

# Education for All - National Action Plan for Norway in accordance with the World Education Forum Declaration, Dakar, 2000<sup>1</sup>

## **PREFACE**

Education for all is of great importance for the personal development of individual citizens and for society as a whole. The principal educational objectives of the Norwegian Government are to achieve quality throughout the educational cycle, as well as education and training adapted to the needs of the individual. These are key areas targeted by the Ministry of Education and Research.

As a follow-up to the Dakar Declaration, the Ministry of Education and Research has prepared a national overview of relevant initiatives and policy areas in collaboration with the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs. This document contains an account of the ways in which Norway is following up “Education for All” (EFA) at a national level.

As in so many other areas, there are considerable differences between poor and rich countries with regard to access to education and the quality of what is provided. The main emphasis of Norwegian EFA work is therefore foreign aid and development. There are some challenges within the EFA field in Norway, nonetheless, and education for all has long been a watchword of Norwegian education policies.

The Ministry of Education and Research is working actively to reach every individual who is failed by or remains outside the scope of the educational system. Special attention has been paid to approaches to problems associated with, amongst others, disabled pupils, minority groups and people with reduced literacy levels.

Work in the EFA field in Norway has been initiated independently of the Dakar Declaration and EFA objectives. As a result, this document will principally give an illustration of existing initiatives relevant to fulfilling the objectives of the Dakar Declaration.

Kristin Clemet  
Minister of Education and Research

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<sup>1</sup> This document was sent to UNESCO in June 2003.

## EDUCATION FOR ALL IN NORWAY

The right to education is central to the personal development of individual citizens and society as a whole. Norway has made considerable progress in providing equal educational opportunities for all. This is not a matter of course, seen from an international perspective. Even though education is a recognised human right, up to 115 million children are unable to attend school. Poverty is possibly the biggest obstacle to ensure education for all. In addition to poverty, gender is a significant factor determining who is given education and who is not. Almost two thirds of those who are not provided with any form of education are girls.

Although nearly all children in Norway go to school, this does not mean that everyone learns what they should, or that there is satisfactory educational provision for all pupils. The Government is concentrating its efforts on increasing the quality of educational provision in general and especially giving minorities and those with disabilities access to good quality educational provision at all levels. This is in line with the objectives of the Dakar Declaration on Education for All.

Work on "Education for All" (EFA) began at the world conference in Jomtien in Thailand in 1990. At this conference, the Declaration "Education for All" and an associated Action Plan were adopted.<sup>2</sup> The principal objective was that all citizens should have access to basic education by the end of the millennium.

Bearing in mind the challenges international society faces in number of areas, this is undoubtedly an exceedingly ambitious objective. Global problems running counter to EFA objectives either directly or indirectly are, for example, continuing high burdens of debt, economic stagnation, high population growth, economic disparities, war, violent crime, HIV/AIDS, high infant mortality and wide-ranging environmental problems. These problems clearly impose a strain on the ability of many countries to meet basic learning needs. This educational deficit contributes in turn to many societies not being able to tackle the problems in an effective and resolute fashion.

At a follow-up conference to the Jomtien conference in the spring of 2000, it was established that developments were progressing too slowly. The World Education Forum in Dakar resulted in a new Action Plan for further EFA work. The principal objective is to give everyone the opportunity to receive basic education by 2015. Special emphasis was placed on the importance of educational opportunities for girls and on the quality of the learning outcome. Emphasis was also placed on vulnerable groups in society, for example child workers, children belonging to ethnic minorities, victims of violence, conflict,

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<sup>2</sup> The Dakar Framework for Action: World Education Forum, Dakar 26-28 April 2000.

invalidity and HIV/AIDS. In the Dakar Declaration, participating countries pledge that no country which genuinely commits itself to providing basic education for all shall fail to do so due to a lack of resources. All the countries attending the Dakar conference have committed themselves to drawing up national EFA Action Plans by the end of 2002. Overall responsibility for following up EFA at a national level in Norway has been delegated to the Ministry of Education and Research.

