development of broad competences. Eleven principles and objectives anchored in the Education Act and the Core Curriculum are gathered in “The learning poster”, which is guiding the activities at institutional level.

*The Subject Curricula* define learning outcomes for pupils and apprentices after 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as after every stage in Upper Secondary Education and Training. Continuity and coherence in learning outcomes are emphasised in the subject curricula for consecutive years. Basic skills are integrated in all subjects from grade one. Decisions on how to organise and adapt teaching and on selection of instructional methods are made locally.

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<sup>21</sup> MOER 2006d

## **The learning poster**

*The school and the training enterprise shall:*

- give all pupils and apprentices/trainees equal opportunities to develop their abilities and talents individually and in cooperation with others
- stimulate the stamina, curiosity and desire of pupils and apprentices/trainees to learn
- stimulate pupils and apprentices/trainees to develop their own learning strategies and abilities in critical thinking
- stimulate pupils and apprentices in their personal development, including the development of identity and ethical, social and cultural competencies, and the ability to understand democracy
- and democratic participation
- facilitate pupil participation and enable pupils and apprentices/trainees to make informed value choices and choices relating to their own education and future careers
- promote adapted teaching and varied pedagogic methods
- stimulate, use and further develop the particular competencies of each teacher
- help teachers and instructors to be seen as positive leaders and as role models for children and young people
- ensure that the physical and psychosocial working and learning environment promotes health, well-being and learning
- encourage and facilitate cooperation with the home and ensure the co-responsibilities of parents and guardians
- ensure that the local community is involved in the education in a meaningful way

The subject curricula are designed so as to allow variations in teaching methods and individual adaptation of teaching. They are not very detailed and there is no curriculum overload that would restrict flexibility and encourage teacher centred teaching due to time pressure.

In higher education, institutions themselves are responsible for the development of study programmes. The Ministry as the owner of the institutions is not interfering with professional issues but overlooks activities and control that budgets are spent according to general regulations and specific agreements.

In some cases when education providers face new challenges in implementing new policies or following up on targeted strategies, the Ministry organises the development of Guides,<sup>22</sup> Handbooks or Compilations of relevant examples of practice. Such documents are often focussing on organisational or methodological aspects of teaching.

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<sup>22</sup> See e.g. UDIR 2006: Utvikling av sosial kompetanse. Veileder for skolen. (Development of Social Competence. Guide for the School). [http://UDIR.no/upload/Satsningsomraader/LOM/Veil\\_Sos\\_kompetanse.pdf](http://UDIR.no/upload/Satsningsomraader/LOM/Veil_Sos_kompetanse.pdf)

### **3 Arrangements aimed at promoting inclusive education**

Pupils and students in basic education and training do not have to repeat school years, no matter their learning progression and final outcomes:

- In compulsory school all pupils advance to the next level and continue to follow instruction in all subjects, including the subjects where they have failed to meet the minimum learning requirements at the lower level.
- At upper secondary level students who fail to meet minimum learning requirements will be allowed to advance to the next level and continue to follow classes in all other subjects than the one where s/he failed to meet minimum requirements.

Formal grades are not used during the first seven years of compulsory education. Instead, the individual pupil and his / her parents are given frequent verbal feedback throughout the year based on the pupil's daily performance in class and test results in the various subjects.

The rationale for both these arrangements is social inclusion. They are based on the knowledge that children and youths need a stable social environment and to experience mastery in order to have an optimal personal development. Repeating classes increases the risk of social exclusion. It influences negatively their personal development by reducing the social stability and their experience of mastery, and hence their feeling of security, well-being and self-confidence. It is assumed that formal grades, if poor, have more negative effects on the experience of mastery than verbal feedback, and hence are more damaging to the pupils' self-confidence.

A number of specific measures that support and promote Inclusive Education are in operation, adapted to the various types of education and target groups. Some of the arrangements are under the auspices of other ministries than the MOER. The arrangements fall in four major categories: social-pedagogical, professional, financial and technical.

#### **3.1 Social-pedagogical**

The main aim of the social support arrangements is to facilitate access to and successful completion of relevant education and training.

##### ***3.1.1 PPT - Pedagogical-psychological services in basic education***

According to the Education Act, each municipality and county is obliged to have a body (PPT) that provides educational and psychological counselling services to kindergartens and schools. Municipalities and counties can organise the PPT jointly. The main function and responsibility of the PPT is to assist children, young people and adults that experience a difficult social or educational situation. PPTs in general employ specialists with background from psychology, pedagogic, speech therapy or similar.

A general task of the service is to assist the institutions and their staff in work on organisational development and development of expertise in order to ensure appropriate adaptation of teaching. This can reduce the need for special education.

The teaching staff shall consider whether an individual child or pupil might have specific needs that cannot be met without particular measures, and notify the management of the institution. The school can request the PPT to organise an expert assessment.

When requested, the PPT organises the expert assessment to establish particular challenges and needs. Based on the assessment, individual students may be:

- Granted extra resources for additional teaching support within the regular class.
- Given priority entrance to particular education programmes in upper secondary education and training.
- Offered special education.
- Offered special arrangements during tests and examinations.

Before carrying out an expert assessment and before making a decision to commence special education, the consent of the pupil or the parents of the pupils shall be obtained.

Pupils, adults and children under compulsory schooling age are entitled to special education in cases where more comprehensive adaptation of teaching is required than can be arranged in mainstream tuition.<sup>23</sup> Learners who receive special education shall have the same number of teaching hours as other pupils.

In assessing what kind of tuition shall be provided, particular emphasis shall be placed on the pupils developmental prospects. The content of the relevant courses shall be such that the pupil receives adequate benefit from the tuition as a whole in relation to educational objectives that are realistic for the pupil. As far as possible, special education provisions shall be planned in cooperation with the pupil and the parents of the pupil, and considerable emphasis shall be placed on their views.

### ***3.1.2 National support system for special education***

Statped is a national support system for special education under the administration of UDIR. It consists of 13 resource centres and 5 units for special education, which offer a broad range of services. Statped's main task is to provide guidance and support to those in charge of kindergartens and education in municipalities and county administrations, enabling them to develop an inclusive school for all. The main objective of Statped is to ensure that children, young people and adults with major and special educational needs are secured well-advised educational and developmental provisions.<sup>24</sup>

Among the many national competence centres in the Statped network, two institutions stand forward as particularly important with regard to the promotion of inclusive Education by providing advice and assistance to education institutions and their owners:

“The national centre for reading education and research” in Stavanger, which is a special education competence centre for reading and writing difficulties and dyslexia.<sup>25</sup>

“The national centre for multicultural education – NAFO” in Oslo, which was established for the purpose of assisting the implementation of the MOER strategic plan: "Equal Education in Practice! Strategy for better learning and greater participation of linguistic minorities in kindergartens, schools and education."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Education Act, chapter 5.

<sup>24</sup> For more details, see:

[http://www.statped.no/moduler/templates/Module\\_Overview.aspx?id=21545&epslanguage=NO](http://www.statped.no/moduler/templates/Module_Overview.aspx?id=21545&epslanguage=NO)

<sup>25</sup> See: <http://lesesenteret.uis.no/frontpage/>

<sup>26</sup> MOER 2007y. See:

[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Strategiplaner/Likeverdig\\_ENG\\_net.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Strategiplaner/Likeverdig_ENG_net.pdf)

### ***3.1.3 Social and vocational counselling services at institutional level***

The Education Act states that all pupils are entitled to educational and career guidance, as well as social counselling both during compulsory school and in upper secondary education and training.<sup>27</sup> School counsellors, who are found at every school, are in general responsible for both types of counselling. The counsellor is in most cases experienced teachers. About half of them have attended specialised training for this role.

An informed choice of educational programme will often determine whether or not the individual student will experience a successful accomplishment of upper secondary education and training. To provide updated and realistic information about the educational system and the possibilities inherent in different education programmes and occupations, hence is one of the main tasks for the school counsellor. At most schools the career guidance is provided in classes or groups of students, and partly by self-studies under supervision by the counsellor. In addition, individual students can make a personal appointment with the counsellor to receive additional assistance.

The purpose and content of the social counselling is to give advice and support to individual learners that experience challenges in accomplishing the school programme due to various factors and conditions in the pupil's social environment. In many cases, the school counsellor will be able to assist in finding a reasonable solution and to solve the problem, often in collaboration with the parents.

Other important tasks in the social counselling are to assist the teachers and collaborate with the PPT to ensure relevant adaptation of teaching for all pupils and professional support to children with special needs.

In order to strengthen the education and career guidance as a means to promote equity, the government recently proposed that the responsibility for the two parts of counselling should be separated (MOER 2006a). Furthermore, the ministry is now considering the introduction of minimum standards of basic and specialist education for guidance counsellors.

In recent years, an increasing number of schools cooperate with external partners in education and working life on career guidance. Several counties have established formal partnerships with higher education institutions, major employer organisations, trade unions and individual institutions for the same purpose. From 2009 all the 19 counties will have such partnership arrangements.

### ***3.1.4 Needs-based priority entrance to upper secondary school***

All young people who have completed lower secondary school are entitled to be accepted at one out of three prioritised education programmes in upper secondary education and training.<sup>28</sup> Allowance to the various programmes and schools within a county are competitive, based on the results from compulsory school. Competition varies over time between programmes and regions and can be hard for the most attractive programmes and schools.

If a learner has been assessed by PPT and it has been established that he or she is entitled to special education or particular adaptation of teaching, the learner can be granted priority

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<sup>27</sup> Education Act, Chapter 9. See: <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-19980717-061-eng.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., Chapter 3.

access to a specific education programme. The condition is that the need for special needs education is due to one or more of the following difficulties:

- Perceptual or motor challenges
- Severe learning difficulties
- Emotional or social problems
- Complex disabilities
- Other disabilities or challenges

### ***3.1.5 Follow-up Service for dropouts and non-attendants in upper secondary education and training***

Since 1994, all counties are legally obliged to operate a Follow-up Service. Every young person in the 16 to 20 age group has a statutory right to three years of upper secondary general education or VET. If a young person has not applied for, does not attend or drops out of upper secondary education or training, s/he will be contacted by the Follow-up Service. Since 2007 the services' role in prevention of dropouts has been strengthened.

The aim of the Follow-up Service is to provide necessary information, guidance and practical assistance to direct the individual young people at risk into an activity leading to access to higher education, a vocational qualification or a partial qualification that can improve their access to the labour market. Thus, the Follow-up Service functions as a safety net for young people in this age group.

The Follow-up Service cooperate closely with the lower and upper secondary schools in order to keep the overview over and contact with young persons who for various reasons are outside upper secondary education or at risk of dropping out.

## **3.2 Professional**

The main aim of these arrangements is to support an optimal development of children and pupils. Most of them are legally institutionalised. They target different levels of education and training.

### ***3.2.1 Local arrangements in ECCE and basic education***

Kindergartens, primary schools and lower secondary schools are legally obliged to work in close understanding and collaboration with the children's homes. The kindergartens and schools organise at least two meetings annually between the relevant educationalists and the parents of the individual child and pupil. The purpose is to exchange information about the progress of the pupil and particular social conditions that influence the development. The parties furthermore identify specific challenges and discuss how they can cooperate to overcome them.

Many second generation immigrant pupils are disadvantaged in terms of the possibility to get homework support from their parents. First generation immigrants often lack the necessary language skills and do not have a sufficient educational background to be able to provide this kind of support to their children even at primary and lower secondary levels. This problem also applies to some ethnic Norwegian pupils.

In order to compensate for this inequality regarding parental assistance, some NGOs and an increasing number of schools from primary to upper secondary level offer homework support

at school after regular school hours. Attendance of pupils is voluntary. Teachers in different subjects in these cases remain at school once or twice a week and provide supplementary tuition to the pupils who choose to use this opportunity.

### **3.2.2 *Deviating training paths and assessment arrangements***

In order to meet the needs of many students that for various reasons have difficulties in following the regular education and training programmes and examinations at upper secondary level, the MOER is allowing deviations based on professional assessment and documentation of specific needs. These include:

- Expanded time for completion of education and training programmes. Students may be allowed to use up to five years to complete a three-year programme.
- Deviation from the regular mix of school-based and work-based training in upper secondary VET. Instead of following the 2 + 2 model - two years of school based training followed by two years of apprenticeship, students may be allowed to spend four years of work-based apprenticeship with shorter periods of theory at school.

In both these arrangements, the learners are met with identical requirements as pupils who follow the regular training path. But it is also possible to train according to a deviating curriculum:

- Students that are found unable to accomplish all parts of the VET programme may be allowed to follow a special training path with reduced curriculum. Provided a willing enterprise is identified, the learner signs a training contract with the training company based on the regular curriculum, and adapted to the abilities and ambitions of the student. Thus, each learner has his or her individual training plan. If s/he completes the agreed training programme and passes the final test, the trainee will receive a document that describes the training and obtained qualifications.

