

Development of Teacher Education in Norway with a Focus on 4-year Undergraduate Study¹

Razvoj izobraževanja učiteljev na Norveškem s poudarkom na štiriletnem dodiplomskem študiju

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Abstract

In Norway, the Bologna process was followed up by a quality reform of higher education. The principles of the quality reform were implemented at all higher education institutions effective from the autumn of 2003. With regard to teachers, in Norway the Ministry of Education lays down national curriculum regulations for teacher education. Statutes and curriculum regulations constitute a mandatory basis for the institutions that provide teacher education, for the employees, students and the representatives of practical training. The overall purpose is to meet the needs of the community for qualified teachers in all subjects and subject areas covered by kindergartens, schools and adult education. The article analyses the main elements of the National curriculum regulations for general teacher education, pre-school teacher education and practical and didactic education (2003).

Key words

teacher education in Norway; implications of the Bologna Declaration; national curriculum regulations; teacher's competencies; practical training

Povzetek

Na Norveškem je bolonjskemu procesu sledil projekt Reforma kakovosti v visokem šolstvu. Načela te reforme so bila uveljavljena na vseh visokošolskih zavodih jeseni 2003. Kar se tiče učiteljev, je na Norveškem Ministrstvo za šolstvo tisto, ki določi nacionalni kurikulum za izobraževanje učiteljev. Statuti

¹ The main part of this article is a condensed version of the National curriculum regulations for general teacher education, pre-school teacher education and practical and didactic education (2003). The complete document can be found on http://odin.dep.no/filarkiv/235560/Rammeplan_laerer_eng.pdf.

in kurikularna pravila so obvezna podlaga za ustanove, ki izvajajo izobraževanje učiteljev, za delodajalce, študente ter predstavnike v praktičnem usposabljanju. Splošen namen je, da bi zadovoljili potrebe skupnosti po kvalificiranih učiteljih za vse predmete ter predmetna področja v vrtcih, šolah ter v izobraževanju odraslih. Članek analizira glavne elemente Pravil o nacionalnem kurikulumu za splošno izobraževanje učiteljev, predšolsko izobraževanje učiteljev ter praktično in didaktično izobraževanje (2003).

Ključne besede

izobraževanje učiteljev na Norveškem; implikacije Bolonjske deklaracije; ureditev nacionalnega kurikulumu; kompetence učiteljev; praktično usposabljanje

1 Introduction

A brief overview of the Educational System of Norway is shown below in *figure 1*. The educational system was revised in 1997 and is under revision in 2006. Pre-school education is not compulsory and the parents have to pay for their children in the preschools. Primary education starts for the 6 year old children and lasts for 7 years. The pupils then continue to a 3 year lower secondary education. Primary and lower secondary education is compulsory. Upper secondary education lasts for 3 or 4 years. The 4 year study includes 2 years in school and a 2 year apprenticeship. The 3 year study prepares for higher education.