### *Education for All in Norwegian International Development Assistance*

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for following up "Education for All" at an international level. Education has been identified as the top priority for Norwegian Foreign Aid and Development. At present, education constitutes 9 per cent of Norwegian Aid and Development funding. The proportion is planned to increase to 15 per cent in 2005. EFA is central to Norwegian international aid efforts. For further information, see the Strategy Document on "Education for All" through Norwegian Aid and Development, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in January 2003.<sup>3</sup>

## **Educational Status and Priorities in Norway**

The overall objective of our educational system is to provide all children and young people with education and training of a high standard, independent of gender, place of residence, functional ability, ethnic or social background. Equal rights to education are at the core of the welfare state and they are a crucial means of enabling each individual to shape his or her own future. Learning is a lifelong process and the provision of education and training and ways of learning must be tailored to suit individual needs. In Norway, all children are guaranteed and obliged to complete ten years of basic education from the age of six. After primary and lower secondary school, all teenagers have the right to three years at upper secondary school, at the end of which they may gain vocational qualifications or qualifications for entry into higher education. The Competence Reform gives all adults over the age of 25 the right to primary and secondary education. The reform also give individuals the right to have their non-formal and informal learning evaluated and documented as a means of qualifying for further education. Despite this, investigations have shown that just under one fifth of pupils leaving primary/lower secondary school have poor results in core subjects.

Norway has the prerequisites needed to create a top quality school system. Norway is a rich country and the adult population is well educated. Few countries devote more money to schools. In 1999, expenditure per pupil in Norwegian primary schools was 43 per cent above the OECD average

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<sup>3</sup> "Education for All" through Norwegian Foreign Aid and Development: [www.odin.dep.no/ud/norsk/publ/handlingsplaner/032171-990034/index-dok000-b-n-a.html](http://www.odin.dep.no/ud/norsk/publ/handlingsplaner/032171-990034/index-dok000-b-n-a.html)

(measured according to spending power), 42 per cent above average in lower secondary schools and 32 percent above average in upper secondary schools (OECD, 2002). The principal reason for the high costs is that there are a considerably greater number of teachers in Norway than in other countries. In OECD countries there are on average between 40 and 50 per cent more pupils per teacher than in Norway. This would suggest there are excellent opportunities for making improvements in schools since good teachers are a school's most valuable resource.

Norwegian schools do face a number of challenges nonetheless. Some of the principal challenges lie in the level of results achieved on average, the wide gap between results achieved by strong and weaker pupils and the discrepancy between expenditure and results. In addition, Norwegian schools have a number of challenges to face with regard to inclusion and motivation of weaker pupils. Relatively many pupils from an immigrant background, pupils with disabilities or reduced levels of literacy, for example, drop out of school or do not gain sufficient benefit from their schooling. Increasing the retainment of minority pupils in higher secondary education and training is a priority. Norway has made considerable progress in adapting teaching to pupils with special needs, but still faces challenges in ensuring genuine access for all. This is a central aspect of the quality development work being carried out in Norwegian basic education.

This document will highlight some of these challenges and provide an overview of initiatives being implemented in the above areas.

# 1 First Objective of the Dakar Declaration:

*Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children*

## 1.1 Status of Policies on Children and Young People

One of the overall objectives of policies on children and young people is to provide equal opportunities for development to all children and young people, independent of social background and where in the country they live.<sup>4</sup> The Government wishes to unite the objectives of achieving good early and teenage years with the acquisition of a substantial qualification for the future. Such a qualification involves both knowledge and attitudes, an awareness of values and responsibility for the community at large. Children and young people must also be assured the possibility to participate and take joint responsibility in society. Voluntary organisations for children and young people are among the most important channels for children's and young people's voices. Enhanced dialogue and interaction between the authorities and the non-governmental sector is essential. This can be achieved, amongst other things, through more systematic and direct contact between the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and non-governmental organisations for children and young people.

In 2001, approximately 63 per cent of all children aged one to five *attended* Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)<sup>5</sup> full-time or part-time. Availability of *ECEC* increases with the children's age. In numerical terms, there were 198 800 children in Norway using approved *ECEC* at the end of 2001. This is an increase of 3300 places compared to the previous year. The Government aims to offer all applicants the possibility to use approved *barnehage* by the year 2005.

Children from an ethnic and cultural minority background use *ECEC* to a lesser extent than other children in Norway. Approximately 30 per cent of minority children between one and five years of age have access to a place in a *barnehage*, compared to 63 per cent of all children in this age group. In selected municipalities and boroughs, studies have been undertaken in order to gather information about the combined impact of part-day *ECEC* for minority children, child health clinic surveys of minority children's language development and parents attending Norwegian language training. A campaign has also been

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<sup>4</sup> Report to the Norwegian Parliament No.39 (2001-2002): Childhood, Adolescence and Living Conditions in Norway.