Deviations from regular examination arrangements are often practiced in lower secondary, upper secondary, higher and adult education. Such arrangements are always based on documentation of specific needs. Arrangements for learners diagnosed with dyslexia include:

- Support for understanding the examination text.
- Use of ICT tools.
- Oral examination instead of written.
- Prolonged examination time.

Prolonged examination time is also often granted pupils with allergies and other medical problems that hamper their pace of work.

Norway has for decades had different “second-chance opportunities” that target early school leavers and dropouts who wish to come back and complete their formal education. In general, one does not have to attend organised education and training courses to be allowed to sit for the exam in individual subjects or full education programmes. Any candidate who meets the intake requirements for a study or training at upper secondary or higher education levels can register and take the exam as an *external candidate*. Candidates in VET must document that they meet formal requirements regarding practical experience. Examinations for private

candidates are organized regularly and are also utilised by ambitious students with a faster learning progress than the average student.

### ***3.2.3 Other adapted professional arrangements that promote inclusion***

Public providers of basic education are obliged to organise education at home or in hospital for pupils with chronic or temporary illnesses that keep them away from school in longer periods.<sup>29</sup>

Higher education normally builds on the successful completion of three years of upper secondary general education. Enrolment is, however, also granted on the basis of a combination of work experience and exams in six general subjects from upper secondary general education. Since 2001, access can furthermore be granted for those older than 25 years on the basis of documented informal and non-formal competencies.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Education Act, adults are entitled to assessment of their qualifications developed through work practice, informal and non-formal learning.<sup>31</sup>

Education and training for the unemployed and for adult immigrants is provided free of charge under the administration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. The volume of provisions varies according to labour market fluctuations and influx of immigrants. These arrangements, as well as education and training for inmates in prisons, are further described in chapter 9.

## **3.3 Financial**

The main purpose of these arrangements is to reduce economic barriers to education attendance by providing support to necessary education costs (textbooks etc) and living costs during the period of studies.

State grants and soft loans are provided by the State Education Loan Fund to all students above compulsory education – young people and adults alike - that are in need of financial support. Loans are interest-free during the studies. Payback starts one year after termination of the studies.<sup>32</sup>

The objective of the educational support from the State Education Loan Fund is to reduce the effect of economic and social inequalities and to ensure equal opportunities in education, in compliance with a major principle in Norwegian education. The financing arrangement aims to ensure that the work environment for students is satisfactory so that they will be able to concentrate on the studies.

The State Education Loan Fund was established in 1947. In 2005-2006, NOK 16.9 billions was allocated to about 276,700 customers, NOK 3,2 billions as grants and NOK 13,8 billions as loans. Today the outstanding debt is about NOK 91,7 billions.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Patients' Rights Act, Chapter 6. See: <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-19990702-063-eng.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Higher education Act, chapter 3. See: <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-19950512-022-eng.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Education Act, Chapter 4. See: <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-19980717-061-eng.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> For more details, see: [http://www.lanekassen.no/templates/Page\\_6768.aspx](http://www.lanekassen.no/templates/Page_6768.aspx)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Kindergartens, schools and training enterprises may apply for additional resources in order to cater for children, pupils and apprentices with specific needs.

Families in need of economic support can get financial assistance through different arrangements organised under other bodies than the MOER:

- Social security arrangements provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion.
- Supplementary benefits provided by the municipalities.
- Housing allowances provided by the Norwegian State Housing Bank.

In many cases these financing arrangements may reduce the barriers for the youth and adults in these families to attend upper secondary and higher education and training.

Financing arrangements to the end of stimulating and promoting adult education include tax relief for enterprises that invest in training of staff, and subsidies to approved non-profit training providers around the country – Adult Education Associations, Distance Education Institutions and Folk High Schools.<sup>34</sup>

### **3.4 Technical**

Technical arrangements are implemented in order to facilitate attendance and participation in regular education activities primarily for learners who are physically challenged, are diagnosed with dyslexia or have difficulties in getting to and from the location of education and training. These arrangements include:

- Free provision of necessary technical equipment, e.g. electric wheelchair, magnifying camera or adapted ICT equipment. The service is provided by the local branches of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV),<sup>35</sup> and the students usually borrow the equipment for the relevant period.
- Free or subsidised transport by taxi, bus or boat for learners in basic education that live more than 2 - 6 km from the school<sup>36</sup> or for other reasons are not able to get to and from the study premises without particularly organised transport.
- The municipalities are obliged to organise free boarding for pupils in compulsory education when daily transport is not appropriate.

For many years, all kindergartens and schools have been built with the necessary facilities to give access to children and pupils with physical challenges. These and other efforts aiming to reduce the barriers to participation of people with different disabilities, and their effects were reviewed in 2003 and new strategies and measures introduced by the government in several areas.<sup>37</sup> Increasing the physical access to all parts of society received particular interest. Today, the “universal access” principle has strong and broad political support. No new public and few private commercial buildings are erected without facilities ensuring access for all.

### **3.5 Stimulating prizes**

Two prizes have been established with the aim to motivate school owners and individual institutions to emphasise inclusive education:

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<sup>34</sup> See chapter 8 for more information about these institutions.

<sup>35</sup> See: <http://www.nav.no/page?id=805312736>

<sup>36</sup> Depending on their age and school level, personal abilities and traffic conditions.

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion 2003. URL:

<http://www.regjeringen.no/Rpub/STM/20022003/040/PDFS/STM200220030040000DDDPDFS.pdf>

*Queen Sonja's school-prize.* This prize, which applies to both compulsory and upper secondary school, is given annually to a school that:

- Practices the pupils' rights for participation and influence.
- Practices adapted education comprehensively.
- Ensures that the pupils experience security and feel that they belong to the school.
- Ensures that each pupil is given positive feedback.
- Has a holistic and long term plan to achieve the goals of equality and inclusiveness, and involves pupils, parents, teachers and the principal in this work.

*The Benjamin Prize.* This prize is given each year to a primary or secondary school that works actively against racism and discrimination.

## **4 How Inclusive? Observations & Reflections on Policy Challenges**

Inclusive education is an ambitious principle and objective. It is given high priority in Norwegian education and training policy. Yet, the presentation and review in this report indicate that there are obvious challenges that must be addressed.

### **4.1 Framework and access**

*Does Norwegian education policy comply with the principles of Inclusive Education? To what degree is the policy regarding Inclusive Education reflected in acts and regulations, funding and administrative arrangements?*

The review in this report shows that the national framework of Norwegian education and training to a large extent is in compliance with major inclusive education principles:

All children, pupils, students and adult learners in the comprehensive LLL system are – on equal terms - legally entitled to access to appropriate education and training, and no one is to be excluded from taking part in learning together with their peers. Instruction is supposed to be adapted to the needs of the learners within the regular learning context, and necessary social, economic and technical support to make it obtainable shall be provided by the education and training authorities.

The system has arrangements for deviation from the regular schedule and content of subjects and programmes, and early school leavers will always have a second chance of coming back to complete what they once disrupted. If the needs of individual learners exceed what can be expected from the teacher, he or she shall be offered special education based on a personal needs assessment by specialists, and discussions with the parents and the learner. Social and career counsellors are available in every education and training institution to the end of securing a good learning environment, and assist the learners with preventing and solving problems that affect the learning in a negative way.

Potential obstacles relating to economy and employment contract conditions for adults wishing to educate further, have been reduced if not completely removed. Systems are in place that ensures validation and documentation of informal and non-formal learning outcomes, and adults can be granted access to higher education based on this documentation.

Targeted regulations and measures shall ensure stimulation and support the language development of linguistic minority learners, including Sami children and pupils. Budgets should be sufficient for implementation: Norwegian spending in education is high, in basic education some 50 per cent above the average for the OECD countries.

## 4.2 Implementation and outcomes

*To which degree does the practicing of inclusive education in the various parts of Norwegian education and training comply with the ideal principles of Inclusive Education and with Norwegian education policy and regulations in this respect? Does the education and training system contribute to social equalisation, as intended?*

In an ideal inclusive education system, all children and youth will have access to relevant education without geographical, cultural or socio-economic obstacles. Once enrolled in the system, which have the necessary capacity, they will receive adapted education for optimal learning progress in a safe and friendly social and learning environment, and show good results.

Our review has shown that the practical implementation of the inclusive education principles is not in accordance with the ambitious policy principles and goals:

Concerning the access, it is observed that there are still some children that are denied a place in kindergarten and hence are not allowed to benefiting from the ECCE, which is proven of vital importance to children's development.<sup>38</sup> Many children from immigrant families do not attend despite the importance of early Norwegian language stimulation and social and mental preparation for a satisfactory learning progress in basic education. One possible reason is the arrangement of cash benefits for one and two-year-olds to parents who do not send their children to kindergarten.

Experience shows that the quality of Norwegian kindergartens is high, and the ECCE attendance in Norway is far above most other OECD countries.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the current government and MOER have still not achieved the policy goal of full coverage. Investments in infrastructure are high and the MOER has proposed that a legal right to a place in kindergarten will be implemented from 2010. But the problem of shortages in professional pre-school teachers remains. A strategy for training of more pre-school teachers has been presented by the MOER, but it is too early to see any effects of this.

In general, institutions and teachers in basic education succeed in establishing and maintaining a positive social environment. The children and pupils identify with and enjoy being at school, and there is not much bullying. Schools and teachers in general provide adapted instruction, but there are indications that many teachers lack necessary competencies in this area. If so, in-service methodological training, increasing the volume of such training in the teacher education programmes, and education and employment of more educationalists with special pedagogic background could possibly reduce the problem. The MOER has initiated a comprehensive review of the teacher role and teacher education. It will be followed by a new teacher training reform that assumedly will give greater emphasis to the issue of adaptation of teaching. The existing diagnostic and support system for adapted and special

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<sup>38</sup> UNESCO 2007. URL: [http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR/2007/Full\\_report.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR/2007/Full_report.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> OECD 2008. URL: [http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_39263238\\_41266761\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3343,en_2649_39263238_41266761_1_1_1_1,00.html)

education represent a massive competence in the field. But it has been questioned whether the resources of PPT and the Statped institutions are being used optimally.

National and international tests show that Norwegian pupils in basic education do not perform at the expected level. Education providers have not succeeded in facilitating an early attainment of basic skills by the pupils. As a consequence, there are too many pupils with weak school results that are let through compulsory school and face severe problems and dropout when entering upper secondary education and training. Since students with highly educated parents tend to get better results in basic education than learners who have parents with little education, one could argue that the education and training system to some degree is actually reproducing social inequalities.

The practical implementation of the LLL policy seems to work well. There is a broad variety of flexible adult education and training opportunities, and the participation rate is high. But adults with a weak educational background participate more seldom in updating and further education and training than those who are highly educated. It is hence a challenge to increase participation in education and training by the least educated adults.

*Are the rights and needs of the identified groups at risk, being met by the education and training system?*

According to a recent report from the Nordic Ombudsmen for children, Sami children give the following description of their own situation relating to education and training:

- The pupils appreciate highly the classes in the Sami language, but the teaching is insufficient.
- There is a lack of textbooks and other teaching aids in the Sami language
- There is a lack of teachers that speak the Sami language
- The “Sami elements” presented in the textbooks and which the majority population relates to, such as reindeer herding as a common Sami means of livelihood, are not representative to the reality of most Sami children today.
- There are examples of discrimination, prejudices and bullying of children based on their Sami origin.

Media has recently presented evidence that support some of these statements, including those on teacher and textbook shortages. The MOER intends to put pressure on the publishing houses, the schools and other relevant actors in order to avoid the textbook shortage problem in the future.

Norwegian and international surveys show that linguistic minority students as a group score lower than linguistic majority pupils. In the national survey of 2007 linguistic minorities scored lower in both reading and in mathematics than linguistic majority pupils. But there are significant differences of attendance and performance between first-generation immigrants and descendants. Research indicates that descendants spend more time on their homework and are more motivated for education and training than linguistic majority students. They furthermore have a higher participation rate in upper secondary education and training than the majority students. Young people with immigrant background are still underrepresented in Norwegian higher education, but descendants (especially girls) have a high participation rate in higher education.

Municipalities and counties seem to take seriously the obligation to ensure inclusion of physical and mentally disabled / challenged children and pupils in ordinary classes. The hearing impaired has got particular political attention in Norway, starting with priorities in several Government Plans of Action for the disabled from 1990 to 2001.<sup>40</sup> Technical equipment is being provided through the local facility centrals and appropriate transport is being organised by the school-owners. Whereas new buildings always meet the physical requirements of universal access – i.e. also for people in wheel chairs etc. – this is more difficult to organise in older schools. A public committee in 2003 concluded that considerations relating to the (physically) disabled often get limited attention, and that it is “a main task” to facilitate the active participation of the disabled at an early stage in the planning of new public buildings and outdoor areas.<sup>41</sup> The Norwegian Federation of Organisations of Disabled People (FFO) works actively and effectively to this end, in collaboration with the national Directorate for Health.