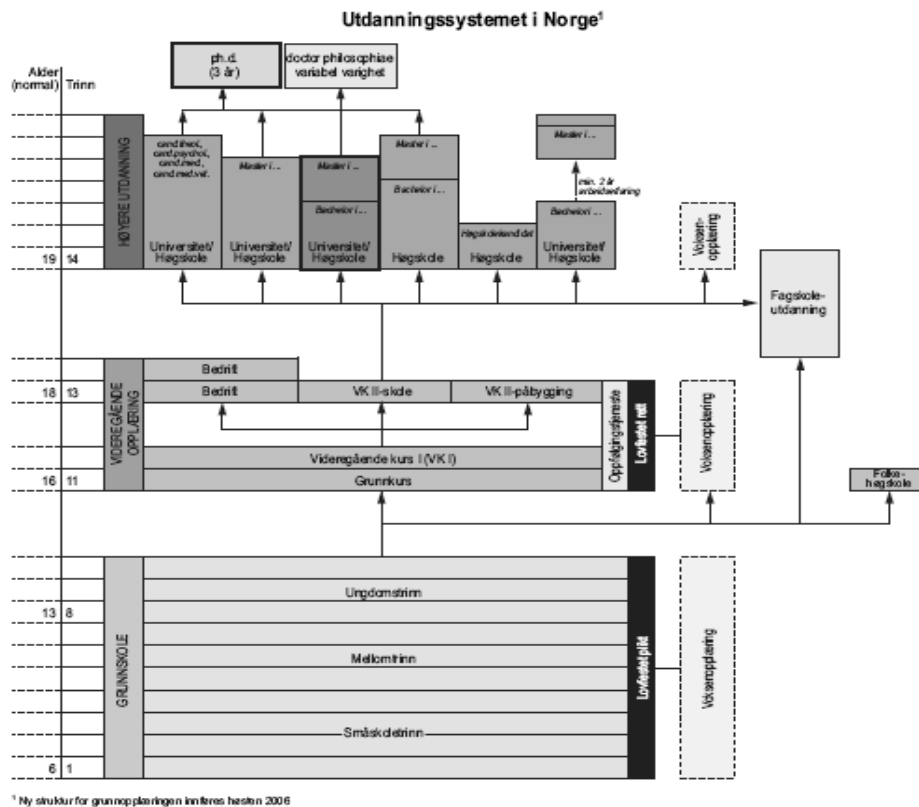


Figure 1

The Bologna Process was followed up by a Quality Reform in higher education. This Quality Reform was implemented at all higher education institutions in Norway effective from the autumn of 2003. The changes introduced by the Quality Reform largely follow up or reflect the Bologna Process. Key aspects of

the reform are the introduction of a new degree structure with bachelor's and master's degrees, the Diploma Supplement and the introduction of credits based on the ECTS model (European Credit Transfer System). The establishment of NOKUT (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) and improved quality assurance at the institutional level also mirror the objectives of the Bologna Process. In addition, scope for student exchange is to be improved.²

2 Teacher Education

The Ministry lays down national curriculum regulations for teacher education in Norway. Statutes and curriculum regulations constitute a mandatory basis for the institutions that provide teacher education, for the employees, students and representatives for practical training.

The overall purpose of teacher education is to meet the needs of the community for qualified teachers in all subjects and subject areas covered by kindergartens, schools and adult education. Section 54a of the Act relating to universities and university colleges expresses the purpose of teacher education as follows:

1. Through teaching, research and scientific development, teacher education shall provide the professional and educational knowledge and practical training needed for the planning,

Implementation and assessment of teaching, learning and nurture. Teacher education shall take as its point of departure the various requirements of children attending schools and kindergartens, and shall accord with the objectives of the level of education aimed at in the teacher education.

2. The education shall promote the personal development and professional ethics of the students, develop their capacity for reflection, rouse their interest in academic and educational development relevant for work in schools and kindergartens, and provide an understanding of the relationship between the teaching profession and the function of the educational system in society.

Teacher education is a highly diversified field. The purpose of the various courses of teacher Education is to provide teachers for specific subjects or specific areas of education. However, Teachers' competence overlaps in such a way that the owner of the school is able to assemble a team of teachers according to the needs of the individual school.

² Ministry of Education and Research: The Bologna Process from a Norwegian Perspective – towards a European Higher Education Area (2005)

Pre-school teacher education (three-year) qualifies for educational work in kindergartens and the first year of the primary school. Addition of one year's relevant further education, qualifies pre-school teachers for work in the first to fourth year.

General teacher education (four-year) qualifies for teaching in the primary and lower secondary school and in adult education at the corresponding level.

Subject teacher education (three-year and four-year) qualifies for teaching of subjects at the primary and lower secondary school, at the upper secondary school, in adult education and for other cultural work with children and adolescents.

Vocational teacher education (three-year) qualifies for teaching in the upper secondary school, in adult education and for subjects from the fifth year of the primary school.

Practical and Didactic Education (one-year) builds on a course of academic studies or on a vocational training course with practical training and vocational theory and qualifies for teaching from the fifth year of the primary school, in the upper secondary school and in adult education.

Integrated master's degree (five-year) qualifies for teaching of certain subjects from the fifth year of the primary school, in the upper secondary school and in adult education.

2.1 The teacher's competence

The qualified teacher must have highly diversified competence. Teacher education is demanding because students are required to develop many types of competence and learning in a number of different arenas. During the course, students must acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that can form the basis for personal growth and development and equip them for practice of their profession.

The practice field as a learning arena

Practical training in kindergartens, schools and enterprises must play a determining role in Vocationally oriented teacher education. The institutions shall offer students a variety of practice experience, thereby providing an introduction to the profession. The students shall learn to plan, carry out and assess teaching. Reflection over situations they encounter during practical training helps them to develop a realistic view of the teaching profession.

Subject studies as a learning arena

During the course, students shall acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that can form a basis for personal growth and development and function as tools in the practice of their profession.