<sup>5</sup> The Norwegian term "barnehage" is equivalent to the term Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). "Barnehage" is a direct translation of the German word Kindergarten and is the common Norwegian term for different types of ECEC under the legislation of the Norwegian Day Care Institution Act, covering the age group 0 - 5 years. The abbreviation ECEC will be used in the rest of this document.

carried out to recruit more men and candidates from immigrant background to pre-school and teaching professions.

## **1.2 Initiatives**

- Government has recently presented a white paper to Parliament for new financial measures of the ECEC sector: The aims are as follows:
  - Increased public financing of the sector
  - Full coverage for all children from 0-5 years of age within 2005
  - Reduced parental fee, app 20 percent of total costs
  - Equal economic framework for public and private ECEC institutions
- State earmarked grants for children with special needs cover initiatives for mentally/physically disabled in ECEC, bilingual assistants in ECEC for children from linguistic, ethnic and cultural minorities and ECEC for children of newly arrived refugees. State grants are supplied to ensure that ECEC institutions with saami children are based on the saami language and culture
- An action plan for gender quality in ECEC will be presented in 2003. One of the aims is to work for a ration of 20 percent male employees in the ECEC sector. All counties are to carry out pro-active recruitment work. At the end of 2003, the Ministry is launching a nation-wide conference on recruiting men to the ECEC sector. A research project is initiated to document existing pedagogical theory and methods to promote gender equality in ECEC.

## **2 Second Objective of the Dakar Declaration:**

*Ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality*

### **2.1 Basic Education in Norway**

Norway is one of the top countries in the world as far as educational standards are concerned. Few countries devote more money to schools and education than Norway does. From the calendar year children are 6, they are guaranteed free, compulsory basic education lasting 10 years. In addition, adult citizens and everyone with permanent residence rights in Norway are guaranteed the right to basic education. Young who have completed primary/lower secondary school or equivalent education, have, on application, a right to three years full-time upper secondary level education. Up to and including ten year primary/lower secondary school education, there is an almost 100 per cent

take-up. Pupils with special needs are, on the whole, integrated into mainstream schools and all pupils have a right to a workplace that is physically suited to the individual's needs. Norway has a non-segregating school system. However, schools have not made sufficient progress in pedagogical differentiation of education and training with respect to the wide range of different needs amongst their pupils and they are not sufficiently flexible to fully meet such needs.

Despite formal rights and a well-established primary/lower secondary school system, a few pupils do reap less benefit than others from their education. The school system has not managed to compensate sufficiently for differences in social backgrounds.

In Norway, minority language pupils, amongst others, face particular linguistic and cultural challenges in education and training and many pupils start school with very limited Norwegian language skills.<sup>6</sup> Minority background pupils achieve lower results than the average amongst Norwegian pupils, and they drop out of the educational system earlier than majority youngsters. The proportion of 16-18 year old immigrants participating in upper secondary education is, however, increasing whereas it is decreasing somewhat in other groups of pupils. From 1994 to 2000 the proportion of first generation immigrants has increased from 59.6 to 67.6 per cent. Amongst individuals born in Norway to two foreign-born parents, the proportion has increased from 79.3 to 86.6 per cent. Divergence between this group and the population as a whole is diminishing rapidly. The difference was 10 per cent in 1994, whereas in 2000 it was under three per cent

Disabled children, young people and adults encounter a number of obstacles in primary/lower secondary school, upper secondary school and adult education. The challenges are linked to the transition between different types of school and between school and work. Not all school premises or all types of education and training are adapted to suit different disabilities. Among the most notable consequences is a higher dropout rate from upper secondary school for disabled pupils than non-disabled.

The PISA survey<sup>7</sup> shows that there is a wide discrepancy in learning achievements in the Norwegian educational system both with respect to pupils at any one school and in any one class. This would seem to indicate that especially the weakest pupils are not benefiting sufficiently from their schooling. Norwegian children are just below the OECD average for reading, and Norway belongs to the group of countries where there is greatest variation in reading skills between pupils. The survey also revealed that a gap has arisen

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<sup>6</sup> Note that minority pupils are not a homogenous group. These are average figures.