### 4.3 Challenges

From the description above, it seems clear that the most serious challenges in Norwegian education and training regarding achieving the goals of inclusive education and social equalisation are relating to:

- Reducing the dropout rate in upper secondary education and training, with a particular view to VET.
- Improving the general performance of the learners in basic subjects.

Recent research findings show that the two issues are closely interlinked and that the weaknesses in the system have serious consequences in terms of social exclusion. The figure below intends to illustrate possible causal relations between important factors and conditions, and insufficient measures and effects, based on these findings (see also chapter 7). To the degree that the anticipated causalities are valid, the figure indicates where to allocate more resources and target measures in order to improve the results. There are strong indications that great effects could be achieved by strengthening the support system for first and second generation immigrant youth, especially boys.

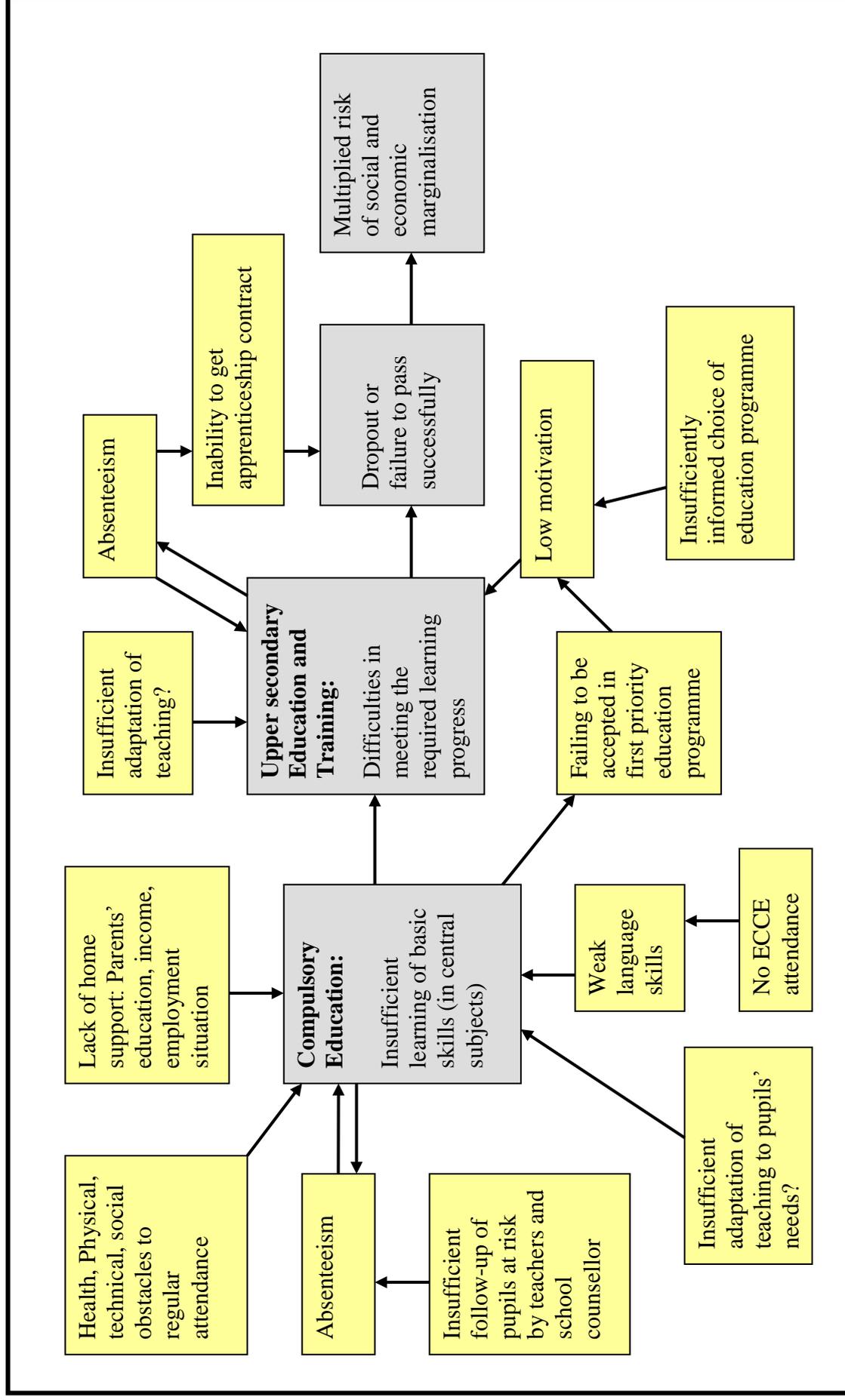
Without doubt, some children are not properly prepared for organised schooling by the time they enter basic education. In addition, on the basis of the documented weak learning

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<sup>40</sup> During this period, some ten ministries coordinated their efforts in order to put in place a cross-sector and comprehensive system for access and participation in society for disabled persons.

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of the Environment 2003. URL: <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/md/dok/NOU-er/2003/NOU-2003-14/8.html?id=382224>

## Possible Causalities in Norwegian Education and Training



achievements of too many pupils, one might question whether the pupils are being motivated for learning and receive the adapted teaching they are entitled to. There is also a question whether all entitled pupils receive special education in accordance with the Education Act.

The framework curriculum for initial teacher education clearly states that adapted teaching shall be an integrated part of all subjects in teacher training.<sup>42</sup> But the question has been raised whether all teachers are sufficiently qualified as regards adaptation and teaching of basic skills when they start working in ECCE or basic education. It might also be that they are not sufficiently trained to identify specific needs of the children and particular difficulties that are hampering the learning progress, such as e.g. dyslexia.

MOER has recently taken several initiatives to address these questions. A broad public committee has been mandated to investigate the current situation and challenges in special pedagogic. Strengthening the counselling services in schools would contribute to an earlier intervention when pupils show indications of problems and absenteeism, and to better-informed choices, and hence to reduced dropout rates. The MOER is planning to split and strengthen the services in compliance with OECD recommendations. But the most important measure is to emphasise much stronger the strengthening of basic skills at an early stage in education.

## **5 Meeting the Challenges: Recent Reforms and Other Policy Initiatives**

Several new initiatives based on findings in recent research have been launched to address the challenges described above. However, it is still too early to expect visible effects on school results and the high dropout rate in upper secondary education and training.

Some of the new initiatives are labelled “reforms”. Others are not, even if they may represent changes in established policies and have significant implications. Below major recent initiatives relevant to inclusive education are presented in brief. More details on the various initiatives will be integrated in the presentations of the individual parts of the education and training system, chapters 6 - 9.

### **5.1 Comprehensive reforms**

#### **5.1.1 The ECCE reform**

When the current government took seat autumn 2005 strengthening of the early childhood care and education (ECCE) was one of its top priorities. Three issues were immediately given full attention:

- Increasing the total capacity in order to achieve universal access
- Low attendance fees, and
- High quality institutions.

The political responsibility for the sector was taken out of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and placed under the Ministry of Education and Research (MOER). This move gave the unmistakable signal that ECCE is seen as a natural first – and very important - part of a coherent education and training system. The new administrative location made it easier to

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<sup>42</sup> MOER 2004. See:

<http://www.regjeringen.no/Rpub/STM/20032004/030/PDFS/STM200320040030000DDDPDFS.pdf>

adapt the content of kindergarten and establish a closer link to primary school, hereby making kindergarten a part of a comprehensive lifelong learning system.<sup>43</sup>

Since the integration in the MOER, the ministry has revised and reformed the formal framework of ECCE and instruments for regulating the professional content. Great efforts have been made in formulating strategies for recruitment and strengthening of the competencies of managers and staff at the institutional level (see chapter 6 for more details).

### **5.1.2 Knowledge Promotion reform**

The Knowledge Promotion was implemented from 2006. This reform comprises all the 13 years in basic education and training. It introduced changes in programme structure, organisation and content of the individual subjects.

The reform does not represent any changes in fundamental political principles or objectives. But it emphasises more strongly than before the development of core skills at an early stage:<sup>44</sup>

- the ability to express oneself orally
- the ability to read
- the ability to do mathematics
- the ability to express oneself in writing
- the ability to make use of information and communication technology

These basic, technical skills have been incorporated into the subject curricula for all subjects, starting in grade one. All teachers are thus responsible for facilitating learning of these skills through their work with the various subjects. The basic skills will enable the learners to participate actively and constructively in the competitive knowledge society and prepare them for lifelong learning. The greater emphasis on basic skills does not imply that the development of social skills and democratic values and attitudes should get less attention. These aspects are elaborated in the Core Curriculum and the Quality Framework.<sup>45</sup>

The reform included the development of new subject curricula in all subjects at all levels, mutually adapted between the levels so as to form coherent learning paths. Instead of overloading the curricula with detailed descriptions of themes and issues to be included in the lessons, the new subject curricula contain clear objectives for what pupils should know and be able to do by the end of each grade.

In general, the new subject curricula are relatively ambitious and the goal achievements of the learners will thus vary. It is the challenge and duty of the teacher to stimulate and facilitate optimal learning by each individual learner through the targeted use of differentiated teaching. The curricula give no instructions regarding teaching materials and organisation of classroom instruction. These are decisions that must be taken at local level by professionals who know the learners and the learning environment.

In accordance with the ILO convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples,<sup>46</sup> all changes in curricula under the knowledge promotion reform were followed by the development of

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<sup>43</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/Selected-topics/kindergarden.html?id=1029>.

<sup>44</sup> See: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/Selected-topics/andre/Knowledge-Promotion/what-is-the-knowledge-promotion.html?id=86769#>

<sup>45</sup> See chapter 6 for further details.

<sup>46</sup> Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, ILO, 1989

similar curricula for the Sami People. This was done in close collaboration with the Sami Parliament. The Sami curricula today are more or less similar to the Norwegian. For some of the subjects, for instance maths, the two curricula are identical. In other subjects, such as history, the Sami curriculum gives more space for the history of the Sami people. Sami language is a special subject, which can be chosen either as their first or second language.

The Knowledge Promotion encourages greater variations in learning methods and learning arenas, more practical learning and more collaboration between schools and external institutions and enterprises. This will give the pupils insight into different working processes, practical working experience and knowledge about working life. It will furthermore contribute to giving the pupils a better basis for making an informed choice of further education and future profession or vocation.

The greater variation in pedagogical approaches and collaboration with external partners harmonise with major principles of entrepreneurship education. There are, in general, many overlaps between principles and goals underlined in the Core Curriculum and the Quality Framework on the one hand, and similar principles and goals in the Entrepreneurship Education Strategy (see below). In the autumn of 2007, a new elective subject was introduced in upper secondary general education: “Entrepreneurship and Business Development”.<sup>47</sup>

### **5.1.3 The quality reform in higher education**

A quality reform was implemented in higher education in 2003.<sup>48</sup> The overall objectives were to strengthen the quality of education and research at universities and university colleges, and to align Norwegian higher education with the so-called Bologna process.<sup>49</sup>

Major elements in the reform<sup>50</sup> were the introduction of a new degree structure with bachelor, master and PhD degrees, a new grading system (A – F) and a system of credit awards aligned with the ECTS model (European Credit Transfer System).

Quality assurance was strengthened by:

- The establishment of NOKUT, the national institution for quality control in higher education.<sup>51</sup>
- The introduction of a national system for accreditation of higher education institutions.
- Mandatory establishment of internal quality control systems at higher education institutions and institutional responsibilities for the implementation and documentation of internal quality controls.

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<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/62.htm>

<sup>47</sup> See:

[http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/templates/UDIR/TM\\_Læreplan.aspx?id=2100&laereplanid=408300](http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/templates/UDIR/TM_Læreplan.aspx?id=2100&laereplanid=408300)

<sup>48</sup> Presented in the White Paper, MOER 2001. See:

<http://www.regjeringen.no/Rpub/STM/20002001/027/PDFA/STM200020010027000DDDPDFA.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> The process started with the publication of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, which generated a range of reforms in European countries to make European higher education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive. The Bologna Process aims to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010, in which students can choose from a wide and transparent range of high quality courses and benefit from smooth recognition procedures. See: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html)

<sup>50</sup> See: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/Selected-topics/Higher-Education/Degree-structure-and-grading-system.html?id=491287>

<sup>51</sup> See: <http://www.nokut.no/sw335.asp>

The reform was followed by the introduction of a new Act relating to higher education institutions.<sup>52</sup> The act introduced a common framework regarding the institutions' rights to establish and phase out study programmes, obligations regarding quality assurance of programmes and provisions, as well as the rights and duties of students.