Firstly, students shall acquire a thorough insight into the subjects, both as a basis for teaching and as part of their own formative process. The formative process here means not only that the students develop personal maturity and self-knowledge, but also that they acquire a scientific way of thinking and use knowledge derived from different academic traditions in a creative, constructive and critical way.

Secondly, specialized knowledge must be linked to subject-related work in different teaching situations. The students must acquire experience of topic-based, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary learning, so that they can stimulate the pupils to adopt a variety of learning strategies. They must experience what needs to be done in order to create a stimulating learning environment, adapted to the needs of children of different ages with different backgrounds.

Thirdly, the students must become familiar with conditions and frameworks for teaching. The students must be acquainted with and be able to apply different educational perspectives and learning strategies. They must learn how they can set up an active and positive cooperation with pupils' homes and with the local community.

Interaction, exploration and reflection as a learning arena

The institutions responsible for teacher education must cooperate with the practice institutions on the development of a comprehensive teaching competence. Research and development work is particularly well suited to identifying and assessing different approaches and to understanding how practical and didactic challenges can be dealt with. Practice-oriented research and research into today's school and kindergarten can make the course relevant and stimulating, and student participation in such projects can stimulate the ability and will to adopt an innovative approach.

Learning and development take place throughout the course, but it is not until the students rework their experience across subjects and learning arenas that areas of competence are viewed in relation to each other and can form an integrated whole. In this way, the individual student can lay the basis for professional competence and efficiency as a teacher.

2.2 Social considerations

If teacher education is to be relevant, it must prepare students for the requirements and expectations imposed by society on kindergartens and the school.

Norway is increasingly seen as part of a global society. Children from linguistic minorities make up a growing element of the education system, while the needs and interests of indigenous peoples and national minorities have been given increasing attention. The teacher must have knowledge of the situation for bilingual and multilingual pupils, more generally speaking, of the meeting between cultures, and he or she must be capable of cooperating with parents and guardians from different cultures.

The institutions that provide teacher education shall ensure integration of the international perspective in all subjects and course modules. They must be receptive to ideas from teacher education in other countries, provide more courses held in English and make provisions for student exchange.

Media industry and ICT result in new forms of learning. Students shall be able to use new technology for learning and communication, but they shall also be capable of critical reflection concerning its use.

Artistic forms of expression are an important part of our daily lives. In schools and day-care facilities for school children, creative activities, experiences and forms of expression shall constitute a major element of activities. Close cooperation with music and culture schools and other local cultural activities will enrich the activities of kindergartens and schools.

The consumer society intervenes with increasing force in the daily lives of children and adolescents, and exerts a powerful influence on values. Kindergartens and the school must be able to respond to this influence by providing alternative knowledge and values. Through critical discussions on the consumer society, students shall learn how to introduce pupils to alternative perspectives, attitudes and values.

A society where keener competition makes itself felt even in kindergartens and schools may encourage greater effort and a positive cycle of learning, but may also give rise to despondency and reluctance to learn. Helping pupils who do not participate actively is a challenge for teachers. The learning environment must be adapted to allow integration of children and adolescents with varying backgrounds including those with special teaching needs. All pupils must experience that hard work is worthwhile, and that they can succeed. Adapted teaching shall be an element of all subjects in teacher education.

Most children and adolescents experience a secure upbringing. However, some children have insecure lives characterized by a failure of care. This may have an effect on the learning community and undermine motivation. Teacher education

must prepare the students for these challenges and also train them in resolving conflicts and in preventing and combating bullying, violence and racism.

It is a presupposition of teaching in kindergartens and schools today that the children will grow up in a society with considerably greater gender equality than was experienced by previous generations. It is a goal for teaching that both sexes shall be able to express themselves on their own terms.

Changes in workplaces and industry place considerable demands on flexibility and the will to change, on personal initiative and creative ability and on being able to put visions and plans into practice. Both kindergartens and the school must open a channel towards local workplaces and industry. Practical entrepreneurship is a learning goal that is given increasing emphasis by the school.

It is a deeply rooted principle in Norwegian kindergartens and schools that children have a right to equivalent education regardless of background, abilities and sex. This value is of particular relevance in a multicultural society. This principle must be particularly expressed in teacher education by placing an emphasis on equity, equality and adapted teaching.

2.3 From national curriculum regulations to curriculum

It is laid down in section 46 (4) of the Act relating to universities and university colleges that the Ministry may establish national curriculum regulations for certain courses. The Act and the curriculum regulations constitute a mandatory basis for the institutions that provide teacher education, employees, students and representatives for practical training. On the basis of the curriculum regulations, the institutions shall develop curricula for compulsory and elective course modules. The curricula shall interpret and specify objectives and establish content, course literature, working methods and assessment arrangements for each subject. They shall also show the overall structure of the course.