<sup>7</sup> Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), OECD 2000.

in recent years between the levels attained by boys and girls, with girls continuing to outperform boys.

Recent studies of the learning environment in Norwegian schools indicate that people enjoy being at school on the whole, but that there is room for improvement as far as reducing noise levels and unrest is concerned. The general picture is that problem behaviour increases slightly school year by school year, reaching a peak at lower secondary school before starting to decline at upper secondary school level.

## **2.2 Initiatives**

- Norway wishes to strengthen ties between school and home in the case of minority parents in order to enable parents from an immigrant background to guide their children through Norwegian society in general and with respect to Norwegian primary/lower secondary school in particular. Initiatives are to be targeted especially at mothers with a low level of competence in Norwegian. As a consequence, the Ministry launched a three year project in 2002 entitled "Minority Language Parents – a Resource for the Education of Pupils in Schools" in collaboration with the National Parents' Association for Primary and Lower Secondary Education (FUG).
- A recruitment campaign has been carried out to increase the number of students with a minority language background in general teacher training.
- Initiatives have been launched to improve living conditions in a number of boroughs in Oslo containing a high proportion of minority language speakers. The principal objective of initiatives in the educational sector is to improve the ability of pupils to complete basic education (primary/lower secondary school and upper secondary school).
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, the Ministry has commenced evaluation of a free part-day nursery place project in the borough of Oslo Old Town. The project aims to evaluate the development of the children's Norwegian language skills in particular, as well as considering the integration and participation of these children in lessons. In addition, emphasis is also being placed on collaboration between school and home.
- Following a motion moved by the Government, The Storting<sup>8</sup> has passed new provisions in the Education Act regarding the psychosocial environment. The new provisions aim to improve pupils' psychosocial

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<sup>8</sup> The Norwegian Parliament



environment, making it more secure and affording pupils greater protection against bullying, violence, discrimination and racism.

- During the course of 2003 every municipality in the country will receive an offer to participate in a programme of measures against bullying and anti-social behaviour in schools.
- An action plan against racism and discrimination has been proposed. It aims to ensure, amongst other things, that schools provide everyone with equal learning conditions and it gives schools an opportunity to work actively against racism and discrimination.
- Work is being carried out to enhance measures aimed at preventing pupils dropping out from upper secondary education. Amongst other things, this includes further development of a follow-up service which aims to ensure that all young people who drop out of school in the transition from primary/lower secondary to upper secondary school, or during upper secondary education, receive an offer of education or work.
- New organisational models are being piloted as a means of enhancing the educational and careers advice service at lower secondary and upper secondary level.
- The Ministry has started a consultation process with regard to a proposed amendment of the law, which would allow vocational training boards of county municipalities to approve individual learning contracts. These would stipulate that all or a large part of an individual pupil's education and training is to be undertaken in the workplace. Improved organisation and differentiation in upper secondary education will also contribute to a higher completion rate. This scheme will give pupils enhanced opportunities to enter into learning contracts directly after lower secondary school.

### **3 Third Objective of the Dakar Declaration:<sup>9</sup>**

*Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes*

#### **3.1 Status of Lifelong Learning in Norway**

Like a number of other countries, Norway has adopted a "from the cradle to the grave" perspective on lifelong learning. This means that lifelong learning does

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<sup>9</sup> This objective covers relevant education for both young people and adults. See also status and measures under objective 2 with regard to young people under the age of 18.

not simply cover adult education, but that the whole of an individual's lifespan must be taken into consideration. Despite this, measures and initiatives in Norway have principally concentrated on adult learning. It is in this field there has been the greatest need for change in order to achieve the objective of lifelong learning for all. As this work progresses, younger age groups will be included in work on lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning has principally been catered for through the Competence Reform.<sup>10</sup> This reform package was initiated in 1999, and is still in progress in various initiatives and projects. The aim of the Competence Reform is to make a contribution towards meeting the needs of society, the workplace and of individuals for competence and skills. A central feature is the implementation of measures for documentation and evaluation of adults' non-formal learning to be used as a basis for professional recognition and entry into further formal education.<sup>11</sup> Non-formal learning may be acquired through work, experience of working in organisations or through other informal learning. Schemes have been developed that are valid in both the workplace and the educational system. This has been achieved through collaboration between the parties in working life, the educational system, study associations and private providers of education.