Other important elements of the reform comprised:

- Increased emphasis on ensuring a good learning environment for the students.
- Closer follow-up of each individual student, including continuous tutoring and feedback during the study period.
- New evaluation arrangements, implying greater emphasis on frequent assessment of the individual students during the study period, and less emphasis on the final examination.
- Adjustments in the national study financing system with the aim to award study progression and quality research.
- Increased emphasis on international cooperation and student exchange.
- The establishment of the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education, SIU.<sup>53</sup>

The Quality Reform was a reform of both structure and content. In general, it gave greater autonomy to the individual institutions as regards the organisation of their activities, but also a greater responsibility for the institutional achievements in education and research.

An evaluation report from 2007 concludes that it is still too early to establish whether or not the Quality Reform has actually caused quality improvements in higher education.<sup>54</sup> Both students and staff has been subjected to new framework conditions and increased challenges in terms of more pressure for documented achievements. New teaching and evaluation approaches, including the introduction of individual education plans for students, have caused closer relations between students and teachers. The average credit achievements per student has increased.

The evaluation report underlines the heterogeneity of students regarding abilities and needs. The Quality Reform has caused a closer follow-up of students, but also increased demands related to compulsory attendance, compulsory reports and more examinations. It is important that the system adapts to the varied needs of students, but this must be balanced against the need to keep up the learning and progress expectations to the students. The institutions are encouraged to continue the development work regarding individual study plans.

## **5.2 Targeted strategies and action plans for inclusion and improved performance**

### **5.2.1 Early intervention**

The MOER presented the White Paper "Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning"<sup>55</sup> in spring 2007. In this document the government presents an active policy aiming to reduce social and

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<sup>52</sup> See: <http://www.lovddata.no/all/nl-20050401-015.html>

<sup>53</sup> See: <http://www.siu.no/en>

<sup>54</sup> MOER 2007: St.meld. nr. 7 (2007-2008): Statusrapport for Kvalitetsreformen i høgre utdanning. See: <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/2033172/PDFS/STM200720080007000DDDPDFS.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Report No 16 (2006-2007) to the parliament. See: <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/2006-2007/Report-No-16-2006-2007-to-the-Storting.html?id=499227>

economic inequalities in society. It expresses commitment to combating poverty and other forms of marginalisation and outlines how education can be a means of social levelling. International surveys indicate that other countries have been more successful than Norway in reducing social differences.

The probability of succeeding in the education system should be made less dependent on family background. According to the government, the possibilities lie in early intervention. It is a great potential for reducing social inequalities by implementing targeted measures in early childhood, and the socio-economic benefits of providing effective measures for children who need extra stimulation are very high.

Early childhood is an important period for developing communication skills, conceptual understanding and vocabulary. The child health clinics are the only institution that, in principle, meets each and every preschool child, including those who do not attend kindergartens. The clinics are supposed to assess the children's language development at the regular two and four-year health controls. A systematic observation of communication skills, language understanding and spoken language is to be conducted as part of the general medical examination. There are indications, however, that there is an unfortunate lack of systematic approach to language evaluation at the clinics.

The White Paper underlines the importance of having full kindergarten coverage and a legal right for all children to a place in kindergarten. Other targeted measures in ECCE and primary education include:

- Mechanisms to ensure needs-based language stimulation at pre-school age for all children.
- Follow-up project for children in ECCE with delayed language development.
- Emphasis on the development of oral and reading skills from grade one.
- Assessment of the organisation and content of general teacher education and making the necessary adjustments to enable new teachers to meet the new education policy requirements.
- Considerations regarding introducing new national regulations that specify minimum qualifications required to teach important subjects at the various levels.
- Ensuring a close follow-up of new teachers when they start working in kindergartens and schools.
- Continued substantial investments in competence-building for the various groups of teachers and ensure that municipalities and counties use funds as intended.

The policy document furthermore notifies that a comprehensive research programme on learning and teaching will be established and that the transfer of research results to the education sector will be strengthened.

### ***5.2.2 Measures on language stimulation***

The PISA results of 2000 and 2001 led to considerable attention being given to the development of reading skills in Norwegian education. Several new initiatives have been taken with the aim to improve children's and young peoples' reading skills:

*Make Room for Reading* 2003-2007<sup>56</sup> was a national strategy aiming to motivate pupils to read and improve their reading skills. The strategy encouraged the schools to design their own strategies for reading skills development. Schools launched a variety of local projects, competence development for teachers and national reading campaigns. They report positive results, although this cannot always be proven statistically.

The national strategic plan *Languages Open Doors* (2005 – 2009)<sup>57</sup> set out aims and launched a wide range of measures to improve the teaching of foreign languages in primary and secondary education.

In recent years inclusive education in the sense of including pupils from other language and cultural backgrounds has been at the focus of education in Norway. Surveys show that especially boys from minority cultures are at risk of being marginalised.

The municipalities are obliged to provide language training for pupils from linguistic minorities. Some 6-7 per cent of the pupils in primary and secondary school receive special Norwegian language training. The largest minority language groups in 2006 were Urdu, Somali, Arabic, Kurdish, Vietnamese, Albanian and Turkish.

To ensure that migrant children learn the Norwegian language, the MOER in 2007 developed a *level based subject curriculum in Norwegian* based on the European Framework for Foreign Languages.<sup>58</sup> This replaced the curriculum in Norwegian as a second language, which was based on age. Immigrant pupils have a right to special instruction in Norwegian or bilingual subject education until they have sufficient mastery of the language to join ordinary classes. A new, standardised assessment tool has been developed, to make it easier to decide when students have sufficient proficiency to follow the regular curriculum.

To support newly arrived pupils, mother tongue instruction can also be given, and the MOER has designed a level based subject curriculum in mother tongue instruction for this group. In 2006 over 40.000 pupils in primary and secondary school representing over 120 languages received tuition in their mother tongue because they did not yet master the Norwegian language sufficiently to follow tuition in Norwegian. When they are able to comprehend Norwegian they are phased over from tuition in the minority language to the curriculum for basic Norwegian for minority language learners.

The plan “Equal education in practice!”<sup>59</sup> is a national strategy for better teaching and greater participation of linguistic minorities in kindergartens, schools and education for the period 2007-2009. The strategy plan has five primary goals:

1. Improve language skills among linguistic minority children of pre-school age.
2. Improve the school performance of linguistic minority students in primary and secondary education and training.

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<sup>56</sup> MOER 2003. See: [http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/rapporter\\_planer/rapporter/2003/Gi-rom-for-lesing.html?id=106009](http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/rapporter_planer/rapporter/2003/Gi-rom-for-lesing.html?id=106009)

<sup>57</sup> MOER 2007. Revised version. See:

[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Strategiplaner/UDIR\\_SprakApnerDorer\\_07nett.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Strategiplaner/UDIR_SprakApnerDorer_07nett.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> MOER 2007x. See:

[http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/templates/UDIR/TM\\_Lareplan.aspx?id=2100&laereplanid=431050](http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/templates/UDIR/TM_Lareplan.aspx?id=2100&laereplanid=431050)

<sup>59</sup> MOER 2007b. See:

[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Strategiplaner/UDIR\\_Likeverdige\\_opplaering2\\_07.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Strategiplaner/UDIR_Likeverdige_opplaering2_07.pdf)

3. Increase the proportion of linguistic minority students and apprentices who commence and complete upper secondary education and training.
4. Increase the proportion of linguistic minority students in higher education and improve opportunities for completing education.
5. Improve Norwegian language proficiency among linguistic minority adults to increase opportunities for education and active participation in society and working life.

Important actions in the plan include:

- Improvement of language teaching.
- Increased recruitment of linguistic minority teachers at all education levels.
- Closer collaboration between the school and the families of the individual pupils.
- Strengthening of the career guidance and counselling in school.
- Measures to improve opportunities for apprenticeships and strengthening of the trainee candidate scheme.
- Development of more flexible and goal-oriented teaching for students with insufficient education and short residence time in Norway.
- Increased recruitment of students with an immigrant background into higher education.
- Recruitment of more people with a linguistic minority background to teacher training.
- Establishment of flexible and goal-oriented education for adult immigrants.
- Introduction of arrangements to ensure that more adult immigrants complete Norwegian education and that they pass the language tests.

In May 2008, the MOER published the White Paper “*Languages Build Bridges*”<sup>60</sup> on language stimulation and language education for children, young people and adults. The policy document takes a comprehensive view of language education and thus covers all languages in education. It presents measures to improve language skills at all levels from pre-school to university. Particular emphasis is placed on developing the reading skills in Norwegian, motivating more students for foreign language studies and improving language education for migrant children. Measures are being implemented from 2008.

Learners with a different language background than Norwegian are allowed to use their mother tongue as the subject requirement for foreign language in the upper secondary general education. Examinations in around 60 languages are prepared each year for these pupils.

### ***5.2.3 Initiatives for improving the learning environment***

Every individual spend major parts of their childhood and youth in the education system. They are entitled to a physical and psycho-social learning environment that is safe and attractive. Norwegian learners have traditionally scored high on well-being in international education surveys. But development and maintenance of a good school environment requires continuous efforts.

On this background UDIR in 2005 presented a new strategic plan for the learning environment in basic education.<sup>61</sup> The strategy represents a framework with several measures and sub-strategies that are subjected to revision and updating according to identified needs.

<sup>60</sup> MOER 2008 c. See: <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/2077013/PDFS/STM200720080023000DDDDPDFS.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> UDIR 2005. See: [http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/Brosjyrer/learning\\_environment.pdf](http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/Brosjyrer/learning_environment.pdf)

Experience shows that measures that include the whole education institution, in general are more successful than more limited interventions. Thus, the strategy aims to strengthen the competencies of school owners and managers to use holistic approaches when working to ensure a good school environment.

According to the strategy: *“A good learning Environment respects the diversity among pupils, apprentices and parents, and is accommodating the variety of their qualifications and needs.”*<sup>62</sup> The strategy will assist the institutions to develop into learning organisations that will succeed in adapting the learning content and pedagogical approaches to the individual pupil and apprentice.

Important institutionalised and compulsory arrangements aiming to actively involve pupils and their parents in ensuring a good learning environment include:<sup>63</sup>

- Every primary and lower secondary school shall have a coordinating committee with two representatives for the teaching staff, one for other employees, two for the parents’ council, two for the pupils and two for the municipality. The coordinating committee has the right to express its views on all matters relating to the school.
- Every primary and lower secondary school shall have a parents’ council, where all parents who have children at the school are members. The parents’ council shall promote the joint interests of the parents and help to ensure that pupils and parents take an active part in working to create a satisfactory school environment. The parents’ council shall promote an atmosphere of solidarity between home and school, lay a basis for contentment and positive development for the pupils and foster contact between the school and the local community.
- The government appoints a National Parents’ Committee for Primary and Lower Secondary Education with a chairman, vice-chairman and five other members. The term of office is four years. The committee provides various types of services to parents and parents’ councils and is an advisory committee for the MOER.<sup>64</sup>
- At each upper secondary school there shall be a coordinating committee consisting of representatives for the staff and the county authority and two representatives elected by the pupils’ council.
- Every school must have a “School Environment Committee” where pupils and parents hold the majority of seats. In upper secondary education, parents are not represented, and the students are in majority.
- Every school must have a “Pupils’ Council”, with representation from all classes.

It is the responsibility of the principal that the members of the School Environment Committee and the Pupils’ Council are properly trained for the work. The teacher has a central role as the motivator and facilitator for student participation.

UDIR has organised several permanent web-based surveys with the aim to get updated information about the opinion of students and apprentices, parents and staff on the education activities and learning environment. The parents’ survey is available in several languages in

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Page 8.

<sup>63</sup> These measures are mandatory according to the Education Act. See: <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-19980717-061-eng.pdf>, Chapter 11.

<sup>64</sup> See [http://www.foreldrenettet.no/data/f/0/26/63/4\\_2401\\_0/Serviceerkl\\_eng\\_web2.pdf](http://www.foreldrenettet.no/data/f/0/26/63/4_2401_0/Serviceerkl_eng_web2.pdf) for further information.

order to reach ethnic minority groups.<sup>65</sup> The respondents have given valuable inputs to policy adjustments and the introduction of new measures to improve the learning environment.

In addition to the permanent and institutionalised arrangements aiming to improve the learning environment, several measures and sub-strategies have recently been introduced and are being implemented. Some of them are presented below:

Since 2005, UDIR has administered the programme; *“Knowledge Promotion – from Word to Action”*.<sup>66</sup> The aim of the programme is to enable institutions from kindergarten to upper secondary level to create an improved learning environment and better social and learning progress of the learners through organisational development.

The programme is a research and developments (R&D) programme and has so far given financial support to 74 projects that involve more than 175 kindergartens and schools. The eligible projects focus on the practical implementation of the Knowledge Promotion reform, early intervention to ensure the development of language skills and basic skills, or an increased rate of successful completion in upper secondary education and training. Participating institutions link up with competence centres or resource persons. These fill the role of mentors and take responsibility for documentation of processes, approaches and tools that are piloted. The school owner takes active part in the development work in order to ensure local capacity development and dissemination of new knowledge, working methods and tools to more schools.