3 General Teacher Education

3.1 Objectives and characteristics

The purpose of general teacher education is to provide qualified teachers for the primary and lower secondary school and to further the personal development of the students. The course has a vocational and practical orientation based on the teacher's field of work, the principles of the Education Act and the curriculum for the primary and lower secondary school.

Children are curious by nature and enjoy learning through play, exploration and creative activities. It is intended that the primary and lower secondary school

shall build upon and further develop this approach to knowledge, skills and learning. Teachers must enable the pupils to make discoveries that give rise to curiosity and insight that provide an experience of mastery and that enable them to learn how to learn. Teacher education must therefore give the students experiences that they can draw upon when developing stimulating learning environments.

All pupils have a right to education adapted to their abilities, interests and needs. The school shall be an inclusive learning environment, and this must also apply to pupils who need additional support and help.

Pupils attending the primary and lower secondary school represent a considerable age range, a wide range of abilities and interests and a varied social, linguistic and cultural background. This requires that the general teacher possesses an insight into the environment in which children and adolescents are growing up and into the circumstances in which they live.

It is the aim of general teacher education to help the students to fill a wide range of vocational

functions. The subject studies, practical training and the student's own reflections shall therefore form an integrated whole and address the tasks that the student will meet in his daily work as a teacher.

General teacher education aims to develop the following forms of competence:

- *subject competence*: familiarity with the content, theories and methods associated with the various basic subjects, knowledge of children, childhood and child education and knowledge of theories and working methods in and across subjects
- *didactic competence*: ability to analyse curricula and reflect over content and working methods and make provisions for learning and development processes for all pupils
- *social competence*: ability to observe, listen, understand and respect the views and actions of others, ability to cooperate with pupils, colleagues and parents and guardians and ability to function as a leader in a community of learners
- *adaptive and developmental competence*: ability to assess one's own activities and those of the school, contribute to development of the teaching profession, take part in local development work and strengthen one's own competence
- *professional ethics competence*: insight into one's own attitudes and the ethical challenges of the profession and ability to assess learning situations in the light of basic educational values

3.2 Structure and organization

General teacher education consists of a four-year vocational training course of 240 credits. The structure is shown in *figure 2*. The course comprises a compulsory component of 120 credits and an elective component of 120 credits.

The compulsory component of the course consists of

- Educational Theory 30 credits
- Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical Education 20 credits
- Mathematics 30 credits
- Norwegian 30 credits
- Basic Literacy and Numeracy Training 10 credits
- Practical training as an integral part of the course modules 20-22 weeks

The elective component of the course consists of a choice of subjects of relevance to school teaching 120 credits³.

Students may adapt the course to the lower levels of the primary and lower secondary school by choosing more subjects or to the higher levels by choosing fewer subjects. Natural Sciences and Environmental and Social Studies as an integrated course provision may be defined as a single subject area in the primary and lower secondary school. The institutions prepare syllabuses for subjects not included in the curriculum regulations. When subjects are extended in excess of 30 credits, subject didactics will generally be directed towards the lower secondary level unless otherwise indicated by the character of the subject.

Depending on the subjects chosen during the first three years and the universities' and university colleges' provisions for and rules for admission to master's courses, the fourth year may be taken as part of a master's course.

In Norway it is also provided a Sami general teacher education which is available for attendance by Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish students who have Sami as their first or second language. The central focus of attention for teachers in the Sami school is the living environment of the Sami pupils, and the course addresses the variation and diversity of Sami society. The purpose of Sami general teacher education is to qualify students to provide education in all subjects both with a Sami focus and with Sami as the language of instruction.

General teacher education for deaf students is adapted to students who are deaf or hearing impaired and have Norwegian Sign Language as their first language.

³ These shall include at least 60 credits in subjects that are taught in the primary and lower secondary school. The subjects may be extensions of subjects in the compulsory component or separate subjects of at least 30 credits and shall include subject didactics and normally practical training as well. A maximum of 60 credits may consist of other course modules of varying size of relevance to school teaching

Some subjects are adapted to qualify for providing teaching based on the needs of deaf or hearing-impaired pupils who use sign language.

3.3 Degrees

If the teacher education course is planned in such a way that it meets the requirements laid down in the rules of the institution, the students may after three years be awarded a bachelor's degree. This degree is not a teaching qualification. The title of the degree is decided by the education institution. The word teacher may not be included in the title.