From 2002, adults requiring primary/lower secondary education, have a legal right to tuition. Furthermore, adults born before 1978 who have not completed upper secondary education, have as of 2000 the right to education at upper secondary school level leading to qualifications for entry into higher education, vocational qualifications or part-qualifications. In accordance with the Education Act, adults have a right to education provision adapted to their needs and level. They are not required to undertake education in areas where they already have knowledge and skills which can be credited. From 2001 adults are also able to enter higher education on the basis of evaluation of non-formal learning. Such evaluation is undertaken by the relevant educational institution.

### **3.2 Initiatives**

A number of initiatives have been launched, in part as a follow-up to the Competence Reform:

- A method has been established for vocational assessment. This form of assessment of non-formal learning is particularly suited to immigrants and minority language speakers who have difficulty documenting their education.

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on the "Competence Reform", see:  
<http://www.dep.no/ufd/engelsk/education/competence-reform/014061-990031/index-dok000-b-n-a.html>

<sup>11</sup> For more information on adult non-formal learning, see:  
<http://www.vox.no/archive/realN.pdf>

- Projects have been started to develop new, flexible teaching models. Flexible arrangements are important when education and training are based on adults' non-formal learning and adapted to the needs and life situation of each individual. People should be able to translate their interest in education and training into actual participation in education.
- The Competence Development Programme is contributing to further development of the market for further education and in-service training by promoting collaboration between educational providers, employers and employees on educational projects.
- Projects have been started to motivate adults to undertake more learning. The threshold for taking the initiative to undertake further learning can be quite high, especially for those who have reduced levels of literacy. More information about adults' use of their right to education needs to be gathered.
- The Government has proposed making statutory provisions for newly arrived immigrants, whereby an introductory programme would be combined with introductory financial support. This introductory scheme is to give immigrants who have recently arrived in the country an efficient and appropriate transition to working life or education.
- Specially adapted training courses in Norwegian and social skills targeted at immigrant women with children have been piloted in Oslo. The results of these initiatives will serve as models for other municipalities.
- In 2003 a pilot project using ICT based training for immigrants will be launched in 10 municipalities. Some municipalities have already started this type of training and their experiences are very encouraging.

Norway will be working further on these initiatives, both to cater for established rights to education and training and to build on results so far. Work is being carried out on developing an overall framework for lifelong learning. The challenge is to uncover bottlenecks and other obstacles to learning and activation of knowledge and to use these as a basis for the assessment of initiatives.

#### **4 Fourth Objective of the Dakar Declaration:**

*Achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults*

## **4.1 Status of Literacy Work**

In general, Norway has very high literacy levels, but some groups do worse than others, nonetheless. Basic reading and writing skills are a precondition for the individual citizen's ability to participate actively in the workplace, in his/her leisure time and in the life of the community. The OECD SIALS survey showed that about 30 per cent of the Norwegian population between the ages of 16 and 65 years had such poor reading skills that it would be difficult for them to function satisfactorily in the workplace. As a result, Norway has launched projects to enable a greater number of suitable education and training provisions to be made for people with reduced levels of literacy.

## **4.2 Initiatives**

- In the summer of 2002, the National Education Office in the county of Møre and Romsdal concluded a primary/lower secondary school project on behalf of The Ministry of Education and Research. The project assessed the need for primary/lower secondary education for adults. As a result of this project, a number of municipalities have considered initiatives on organising specific training for people with reduced levels of literacy and for immigrants. In the course of the project, work has been carried out on motivation and self-image, learning strategies, development of models for reading and writing, adaptation of academic material, multimedia learning packages and assessment of non-formal learning.
- The Competence Development Programme includes some projects whose primary focus is adults with reduced levels of literacy. The projects are partnerships with businesses interested in organising initiatives for or easing the burden of work on their employees.
- Dysnett is an electronic network for adults with reduced levels of literacy and for professionals working in the field. Dysnett aims to achieve better co-ordination and collaboration between the various parties and providers in the field.