A new programme on inclusive learning environment is being prepared and will be presented early 2009.

The first *“Manifesto against Bullying”* was signed in September 2002 by the government and major stakeholder organisations in the child care and education sector.<sup>67</sup> A revised version was signed in 2005 and a new revision is planned for 2009.<sup>68</sup>

The Manifesto parties work actively to prevent children and young people from being exposed to physical or psychological bullying, violence, racism, homophobia, discrimination and social exclusion. The parties also work to strengthen the roles of kindergartens and schools as instruments for social equalisation and inclusion.

In addition to the national initiatives, there are many interesting and important initiatives at local and institutional levels aiming to ensure an inclusive and good learning environment. For instance, many institutions from kindergarten to universities have arrangements to ensure a smooth and rapid social integration of new children and students, including the use of established learners as appointed “guides and guardians” to the newcomer. In some municipalities and counties, the schools are offered assistance to establish systems for student mediation in conflict resolution.

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<sup>65</sup> See: [http://www.undanningsdirektoratet.no/templates/UDIR/TM\\_Artikkel.aspx?id=3980](http://www.undanningsdirektoratet.no/templates/UDIR/TM_Artikkel.aspx?id=3980)

<sup>66</sup> UDIR 2005: Kunnskapsløftet - fra ord til handling (2005-2009). <http://UDIR.no/fraordtilhandling>

<sup>67</sup> Including the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, which organises all public school owners, the Union of Education Norway, which is the largest trade union for teachers and instructors, the National Parents’ Committee for Primary and Lower Secondary Education and the Ombudsman for Children.

<sup>68</sup> More details on the Manifesto and Action Plan:

[http://www.UDIR.no/templates/UDIR/TM\\_Artikkel.aspx?id=2109](http://www.UDIR.no/templates/UDIR/TM_Artikkel.aspx?id=2109)

#### 5.2.4 *Entrepreneurship education strategy*

In 2004, the Government presented a new strategy for entrepreneurship education in Norway: “See the Opportunities and make them work!”. It was prepared in collaboration between the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and the MOER. The strategy was revised in 2006.<sup>69</sup> (MOER 2006c).

According to the national strategy:<sup>70</sup>

*“Entrepreneurship is a dynamic and social process where individuals, alone or in collaboration, identify opportunities for innovation and act upon these by transforming ideas into practical and targeted activities, whether in a social, cultural or economic context.”*

The entrepreneurship education strategy describes entrepreneurship as a means to renew education and training, as an educational objective and training approach. The strategy aims to motivate educational institutions, teachers and school owners to plan and implement entrepreneurship training in cooperation with private enterprises and other relevant partners in the local community.

The entrepreneurship education strategy comprises the entire educational career from primary school to college and university, including teacher training. It encourages the establishment of student enterprises, visiting institutions and enterprises in the local community, and including entrepreneurial thinking as part of various subjects in mainstream education. Obviously, the pedagogical approaches vary greatly between the different education levels.

Entrepreneurship in education includes the development of:

- Personal qualities and attitudes that increase the probability of a person seeing opportunities and doing something about them. Work on entrepreneurship in education should primarily emphasise development of personal qualities and attitudes. In that way a basis is laid for later utilisation of knowledge and skills in active productive work;
- Knowledge and skills concerning *what* must be done to establish a new enterprise, and *how* to develop an idea into a successful enterprise, whether social, cultural or commercial.

Successful entrepreneurship education has many positive aspects that clearly comply with major principles and objectives of the Knowledge Promotion reform:

- It is inclusive by being flexible and hence gives good opportunities for adapting the teaching to the students’ abilities and interests.
- It is inclusive by being attractive also to pupils with a less theoretical orientation, who often struggle with the more traditional school subjects.
- It represents active participation by the learners, and learning by doing.
- It stimulates and develops creativity and innovative thinking.
- It promotes the development of self-confidence and gives the learners courage to take personal initiatives.
- It promotes social and cultural competencies.

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<sup>69</sup> MOER 2006c:

[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Strategiplaner/See\\_the\\_opportunities\\_and\\_make\\_them\\_work\\_2204-2008.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Strategiplaner/See_the_opportunities_and_make_them_work_2204-2008.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Page 5

- It involves cross-disciplinary working methods and gives the students an understanding of how school subjects are interlinked in the world outside the education system.
- It gives valuable insights in the social, cultural and working life, and hence gives the students a better foundation for informed choices of further education and training, and professional career.

The responsibility for national administration and further development of the entrepreneurship education strategy is placed with UDIR. A national consortium organised as a private foundation and financed jointly by major public and private partner organisations, provides advice and support to the education and training institutions on the establishment and operation of student enterprises. The foundation, Junior Achievement - Young Enterprise Norway (JA-YE Norway), has offices in all the 19 counties and has developed programmes for all levels of education. In 2008, some 100 000 pupils and students are registered in the JA-YE Norway's programmes.<sup>71</sup>

The entrepreneurship education strategy has many positive aspects in the perspective of learning. In a broader and more long-term perspective, the entrepreneurship training is expected to contribute to the development of socio-cultural responsibility, positive attitudes to productive work and innovation, and a culture propagating entrepreneurship. This will in turn stimulate the development of new production and employment opportunities.

#### ***5.2.5 Creative Learning. Strategy for art and culture in education***

This plan is presented within the framework of the Knowledge Promotion reform. The objective of the Strategic Plan is to develop competence in arts and culture, aesthetics and creativity among children, pupils, students and staff in institutions at all levels from ECCE to higher education. The idea is that art and culture may unify and provide opportunities for interaction and understanding between people with different cultural backgrounds.

According to the new National Curriculum in basic education, young people need broad cultural insight and competencies in order to participate actively in a multicultural society. Hence: "... education shall enable them to acquire knowledge on different cultures and experience a wide range of forms of expression. Education shall promote cultural understanding and develop self-insight and identity, respect and tolerance. The pupils shall experience art and cultural expressions that express humankind's individuality and togetherness, and which stimulate their creativity and innovative abilities. They shall also have the opportunity to use their creative powers through varied activities and forms of expression. This can lay the basis for reflection, emotions and spontaneity."<sup>72</sup>

The Strategic Plan includes measures aiming to let cultural diversity in society be reflected in art and culture in education. It encourages exchange of experiences with other nations and cultures to improve the work on art and culture in education.

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<sup>71</sup> For more details, see:

[http://english.ue.no/pls/apex/f?p=16000:1002:3961442701913479:::1002:P1002\\_HID\\_ID:6405](http://english.ue.no/pls/apex/f?p=16000:1002:3961442701913479:::1002:P1002_HID_ID:6405)

<sup>72</sup> UDIR 2006: Quality Framework, page 3. See:

[http://www.UDIR.no/upload/larerplaner/Fastsatte\\_lareplaner\\_for\\_Kunnskapsloeftet/prinsipper\\_lk06\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.UDIR.no/upload/larerplaner/Fastsatte_lareplaner_for_Kunnskapsloeftet/prinsipper_lk06_Eng.pdf)

### 5.2.6 Others

The strategic plan “*A joint promotion of Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST)*”<sup>73</sup> was introduced in 2006 and is meant as a tool for the many partners that are involved in the efforts to strengthen MST in Norway. The overall objectives are to strengthen the competences of Norwegians in MST and to improve the recruitment to studies in these areas. The plan points to areas of MST where the needs of improvement are particularly important. A plan of targeted measures is presented annually by the MOER, based on reported development.

The *Action Plan for Gender Equality in ECCE and Basic Education*<sup>74</sup> was presented in April 2008. It comprise a series of measures with the aim to promote greater gender equality in kindergartens and basic education institutions. Many of them are already integrated in curricula and framework plans of these institutions.

The action plan puts up three major objectives:

- The social and learning environment in kindergartens and basic education shall promote equality between boys and girls.
- The gender balance in selection of education of career paths shall be better, in particular as regards VET and recruitment of girls to studies in mathematics and science.
- The gender balance among the staff in ECCE and basic education shall be better. The male ratio in kindergartens shall be increased.

The Government has also launched comprehensive plans for combating forced marriages<sup>75</sup> and genital mutilation<sup>76</sup>. A major element in both plans, which contain several measures, is preventive actions in the kindergarten and schools. One measure to combat forced marriages is to prevent that students drop out of upper secondary education.

### 5.3 Renewed Focus on Quality in Basic Education

In June 2008 the government presented a White Paper on Quality in Education.<sup>77</sup> The document first and foremost gives additional political priority to and intends to ensure the quality and effect of policies and strategies that have been presented during the last couple of years. The White Paper addresses the relatively low performance of Norwegian pupils in reading, maths and science, documented in the international PISA studies.<sup>78</sup>

Research consistently emphasises the importance of early intervention in order to improve learning outcomes (Heckman 2007, Taylor *et al.* 2007, OECD 2007, Markussen *et al.* 2008). Policy measures are proposed for increasing early intervention in accordance with the Early Intervention strategy (see section 3.6). Some of the measures are also targeting the children in ECCE. In basic education, MOER suggests to introduce mandatory diagnostic tests in reading

<sup>73</sup> [http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/kilde/kd/pla/2006/0003/ddd/pdfv/294463-strategi\\_engelsk.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/kilde/kd/pla/2006/0003/ddd/pdfv/294463-strategi_engelsk.pdf)

<sup>74</sup> MOER 2008c.. See:

[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Likestilling/KD\\_Handlingsplan%20for%20likestilling\\_web\\_09\\_08.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Likestilling/KD_Handlingsplan%20for%20likestilling_web_09_08.pdf)

<sup>75</sup> Ministry of Children and Equality 2001: Handlingsplan mot tvangsekteskap. See:

[http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/bld/dok/rapporter\\_planer/planer/2001/Handlingsplan-mot-tvangsekteskap.html?id=276888&showdetailedtableofcontents=true](http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/bld/dok/rapporter_planer/planer/2001/Handlingsplan-mot-tvangsekteskap.html?id=276888&showdetailedtableofcontents=true)

<sup>76</sup> Ministry of Children and Equality 2000: Handlingsplan mot kjønnslemlestelse. See:

[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/kilde/bfd/rap/2000/0009/ddd/pdfv/171774-q-1012f\\_handl\\_plan\\_mot\\_kjonnslem\\_fransk.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/kilde/bfd/rap/2000/0009/ddd/pdfv/171774-q-1012f_handl_plan_mot_kjonnslem_fransk.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> MOER 2008. See: <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/2084909/PDFS/STM200720080031000DDDPDFS.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> OECD 2007.

and math in grades 1-3, and to finance additional teaching resources for follow-up of unsatisfactory results in reading and mathematics. The funding will be combined with a new regulation requiring municipalities to strengthen teaching for pupils with poor performance in these subjects.

MOER furthermore highlights the importance of teacher quality and school leadership and proposes the systematic use of in-service updating training of teachers and school leaders. High priority is given to training that leads to formal accreditation.

The White Paper proposes to further develop and expand the national assessment system, such as national tests in reading, maths and English at grade 9 in lower secondary education, in addition to present tests at grade 5 and 8. Mandatory diagnostic tests in reading and math will be introduced in the first grade in the upper secondary education. In addition, steps are taken to facilitate the use of performance information at the local level. The improved monitoring system will give reliable feedback on the current situation and indicate where to concentrate targeted interventions, at national as well as local and institutional levels. One assumption is that the strengthened monitoring system will increase the performance pressure on both teachers and learners. This could actually cause higher performance.

In the document MOER proposes to strengthen local accountability of the municipalities by requesting that they submit annual reports on the results of each school. The Ministry will provide extraordinary government support to schools with low performance.

#### ***5.4 The further development***

The particularly high dropout rate in upper secondary VET causes serious worries. Thus, the MOER is investigating whether policy changes and targeted measures in this part of the education and training system could promote improvement of performance. A broad, public committee has been appointed to find answers to this question.<sup>79</sup>

Two other committees are looking into the broad issues of teacher training and special education, respectively. It is expected that their reports will initiate major changes to the aim of strengthening adapted and special education at early stages of education and training.

Among other targeted measures that have been proposed for promoting improved accomplishment and reduced dropout, is a strengthening of the school counselling services in basic education. A close follow-up on students at risk and immediate reaction in case of absenteeism or other deviances from regulations, could prevent problem aggravation and eventual dropout. OECD argues that strengthening of the career guidance could have positive effect on several policy concerns and contribute to reducing dropouts.<sup>80</sup> Another committee is working on the question of how to promote equal education for linguistic minorities in kindergartens, schools and higher education institutions. The committee will present its report by May 2009.

The government is furthermore considering how compulsory education can be given a more practical orientation, with the aim to increase motivation and give new opportunities to pupils with a less theoretical orientation.

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<sup>79</sup> The Karlsen committee. See: <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dep/Styrer-rad-og-utvalg/utvalget-for-fag--og-yrkesopplaringen-.html?id=479449>

<sup>80</sup> OECD 2002. See: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/38/24/1937973.pdf>

## **PART 2: A CLOSER LOOK AT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE VARIOUS AREAS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **6 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**

#### **6.1 Policy goals and principles, laws and regulations**

The Norwegian name of the institutions for care and education of children under school age is 'barnehage', a direct translation of the German word 'Kindergarten'. Kindertartens in Norway are for children aged 0 – 5 years.

The first Kindergarten Act in Norway entered into force in 1975. Today's Kindergarten Act (Act no. 64 of June 2005 relating to Kindertartens) entered into force January 2006. According to the Act, kindertartens shall provide children with good opportunities for development and activity in close understanding and collaboration with the children's homes (section 1). It furthermore states that "Kindertartens shall take account of children's age, level of functioning, gender, and social, ethnic and cultural background, including the language and culture of Sami Children" (section 2).

Kindertartens are pedagogical institutions that comprise care, upbringing, play and learning. According to the needs of the families, the kindertartens offer full-time or part-time places. Besides being a good pedagogical institution for children, the kindertartens also take care of children while their parents work or study. Almost 80 per cent of Norwegian women 15 – 64 years of age are in the labour force (OECD; Employment Outlook, 2005). The kindertartens therefore also are a means to promote gender equality.

Inclusion is an overall goal in the kindergarten system in Norway. According to the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks for Kindertartens (MOER 2006d), which is a regulation to the Kindergarten Act, the social role of kindertartens in Norway is to offer pre-school children a care and educational environment that benefits each child. They should provide both education and a public service to the parents of young children. Kindertartens shall support and take into account individual children, whilst also looking after the common interests of the children. Kindertartens shall increase the opportunities that children have to learn and participate actively in a peer group. Kindertartens have a responsibility for the early prevention of discrimination and to foster inclusion. It is the policy of the government that diversity should be welcomed and promoted through "Inclusion and participation – responsibility and freedom". Diversity has to be seen as a positive factor in society. The Norwegian Government has decided 2008 to be "The Year of Diversity".<sup>81</sup>

According to the Kindergarten Act, children with disabilities and children who are objects of an administrative decision pursuant to the Child Welfare Service Act shall be given priority for admission to a kindergarten. An expert assessment shall be carried out to determine whether the child has a disability. The main reason for giving these children priority is their special need for play and interaction with other children, in order to give them good possibilities in life. The ministry has published a guiding booklet concerning the inclusion of children with disabilities in kindertartens.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kkd/aktuelt/nyheter/2008/Mangfoldsaret-2008-er-i-gang.html?id=496116>  
Temahefte om barn med nedsatt funksjonsevne i barnehagen, Kunnskapsdepartementet 2008, F-4242 B.

## 6.2 Political and administrative responsibilities at various levels

One of the main goals of today's government is a place in kindergarten for all children whose parents want it.

The municipality is the local authority for kindergartens and is obliged to ensure that there are available a sufficient number of places in public and private kindergartens for pre-school children. The municipalities take decisions on approval of private and public kindergartens. All private kindergartens are legally entitled to approval provided they are suitable in terms of purpose and content and meet the requirements stated in the Kindergarten Act.

Owners of kindergartens, private as well as public, are obliged to present written statutes for the institution, including ownership, purpose, admission criteria etc. The owner must run the undertaking in accordance with the statutes and public regulations and provide information on accounts and services. The municipality is the immediate supervising authority and ensures that kindergartens are operated in accordance with current regulations.

The County Governor is responsible for providing guidance to municipalities and owners of kindergartens and for controlling that each municipality fulfils its duty as the local authority for the sector. The county governor also handles other matters on behalf of the MOER, e.g. distribution of state grants to the kindergartens.

## 6.3 The Content of Kindergartens

The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens<sup>83</sup> is a regulation to the Kindergarten Act. It states that kindergartens must lay a sound foundation for the children's development, life-long learning and active participation in a democratic society. Care, upbringing and learning must promote human dignity, equality, intellectual freedom, tolerance, health and appreciation of sustainable development. The Plan furthermore decides that all kindergartens must work goal-oriented with children's development and learning, and stimulate children's linguistic and social competence. The Framework Plan outline seven comprehensive learning areas that children should be acquainted with in the kindergarten:

- Communication, language and text
- Body, movement and health
- Art, culture and creativity
- Nature, environment and technology
- Ethics, religion and philosophy
- Local community and society
- Numbers, spaces and shapes

There is an obvious coherence between the Framework Plan and the Curricula for Norwegian primary schools. The learning areas are to a great extent the same that children will meet again as subjects at school.

Childhood is a phase of life with intrinsic value; hence kindergartens must be inclusive communities with space for each child. According to the Framework plan: "Staff is responsible for ensuring all children, regardless of their level of functioning, age, gender and

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<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Education and Research 2006

family background, feel that they and everyone else in the group are important to the community, Kindergartens shall provide an environment in which different individuals and different cultural expressions meet with respect for their differences. Looking at differences and similarities can help to foster understanding and insights. Encountering something that is different from yourself allows you to develop a curiosity about the similarities and differences between people and cultures.(...) Kindergartens have a particular responsibility for preventing social problems and for discovering children with special needs. (...) Many children do not have Norwegian as their mother tongue, and learn Norwegian as a second language in the kindergarten. It is important that these children are understood and get the opportunity to express themselves. Kindergartens must support them in their use of their mother tongue, whilst working actively to promote their Norwegian language skills.(...) Kindergartens shall (therefore) facilitate dialogue and interaction between different groups, on an equal footing”.<sup>84</sup>

The Ministry has developed a guide booklet on “Linguistic and Cultural Diversity”<sup>85</sup> to inspire the kindergarten staff in their work with diversity. A national survey to the municipalities<sup>86</sup> commissioned by the ministry indicated that approximately 90 per cent of the public and 72 per cent of the private kindergartens use different kinds of programmes and pedagogical tools for language stimulation. The governmental budget has earmarked grants for language stimulation in ECCE.

## 6.4 Participation

Full kindergarten coverage is one of the most important goals for the Norwegian Government. By mid 2008, most municipalities have reached the goal whereas some of the large cities have problems meeting the demand for places.

At the end of 2007, a total of almost 250 000 children attended kindergarten (Statistics Norway 2008). This is an increase of 15 000 children from 2006. Over 215 000 children had a full-time place,<sup>87</sup> an increase of 21 000 from the previous year.

In 2007, the proportion of children aged 1-5 who attended kindergarten was 84 per cent, an increase of 4 percentage points from 2006. In all counties the participation rate was 76 per cent or more. For children aged 1-2, 69 per cent attended kindergarten, while 94 per cent of children aged 3-5 did. Approximately 18 900 children with minority language background attended kindergarten. This is 63 per cent of minority language children aged 1 – 5 years.

A shortage of kindergarten places and the financial situation of families are the main reasons why some children do not attend kindergarten. A national kindergarten survey<sup>88</sup> indicated that about 1 000 more children would attend kindergarten if today’s parental fee is reduced with 100 NOK per month, while 84 per cent of those who did not apply for a place answered that their choice was not dependent of price. 65 per cent of those who did not want a place for their child wanted to take care of their child themselves, whereas seven per cent said the price was too high, 1 per cent did not believe they would get a place, 11 per cent had other forms of child care and 17 per cent had other reasons. One explanation is the “cash benefit scheme” in operation over the last years. This is an alternative for parents with children between one and three years of age who do not use kindergarten or combine part-time kindergarten with a

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<sup>84</sup> Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens, MOER 2006.

<sup>85</sup> Temahefte om språklig og kulturelt mangfold, Kunnskapsdepartementet 2006, F-4214 B

<sup>86</sup> Rambøll 2008

<sup>87</sup> 33 hours or more per week.

<sup>88</sup> TNS gallup 2008

reduced cash benefit. The cash benefit is of more importance to immigrant families' income than to families within the population as a whole, as it represents a higher share of those families' total income. Another result of the survey was the presumption that the application for places would increase with 8 000 – 10 000 children if the cash benefit is reduced or eliminated.

## **6.5 Staffing. Involvement of children and their parents**

Competent and well-educated staffs is of crucial importance to the quality of the kindergartens. According to the law, managers and pedagogical leaders must be trained pre-school teachers or have other college education that gives qualifications for working with children,<sup>89</sup> in addition to pedagogical expertise. Pre-school teacher education is a three-year university college study with bachelor degree. Pedagogical leaders without pre-school teacher education must have further education in pre-school teaching. According to national regulations<sup>90</sup> there must be one pedagogical leader per 7 – 9 children under the age of three and per 14 – 18 children over the age of three. Further staffing: “must be sufficient for the staff to carry on satisfactory pedagogical activity”.<sup>91</sup>

75 800 people were employed in kindergartens at the end of 2007 (Statistics Norway 2008), and in total they worked 60 500 man-years. 91 per cent of them were women. Approximately 30 per cent of the staff was trained pre-school teachers, while some 17 per cent of the managers and pedagogical leaders were not educated pre-school teachers and had been granted individual dispensations from the educational requirement.

There is today a lack of staff with the required educational background in Norwegian kindergartens. In 2007, the Ministry launched a strategic plan that includes several targeted measures for recruiting pre-school teachers to work in kindergartens.<sup>92</sup>

Kindergartens shall assist parents in the upbringing of their children. They shall furthermore build a sound foundation for the children's development, life-long learning and active participation in a democratic society.

The Kindergarten Act gives children and parents a legal right to participating in planning and organising the activities at the institutional level. The children are encouraged to give their opinion on and take responsibility related to implementation of the daily activities. Parents can participate in the parents' council and/or in the coordinating committee, consisting of staff, parents and the owner. Every kindergarten is obliged to establish such bodies. The coordinating committee is obliged to develop annual plans for the pedagogical activities.

## **6.6 Financing**

The operational costs of kindergartens are financed jointly by the state, the municipalities and the parents.<sup>93</sup> According to the OECD Norway spent 1.7 per cent of GDP in the pre-school sector in 2004.

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<sup>89</sup> Kindergarten Act, Sections 17 and 18

<sup>90</sup> MOER 2006

<sup>91</sup> Kindergarten Act, Section 18, fifth paragraph

<sup>92</sup> MOER 2007

<sup>93</sup> In 2008, the governmental budget for kindergartens is at 21 000 million NOK.

All approved kindergartens, both private and public, are entitled to receive earmarked state grants, which vary depending on the participating children's age and weekly attendance time. The grants are higher for private than for public kindergartens. National regulations state that non-public kindergartens are entitled to get their costs fully covered. This is the responsibility of the municipality. Thus, one could in general say that both public and private kindergartens are publicly funded.

The financing of local governments in Norway is normally done by a system of block grants provided by the national government to the local level, called "the general-purpose grant scheme". Keeping the state grants for kindergartens separated from the block grant scheme is done with reference to the need for securing the grants to the private sector. A second purpose is to use the grant system in motivating both local authorities and private owners to increase access to kindergartens.

In 2004 the Parliament set a parental fee of NOK 2 750/month for an ordinary place in kindergarten, comprising a full-day or 41 hours or more per week. A separate charge may be levied for meals. For 2007 and 2008 the maximum fee is NOK 2330/month, according to national regulations. All municipalities are obliged to offer low income families either free access to kindergarten or a reduction in parental fee, regardless the ownership. There should also be a discount for siblings.

## **6.7 Further development, challenges**

The Government will introduce a legal right to a place in kindergarten when full coverage is reached. A bill on this topic was presented to the parliament in spring 2008. The reform is planned to enter into force 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 for children from the age of one year.

Kindergartens should have high quality, for which qualified staff is the most important factor. The Ministry has recently developed a strategic plan for enhancing the competence of kindergarten staff. Efforts at the cost of approximately 60 million NOK in 2007 and 2008 is prescribed in the strategy, which give priority to the following strategic elements: pedagogical leadership, children's participation, language stimulation and preparation for transition from kindergarten to school.

The lack of qualified pre-school teachers is a serious challenge. The ministry has recently developed a strategy to improve the recruitment of people to the pre-school teacher education and to retain them for working in kindergartens. This strategy should be seen in connection with the strategy<sup>94</sup> for enhancing the staff qualifications.<sup>95</sup>

## **7 Basic Education Grades 1 to 13**

In Norway Basic Education comprises primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training. The first ten years are compulsory. All thirteen years of basic education is regarded as one unified part of the wider education system. Accordingly, it is regulated under one common act and one set of regulations. At central level, policy

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<sup>94</sup> MOER 2007

<sup>95</sup> MOER 2007

responsibilities are placed with one and the same department in the MOER, and the operational responsibilities are gathered in UDIR.