## **5 Fifth Objective of the Dakar Declaration:**

*Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality*

### **5.1 Gender equality in Norwegian schools**

Norway has, in many respects, made considerable progress in achieving true gender equality, and this also holds for the educational sector. For example, there are now more women than men undertaking higher education. Nevertheless, in several areas of the educational sector there is still a need to work actively to create true gender equality:

- young people make highly gender-segregated choices of education and profession
- boys have poorer reading skills than girls
- girls rarely choose technology or science and mathematics based subjects
- gender equality is not a fully integrated topic in Norwegian education
- there are few women in academia holding positions at higher levels
- few men undertake teacher training or choose to work in schools

The proportion of male teachers in primary/lower secondary school is at present 36.9 per cent. The proportion of men applying for teacher training has also been falling. Work on gender equality in the educational sector covers women, men, girls and boys. The focus on boys and men in this work is a new dimension which has been added in recent years.

## 5.2 Initiatives

- Norway has one of the most gender-segregated workplaces in the whole of the OECD. Both girls and boys still make very gender traditional choice of education and professions. This was the background for the project "Conscious Choices of Education" which was intended to stimulate girls and boys to make untraditional choices. The project entitled "*Operation Minerva: Girls and Mathematics*" is aimed at girls at 32 primary/lower secondary and upper secondary schools in the whole country. The initiative is intended to stimulate girls to choose mathematics and science subjects.
- The report "Let men be men" (2001) proposed national as well as local initiatives and strategies for recruiting men to teacher training and schools. In the spring of 2002 a campaign was carried out to recruit people to different types of teacher training. One of the target groups of the campaign was young men. The proportion of men applying to teacher training increased somewhat after this and the proportion of male teacher training students is now 34 per cent.
- The Ministry has financed an Internet based network for men in schools and men in teacher training.<sup>12</sup> The Ministry has, in addition, initiated and funded research on the significance of male teachers. In February 2003, a

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<sup>12</sup> [www.menniskolen.no](http://www.menniskolen.no)

report was published on the significance of the presence or absence of male teachers in the school life of Norwegian pupils in general and boys in particular.

- Gender and ICT is a core area being targeted by policies on gender equality. One survey has shown that boys spend more time using computers outside school than girls do. Work is being carried out to increase interest in and use of computer technology amongst girls at school. This work spans everything from following up individual local initiatives to management of national development projects in the field.
- A guide has been prepared for work on gender equality in primary and secondary education and adult education. The guide is being followed up by a development and learning project for pupils and teachers about the significance of gender and gender equality. The project takes as its starting point young people's attitudes to TV series.

## **6 Sixth Objective of the Dakar Declaration:**

*Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills*

### **6.1 Status of Quality in the Norwegian School System**

Changes in society are altering demands for knowledge, competence and skills and raising the professional and ethical demands on every individual and on the workforce as a whole. Demands with respect to relevant competence and professional standards are being continuously redefined. In this context, it is important to reinforce basic competence and knowledge, which form the mainstay of core values. Good basic serves as a foundation for lifelong learning for each individual. At the same time we must ensure that institutions operating within higher education and research maintain a high level in international terms.

Norway is among the countries devoting most resources to education. The outcomes of the national input in education and training are not at a correspondingly high level. International comparisons in a number of surveys of knowledge and competence in schools indicate that we do not achieve more than reasonably good results. The PISA survey (2000) of 15-year-olds showed that amongst the 31 participating countries, Norway was no. 17 in mathematics and no.13 in science and reading. International surveys document that there is a wide range of results in Norwegian schools both amongst pupils at any one school and in any one class. This would seem to indicate that the weakest pupils, in particular, are not benefiting sufficiently from their education.

International surveys also show relatively good results for Norwegian pupils. Norwegian pupils from both primary and secondary schools took part in the TIMSS survey<sup>13</sup> of 1995, including pupils in the final year of upper secondary education. The Norwegian pupils reached top scores with respect to basic knowledge of science and mathematics.

The CIVIC survey<sup>14</sup> is an international research study which investigates education and training on the subject of democracy in 28 countries, surveying how far 14-15-year olds in these countries are prepared for democracy. Norwegian pupils (14-15) do well in several areas. The survey shows, amongst other things, that in comparison with pupils from the remaining 27 countries, Norwegian pupils attain a high score on basic knowledge about democracy, democratic institutions and central democratic rights and duties.