## 7.1 Common framework and features

Total and public spending in Norwegian basic education is high: Accumulated expenses per pupil is almost 50 per cent above the OECD average. Similarly, the spending in basic education as compared to the GDP is above the average of the OECD countries. Teacher salaries constitute a major part of the expenses, despite that salaries of Norwegian teachers are below the OECD average. The teacher-student ratio is above average: 10.9 students per teacher in primary school (16.2 in OECD), 10.2 in lower secondary (13.5) and 9.7 in upper secondary education (12.8). Yet, the pupils receive fewer school-hours than in most of the other countries.<sup>96</sup>

Norwegian education policy and practice is anchored in three types of curricula:<sup>97</sup>

*The Core Curriculum*, the original version developed more than 15 years ago, describes the fundamental values and principles of a democratic education system and the role of education in society as a whole, taking the various types of individual, human needs and rights as the general point of departure. It constitutes a binding foundation for the development of separate curricula and subject curricula at the different levels of education. Since its first presentation it has been kept virtually unchanged and endorsed by several governments of different political colours, and still holds its position as the major policy document guiding inclusive approaches in all parts of education.

*The Quality Framework* establishes the responsibility for school and training establishments to organise and adapt the teaching processes for the pupils' and apprentices' optimal development of broad competences. Key competences that are integrated into the broad Quality Framework include learning strategies and social and cultural competences.

The quality framework helps to clarify the responsibilities that the school owners, i.e. primarily the municipalities and counties, have in providing education pursuant to the national regulations and the principles of human rights, and adapted to local and individual aptitudes, expectations and needs.

The quality framework consists of two parts:

1. Presentation and operationalisation of seven Main Themes:
2. The learning poster (see chapter 2).

*Subject Curricula*. See chapter 2.

## 7.2 Compulsory school: Primary and lower secondary education

In October 2007, a total of 616 400 pupils were registered in primary and lower secondary schools. Out of the total 3100 schools at this level, 153 were private. They had in total 14 400

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<sup>96</sup> OECD 2007; OECD 2008.

<sup>97</sup> See also chapters two and three, where major principles and objectives of basic education and training were presented and many arrangements relating to inclusive education were highlighted.

pupils (2.3 per cent). Almost 22 100 pupils (3.6 per cent) in compulsory education received mother tongue language training, covering 117 different languages.<sup>98</sup>

In the OECD countries some 50 per cent of teaching in primary school is in the three basic subjects: Reading and writing (23 per cent), Mathematics (16 per cent) and science (9 per cent). In Norway, the corresponding figures are 23 per cent, 15 per cent and 7 per cent. In this country the pupils spend much time on Aesthetics (15 per cent) and Religion and ethics (9 per cent). The corresponding figures for OECD are 12 and 4 per cent, respectively. In lower secondary school the differences in subject instruction between Norway and the OECD average is generally reduced, but remains for Science.<sup>99</sup>

Recent OECD figures show that Norwegian pupils in primary and lower secondary school score slightly lower than the OECD average in international tests of reading skills, science and mathematics.<sup>100</sup>

In principle, all Norwegian children and youth in the age group 6 – 16 attend compulsory education regularly throughout the ten years. Experience shows, however, that there is some absenteeism among pupils, especially at lower secondary level. This happens despite the efforts made by the schools to encourage the learners to comply with the requirement of compulsory attendance. The pupils in question often have weak school performance. Many of them are likely to fail or / and to leave education before completing upper secondary education and training.

### **7.3 Upper secondary general education and VET**

International statistics shows that 79 per cent of the adult Norwegian population aged 25 – 64 has accomplished upper secondary education or training. The OECD average is 68 per cent. 17 per cent of Norwegians between 25 and 35 years have not completed upper secondary education, whereas the corresponding figure for other Nordic countries is some 10 per cent.<sup>101</sup> Far more girls than boys complete upper secondary education and obtain a general right of admission to higher education.<sup>102</sup>

Recent data show a positive correlation between time spent in upper secondary education and training on the one hand, and the student's health, employment situation and general satisfaction level on the other.<sup>103</sup> Of those who successfully accomplished the final trade examination in 2002, 84 per cent found a job within three months. 88 per cent of them were in employment four years later. This is above the population average.<sup>104</sup> In contrast, of those in the age group 20 – 24 who dropped out without completing upper secondary VET, 24 per cent of the men and 28 per cent of the women are outside both education and the labour market, whereas virtually none of those who completed training are outside education and work.<sup>105</sup> Another study found that as many as 60 per cent of the dropouts from upper secondary VET

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<sup>98</sup> Statistics Norway 2008. See: [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/04/02/20/utgrs\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/04/02/20/utgrs_en/)

<sup>99</sup> OECD 2008.

<sup>100</sup> OECD 2007, OECD 2008.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> OECD 2008.

<sup>103</sup> Statistics Norway 2008.

<sup>104</sup> Hagen et al 2008. See: <http://www.fafu.no/pub/rapp/20071/20071.pdf>

<sup>105</sup> UDIR 2008. See:

[http://UDIR.no/upload/Rapporter/Utdanningsspeilet\\_2007/The\\_Education\\_Mirror\\_2007\\_2mb.pdf](http://UDIR.no/upload/Rapporter/Utdanningsspeilet_2007/The_Education_Mirror_2007_2mb.pdf)

are still without a job or in part-time employment three years later. There is no significant difference between minority and majority students.<sup>106</sup>

For the school year 2007 – 2008 there were a total of 75 400 applicants to first year courses in upper secondary education and training. This means that 97 per cent of those who completed lower secondary education, registered for further education and training.<sup>107</sup> In recent years, some 60 per cent of new entrants choose a vocational training programme.<sup>107</sup>

During the last half of 2007, 15 600 new apprenticeship contracts were signed, around one third by individuals that did not come directly from school based training. Many of these are adults with work experience; some are dropouts that return to complete their aborted education, whereas some have completed upper secondary *general* education and are changing career path. A total of 37 200 apprenticeship contracts and 860 trainee contracts were running in 2007 and almost 19 300 candidates completed vocational examinations, with a success rate above 90.<sup>108</sup>

Whereas some 60 per cent of the first year students at upper secondary level start training in a VET programme, the ratio is lower for those who complete the full education programme successfully. Some students in VET switch to general education and attend a theoretical bridging course in order to qualify for general tertiary studies instead of entering apprenticeship. Furthermore, more students in vocational than in general education programmes fail in individual subjects or drop out during the studies. Almost 30 per cent of the VET learners left training without completion. For students in general education programmes the figure was slightly above 5 per cent.

Statistics show that only 40 percent of the VET learners complete the training successfully in the assumed time, whilst the corresponding figure is around 80 for students in general education programmes. The dropout rate is particularly high in the north of the country.<sup>109</sup>

Several studies have identified factors – some of them are interlinked - that influence study progression, success rate and dropout:<sup>110</sup>

- The social background of the learners: parents' education level, employment situation and income level.
- Whether or not the student/apprentice has been granted enrolment in the education programme which was on top of his/her priority list. The dropout rate is significantly lower among those who are accepted in the first priority programme, probably due to higher motivation for the training.
- Whether or not the student in a VET programme is able to find a willing training enterprise to sign the apprenticeship contract. Non-western immigrants have more difficulties in obtaining an apprenticeship place than ethnic Norwegians.
- The learning achievements in compulsory education are the single most important factor for a normal study progression and successful completion at upper secondary level. It decides whether and how well the VET students manage during the first two years of school based training, and influences the possibilities of finding an

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<sup>106</sup> Fekjær & Brekke 2006.

<sup>107</sup> UDIR 2008. See: [http://www.UDIR.no/upload/Rapporter/Utdanningsspeilet\\_2007/US\\_2007.pdf](http://www.UDIR.no/upload/Rapporter/Utdanningsspeilet_2007/US_2007.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> Statistics Norway. See: [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/04/02/30/vgu\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/04/02/30/vgu_en/)

<sup>109</sup> Markussen et al 2006.

<sup>110</sup> Byrhagen et al 2006; Markussen et al 2006

apprenticeship place. Lack of basic language and numeracy skills causes employment problems for the individual throughout life.

## **7.4 Challenges in Basic Education**

As already pointed out, the most obvious challenges in basic education are:

- To reduce the dropout rate in upper secondary education and training, with a particular view to VET.
- To improve the general performance of the learners in basic subjects.

For further reading about these issues and recent policy initiatives to address them, we refer to chapters 4 and 5.

# **8 Higher education**

## **8.1 Goals and principles, Laws and regulations**

The objective of higher education is to ensure a stable supply of highly qualified professionals to the various sectors of society and contribute to knowledge development and innovation. Regarding the individual students, the role of higher education institutions is to stimulate and facilitate the realisation of their learning potential, hereby qualifying them for a successful transition to the labour market.

Higher education is regulated by the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges. It was presented in 2005, in the wake of the Quality Reform in Higher Education. The Quality reform comprehensively restructured higher education in Norway.

The new Act, which is valid for both public and private institutions, places the responsibility for ensuring an optimal learning environment for all students, with the individual higher education institution. It establishes that this responsibility also includes students with functional disabilities, stating that, “as far as possible and reasonable”, the physical working environment shall be designed in accordance with the principles of universal design. In practical terms, the institutions must ensure that the premises, including the entrance and sanitary and technical facilities, are designed so that persons with functional disabilities can pursue their studies there.

Every higher education institution is, “as far as possible and reasonable”, obliged to adapt the study situation for students with special needs. This adaptation must not imply any reduction of the academic requirements found in each course of study, but could comprise the use of ICT and extra time for examinations, and oral rather than written examinations.

Pursuant to the Act, individual education plans must be agreed between the higher education institution and each individual student. The prime, general intention is to ensure a close follow-up of each student with the aim to reduce dropout and improving student performance. Such plans are useful tools for adapting studies for persons with specific needs. They should furthermore contribute to increased awareness of the higher education institutions as to the responsibilities they have for all their students, and for the need to adapt the study situation for students with some type of functional disability.

Higher education institutions are obliged to establish internal learning environment committees that also have student members. The committee shall deal with the learning environment for all the students at that particular institution. This is an important and targeted approach to the issue of ensuring an accessible and adapted learning environment.

The Sami university college provides training of Sami teachers. The University of Tromsø offers study programmes at all levels in the Sami language.

## **8.2 Action plan and advisory service**

Access to higher education for young people and adults with specific needs is an area of great political interest. In the period 1991-2002, there were three national government action plans for people with functional disabilities. These action plans have been operated and monitored through close collaboration between relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education and Research.

Within the framework of the national action plan, the MOER in 1998 required that all higher education institutions develop action plans at the institutional level, to the end of ensuring equal access for students with functional disabilities. An evaluation later showed that the vast majority of institutions have developed such plans, and that the instruction to do so in general has caused more awareness of the issue, but that the implementation of plans was not complete at the time of evaluation (Båtevik 2003).

Every higher education institution is obliged to establish and operate a special advisory service for persons with functional challenges. This service has a particular responsibility for providing these students with counselling and various forms of assistance.

## **8.3 Political and administrative responsibilities, various levels**

The MOER has a direct responsibility for all higher education institutions, except those of the police and the military services, which are administered by the ministries of justice and defence, respectively.

A board with external as well as staff and student representatives is the highest governing body at the individual public higher education institution. The Ministry cannot instruct the institutions as to the content of their teaching, research or development work.

Apart from the strictly professional aspects, most other activities are regulated under the national administration and management of higher education institutions, either through legislation, royal decrees or formal regulations, or through agreements between the trade unions<sup>111</sup> and national authorities. The tendency is that the text of such documents have gradually become less detailed. They now outline a framework for scope of decision-making, balanced by a control system in which there is some flexibility for discretionary decisions at the institutions, after due consideration of the national policy and regulations.

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<sup>111</sup> For teaching and other staff, as well as the student organisations.

## 8.4 Financing

Higher education institutions are funded directly by the Ministry of Education and Research. The total amount of funding to higher education is determined by the parliament as part of the annual government budget negotiations. Budgets are supposed to cover most of the investments and operating costs of the institutions. The funding of state institutions was earlier specified by three main categories: salaries and other ordinary costs, investments and new equipment, other costs, e.g. activities common to several institutions. Today the institutions receive a block grant and are free to decide how to allocate resources between the different types of cost.

## 8.5 Quality control

Every higher education institution is obliged to establish a system for internal quality assurance, and to conduct continuous quality development and assessment. Documentation of the system, quality assessment work and findings are presented to the Ministry in the formal annual bilateral meeting.

External quality control of higher education institutions is the responsibility of the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT).

NOKUT is an independent agency under the MOER. Its tasks in quality assurance comprise the following:

- Accreditation of higher education institutions
- Accreditation of higher education programmes and courses
- Revision of accreditation
- Evaluation of internal quality assurance at the higher education institutions
- Evaluation of specific types of educational provisions or defined aspect of such

For the conduction of the control tasks NOKUT frequently assign external consultants with the relevant expertise to cooperate in teams with NOKUT officials.

NOKUT also handles similar accreditation and quality control of tertiary vocational education, and process and take decisions on applications for formal recognition of qualifications obtained abroad.

## 8.6 Participation

Some 30 per cent of all Norwegians in the age group 19 – 24 are attending higher education.<sup>112</sup> Young people from low income groups are under-represented and tend to choose shorter higher education studies, while young people whose parents have elite education which lead to high income professions often choose similar education themselves.

Gender equality in higher education correlates closely with the gender segregated labour market. Men tend to choose technological and business studies. Women dominate more or less all the other studies and they are particularly dominant in health and social studies. During the last couple of years, the number of female applicants to technological studies has been increasing. According to The Norwegian Universities' and Colleges' Admission Service (NUCAS), there were more female than male applicants than male in the second half of 2008.

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<sup>112</sup> In 2007. Statistics Norway. URL: [http://www.ssb.no/utdanning\\_tema\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/utdanning_tema_en/)

Since the year 2000, the number of students in the age group 19 – 24 with a non-western background in higher education, has been increasing steadily and in 2006 reached 7 per cent of the total student population.<sup>113</sup> Non-western first-generation immigrants do not attend higher education to the same extent as the rest of the population. Today, persons born in Norway of two foreign-born parents (descendants) have an attendance rate that corresponds to the one for ethnic Norwegians.

It should be noted that the imbalance in ethnic recruitment is to a large extent socially determined. Ethnic minorities whose parents have higher education tend to take higher education to the same extent as the majority population.

We do not have an exact number of persons with reduced functional abilities in higher education. Institutions report that at least 2% of the students might need some form of adaptation of examinations. This number is probably increasing, not least due to the fact that an increasing number of persons with dyslexia apply for admission.

Geographic accessibility in higher education has been a political concern since the expansion of the sector in 1960s and 1970s. In 2008 the higher education institutions are distributed throughout all 19 counties. The decentralisation has contributed to the establishment of a large university college sector that represents a popular alternative to the universities. In 2007, more than 50 per cent of all students were enrolled at the university colleges.<sup>114</sup>

The political concern for a strong local and regional development of higher education has a double basis: one concerns the geographical access for students; the other, and even more important, is related to long-term habitation patterns, since many graduates choose to settle down in the area or region where they studied.<sup>115</sup> (Eurydice, 2003).

Policy on geographic equity of access also concerns policy on access to higher education among national minorities and indigenous peoples. The Sámi University College has a special responsibility for Sámi teacher education and for training in traditional Sámi crafts (duodji). The creation and existence of an entirely Sámi higher education institution was – and is – also an important measure for the development of Sámi as a language of science and learning. State support is provided for the development of textbooks written in the Sámi language.

## **8.7 Achievements and challenges**

We do not know how well students with reduced functional abilities perform, nor do we know the dropout rate for these students. To learn more about how students with reduced functional abilities view their situation in higher education after the reform, a qualitative study was undertaken in 2005.<sup>116</sup> It appears that students in general are satisfied with their situation and with the Quality Reform. Nevertheless, several respondents complained about the lack of adapted textbooks and other study material, which impedes normal study progression.

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<sup>113</sup> According to Statistics Norway, the relevant figures were 8 per cent for the universities, 4 per cent for the specialized university institutions and 6 per cent for the university colleges per 1 October, 2006.

<sup>114</sup> Statistics Norway. URL: [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/04/02/40/utuvh\\_en/tab-2008-06-17-01-en.html](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/04/02/40/utuvh_en/tab-2008-06-17-01-en.html)

<sup>115</sup> Eurydice 2003.

<sup>116</sup> NIFU STEP Brandt 2005

In the White Paper “*Dismantling of Disabling Barriers*”,<sup>117</sup> the Government presents experiences and results from the national action plans as well as the strategies, objectives and measures in its policy relating to persons with a reduced functional ability. While measures and services implemented during the last decade have improved the conditions for students with disabilities, the new policy document pointed out areas where more effort is needed in order to reach the policy goals. This was especially relating to increasing the physical access to all parts of society. Today, the “universal access” principle has strong and broad political support.

Concerning higher education, the aim in the policy and measures expressed in the White Paper is to both increase participation in higher education, and to ensure that applicants to higher education institutions are given equal treatment in terms of access and an optimal learning environment.

## **9 Adult education, Life-Long Learning**

### **9.1 Policy and regulations**

The policy objectives of adult education are similar to those covering other parts of education and training. In compliance with EU strategies, but in particular due to expressed concerns of the employers’ organisations, trade unions and other social partners, the MOER has for many years had high ambitions relating to the development of a flexible lifelong learning (LLL) system and multiple opportunities for adult education and training. The current public adult education policy was formulated in the “Competence reform”, which was prepared in close cooperation with the major social partners.<sup>118</sup>

A well developed LLL system is seen as a central means to contribute to the best possible management of the enormous human capital of the country and ensure the updating of knowledge and skills according to emerging and changing needs of the dynamic knowledge society.<sup>119</sup> This is considered necessary for maintaining international competitiveness and hence to secure the welfare society.

But an active LLL policy is important also in the perspective of inclusive education: Individuals with a weak education background are particularly at risk of social exclusion. The aim of the LLL policy is to give adults opportunities to strengthen and maintain their competencies throughout their active working life. The ongoing demographic changes with a general age increase in the labor force makes it even more important to adapt conditions to make it possible for adults to take part in training, education and competence development. Particularly important target group comprise adults with little education, adults with reading and writing difficulties and adults belonging to ethnic minorities. Adult education and training is also used actively as a means to bring back individuals that for various reasons have been socially excluded: the unemployed and the convicted criminals. In the recent white paper on

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<sup>117</sup> St.meld. nr. 40 (2002-2003)

<sup>118</sup> See: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/Selected-topics/Policy-for-lifelong-learning/The-Competence-Reform.html?id=498241>

<sup>119</sup> See: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/Selected-topics/education-and-training-for-adults.html?id=1426>

Early Intervention, the Ministry also included some elements relating to adult education and LLL.<sup>120</sup>

Adult education is regulated mainly by two sets of laws, The Education Act<sup>121</sup> and the Act on Adult Education,<sup>122</sup> and the appurtenant regulations. VOX, the Norwegian Institute for Adult Learning, is an agency owned by the MOER. VOX has the administrative responsibility for following up on and stimulate training that falls under the Act on adult education. The Institute works to improve basic skills in the adult population in the areas of reading, writing, arithmetic and the use of ICT and is responsible for curriculum development in Norwegian and socio-cultural orientation for adult immigrants.<sup>123</sup>

Like education and training for other groups, adult education is rights-based. Adults have a statutory right to primary and secondary education and training. The municipalities and counties, respectively, are obliged to organise appropriate provisions, free of charge.<sup>124</sup> They are also entitled to career counselling relating to their education and training needs. Estimates indicate that 50 000 – 90 000 adults, including immigrants, attend such education and training annually.<sup>125</sup>

## 9.2 Delivery mechanisms and participation

Adult education is delivered through several other mechanisms as well:

Public, private and semi-private providers organise a variety of courses. Universities and colleges annually deliver further education and training for 80 – 100 000 individuals in their own program areas, full-time, part-time and distant education courses alike. 20 recognised non-profit Adult Education Associations, 13 Distance Education Institutions and 77 Folk High Schools provide education and training according to national curricula on secondary and tertiary levels, as well as work-related and personally oriented courses. These are being subsidised by the MOER according to the number of students. In 2007, some 490 000 students attended courses organised by these structures.<sup>126</sup> According to a recent Green Paper, the Adult Education Associations shall:<sup>127</sup>

- Contribute to the maintenance and strengthening of democracy and the foundation for a sustainable development by engaging and develop active citizens.
- Enable people to influence their own living conditions.
- Combat exclusion and contribute to inclusion.
- Contribute to motivate for and give access to knowledge and competencies for all, and hereby meet needs in a continuously changing society and working life.
- Contribute to strengthening cultural diversity and increase participation in cultural activities
- Constitute an independent arena for learning and a supplement to the public education and training provisions for adults.

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<sup>120</sup> MOER 2007x. See: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/Selected-topics/Policy-for-lifelong-learning/The-Competence-Reform.html?id=498241>

<sup>121</sup> MOER 1998. URL: <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-19980717-061-eng.doc>

<sup>122</sup> MOER 1976 See: <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-19760528-035-eng.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> See: <http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=2598>

<sup>124</sup> According to the Education Act.

<sup>125</sup> Skaar et al. 2008. See: [http://UDIR.no/upload/Rapporter/laremiddele\\_rapport.pdf](http://UDIR.no/upload/Rapporter/laremiddele_rapport.pdf)

<sup>126</sup> Statistics Norway 2008. URL: [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/04/02/50/voppl\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/04/02/50/voppl_en/)

<sup>127</sup> MOER 2007c. URL:

<http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/2006252/PDFS/NOU200720070011000DDDPDFS.pdf>

Learning takes place continuously throughout life, and in many different arenas – at home, at school, at work and during leisure hours. A large part of all people’s individual competencies stem from informal and non-formal learning. The workplace is a particular important arena for both organised learning and learning through work experience. A person’s work is an important motivation factor for participation in organised courses, and Norway has a high participation rate in workplace-based education and training.

In a European survey conducted in 2007, more than half of all employed had participated in organised training during the last twelve months, compared to only a fifth of those who were not employed. The employers themselves provided 32 per cent of the job-related non-formal training. 63 per cent of the employed reported having learning-intensive work. The level of educational attainment is important for the opportunities and requirements for learning: 52 per cent of employees with less than upper secondary education had learning-intensive work, whereas the corresponding figure for those with long tertiary education was 87 per cent.<sup>128</sup> Tax relief is granted to employers for investments in education and training of staff. The Competence reform introduced arrangements of entitlement to study leave for employees and financial support to adult students through the State Education Loan Fund.<sup>129</sup>

### **9.3 Validation of informal and non-formal learning outcomes**

As other European countries, Norway acknowledges that adults attain important knowledge and skills through work experience. Formal documentation of these qualifications is to the benefit of the both the individual and the labour market actors. A system that allows individuals to sit for formal examinations in mainstream education areas without having followed organised instruction has been in operation for decades.

From 2001 more comprehensive systems for validation of prior learning outcomes were introduced at county level. The Education Act establishes that every person is entitled to having his or her competencies validated and documented. From the same year, adults above the age of 25 were also given the right to admission to universities and university colleges based on assessment of their formal, non-formal and informal qualifications.<sup>130</sup>

### **9.4 Targeted adult education and training to the end of inclusion**

Training is embedded in several of public measures targeting the unemployed and other vulnerable groups in the labour market.<sup>131</sup> The volume of provisions varies according to fluctuations in the labour market and the number of people with specific needs of support. Vocational training and work practice are organised for people with various vocational disabilities by around 100 “Labour market enterprises”.<sup>132</sup> Ordinary labour market measures with training elements comprise rehabilitation training and labour market training.

Since 2004, refugees and other immigrants from third world countries are entitled and obliged to follow a two-year, full-time “introduction course” to Norwegian society, comprising

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<sup>128</sup> Eurostat 2007. Norwegian results from AES, see: [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/04/02/50/vol\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/04/02/50/vol_en/)

<sup>129</sup> MOER 1998b. URL: [http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/19971998/st-meld-nr-42\\_1997-98-summary\\_in.html?id=191807](http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/19971998/st-meld-nr-42_1997-98-summary_in.html?id=191807)

<sup>130</sup> MOER 1998. URL: <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-19980717-061-eng.pdf>

<sup>131</sup> See: <http://www.nav.no/page?id=714>

<sup>132</sup> These are regular enterprises that produce for the market, but in addition have one or several departments that provide practical training to the disabled in protected environments. The “Labour market enterprises” receive financial support from the government.

language training, social studies and training for work. The participants receive a salary during the two years, paid by the government.<sup>133</sup> Training for employment and integration of newly arrived immigrants is the organisational and financial responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion.

The principle of Inclusive Education applies also to the approximately 3000 inmates in Norwegian prisons. Education and training is an important element in the social rehabilitation programmes. The objectives are similar to those valid for the regular education system. The prisoners are also entitled to career guidance, adapted teaching and special education, like the learners in regular schools. MOER is the responsible ministry, and the education and training is organised by schools in the vicinity and delivered by their teachers. 34 out of the total 47 prisons offer education and training to the inmates. In order to ensure completion of the training programmes for those who finish the serving of their sentences, special “follow-up classes” have been organised outside prison at ten different locations around the country. The experiences with this education and training of prisoners are promising, with high attendance, motivated learners and several examples of good rehabilitation effects. The government is now planning to expand the provision of education and training in the prisons, and to give particular attention to basic language and numeracy skills, and VET.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> For more details, see: [http://www.imdi.no/templates/CommonPageLanguage\\_4436.aspx](http://www.imdi.no/templates/CommonPageLanguage_4436.aspx)

<sup>134</sup> MOER 2005. URL:

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