## **6.2 Initiatives**

- In the autumn of 2001, the government appointed a public committee, "The Committee on Quality" whose mandate includes the analysis and evaluation of current Norwegian basic education with respect to content, quality and organisation. As part of the Government's modernisation programme, the Ministry of Education and Research has initiated work within Norwegian basic education (primary and secondary education) under the motto "School know best". The project is to follow up proposals from The Committee on Quality and propose and carry out changes in the following areas: laws and regulations, funding and quality assessment.
- In 2002, the Ministry introduced a pilot scheme of special grants to selected demonstration and bonus schools in order to encourage efforts to improve the quality of education. Demonstration schools and bonus schools are schools which have excelled, amongst other things, by working systematically to improve the quality of education. Demonstration schools have been given special responsibility to disseminate the results of their development work to other schools. In 2003 the Ministry will extend the demonstration school scheme and establish a scheme for business providers of apprentice training. In addition, a Quality Prize will be awarded to school owners who have excelled in this field.
- In order to improve information about the current state of schools, the Ministry is working to establish an interactive website for information on school quality on the Internet. The site is intended to facilitate more

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<sup>13</sup> The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

<sup>14</sup> The Civic Education Study was carried out by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) in 1999 and 2000

systematic analysis and use of statistics, status reports, research, international surveys and national tests, with special emphasis on learning outcomes, the learning environment and learning resources. National tests in reading, writing, mathematics and English are also to be developed at four different levels in basic education by the year 2004.

- One key area being targeted is the reinforcement of teaching in the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics at primary/lower secondary school level. This has been achieved, in part, by increasing the number of lessons in Norwegian and reading for years 2 to 4 from the autumn of 2002.
- In order to raise standards, it is important that school owners and schools use the local flexibility, which is already available. The Ministry facilitates local experimental projects under the provision of the Education Act and trials based on regulations on working hours.
- The Ministry has prepared a strategy to reinforce science and mathematics in the whole of the educational cycle. One component of this work is the establishment of a national centre for mathematics under the aegis of NTNU (The Norwegian University of Technology and Natural Sciences). This centre is to lead and co-ordinate development of new, improved working methods and ways of learning in mathematics.
- The Development of teachers' competence and skills is a key area being targeted by the Ministry of Education and Research. Teachers are a school's most valuable resource. It is critical that they have a thorough grounding in their subjects and that they can use information and computer technology (ICT) in their lessons. Teachers must be seen as authoritative figures, as well as having the capacity to facilitate organisation of a positive learning environment. The aim of the Government is zero tolerance towards violence, racism and bullying in schools. The Ministry has therefore arranged for:
  - ⇒ flexible, school-based further education and in-service training in Norwegian, mathematics, science, English and other foreign languages (German/French), as well as school management.
  - ⇒ a grant to be awarded to a minimum of 1000 teachers to undertake further education in mathematics, Norwegian and Sami (national minority language) from the autumn of 2003.
  - ⇒ further education and in-service training in the pedagogical use of ICT for up to 40 000 teachers.
  - ⇒ development of teachers' competence/skills in class management.
  - ⇒ a new agreement on working hours for teachers in 2003. The aim of this agreement is to promote more flexible working schedules which are better suited to the needs and demands of the current school system and any future developments in the educational sector.



## SUMMARY

As mentioned in the preface, Norway has made considerable progress in making good educational provision for all. This does not mean that the Norwegian school system does not face any challenges with respect to the six Dakar objectives. This document has presented a brief status report on each of the six objectives and a list of the most important initiatives in each area.

Education for all seen in a lifelong perspective is both important and complex. The Competence Reform in Norway represents an important step in the direction of lifelong learning. Teaching adapted to the needs of the individual is also a prerequisite for reaching everyone in society. Some groups of pupils have proven difficult to reach in the current Norwegian school system. Formal rights and genuine provision are not in themselves always sufficient to reach those groups which have the greatest need for increased competence and skills. Lack of self confidence and motivation are key concepts in understanding many of those who, for various reasons, have negative experiences of school. It is therefore important that education and training is based on pupils' sense of achievement. This will increase motivation and self-confidence of individual pupils, enabling them to meet new challenges in the school of the future.

Another core challenge for the Norwegian school system is the quality of the education and training provided. International surveys show that Norwegian schools achieve average standards. This is not satisfactory, bearing in mind the resources committed to schools. Raising standards in the education system is a priority task in the Norwegian school system.

Despite these challenges, the Norwegian school system is of a high standard in international terms, and these unsolved problems are small in comparison with the challenges in the field of aid and development. Seen from a Norwegian perspective, international development work is therefore the most important focus of EFA.