3.4 Internationalization

In the various parts of the course, the institutions shall make provisions to ensure that the students are provided with an international perspective in relation to course subjects and teaching.

The institutions shall also make arrangements to enable students to take parts of the course abroad. Conditions shall be laid down for recognition of studies abroad as part of subject studies and practical training.

Figure 2. General Teacher Education, Structure and Organization

Years	Subjects	Credits	Practical training	Credits
Elective subjects (total 120 credits)	Primary and lower secondary school subjects / Subjects of relevance to school teaching	60 or 2 x 30		
Year 4	Primary and lower secondary school subjects	60 (modules of varying size)	Practical training integrated in the subjects	20 - 22
Year 3	Basic literacy and numeracy training	10		
Year 1 and 2: Compulsory subjects	Mathematics	30		
	Norwegian	30		
	CKREE (KRL)	20		
	Educational theory	30		

3.5 Practical training

As regards practical training, students shall meet the requirements and expectations faced by the teacher. They shall develop their professional

competence by applying and adapting their own knowledge of subjects and didactics. Experience and issues derived from practice are also a central focus of the subject studies. In order to clarify the relations between the various learning arenas, the course must provide room for didactic reflection.

The institutions draw up a practical training plan. This plan is based on the objectives of the various subject studies and of the course as a whole. The purpose of the plan is to show how practical training is organized, and how progression is ensured throughout the course. It must emphasize the joint responsibility of subject teachers, students and practice schools for planning, carrying out and reworking the experience of practice. Practical training takes up a total of 20-22 working weeks, shall be guided and shall primarily take place in the primary and lower secondary school. However, a maximum of 2 weeks may take place in other appropriate practice fields. The students shall undergo an assessment with a pass/fail mark following each practice period.

The practical training shall be arranged so that the students

- become familiar with the diversity of professional tasks
- encounter the practice field as an arena for study of the subjects and as an arena for exploration
- develop knowledge of the interaction between pupils and between pupil and teacher and knowledge of school management, class management and teamwork
- reflect over and develop didactic knowledge relating to the subjects and across the subjects
- work in a multicultural learning environment and make provisions for adapted education for all pupils
- experience cooperation with parents and guardians and persons who share responsibility for the environment in which the children are growing up
- analyse experience of practice in the light of theory, curricula for the primary and lower secondary school and own experience with pupils
- gain experience of working methods that promote entrepreneurship

3.6 Principles of working methods and forms of assessment

The institutions are responsible for ensuring that the students gain experience of professionally relevant working methods and forms of assessment. Exercises and forms of documentation must integrate subjects, subject didactics and practical training so that the course functions as a coherent whole.

The working methods shall be planned in such a way that the students

- work with knowledge from different subjects and learning arenas
- obtain knowledge from different sources and assess the sources critically and independently

- take part in planning, carrying out and assessing the various parts of the course
- familiarize themselves with and analyse research, surveys and the national assessment system
- gain experience of methods that promote entrepreneurship at different levels
- have the opportunity for aesthetic expression, experience and awareness
- analyse questions of professional ethics
- present and disseminate material for different target groups
- work with ICT and other teaching aids and assess the teaching aids critically

Forms of assessment shall be planned in such a way that the students

- encounter assessment both during and at the end of the course modules
- observe the relations between practice and theory and between subjects
- experience a variety of forms of assessment adapted to the objectives and working methods of the course
- become familiar with forms of assessment appropriate for the primary and lower secondary school
- receive guidance and support in relation to their own learning and personal development

3.7 From national curriculum regulations to course curriculum

The national curriculum regulations constitute a mandatory basis for the institutions, staff, students and practice schools. On this basis, the institutions develop a course curriculum in cooperation with students and practice schools. The curriculum shall provide general information concerning the course. This means an outline of the course as a whole included a practical training plan, individual subject syllabuses (for both compulsory and elective course modules) and syllabuses for interdisciplinary course modules.

3.8 The general teacher education – students

General teacher education is provided by approximately 20 University Colleges in Norway. Most of the students will finishing their 4-year study at one University College, but it is possible for a student to move over to another University College during their study or to add the elective subjects from another University College or from a University. The 4th year can also be the 1st year of a 2-year master study at a University College or a University. The student will in that case usually during a 5-year study be qualified for work in upper secondary education as well.

At present the students need to have a certain limit of qualifications from upper secondary schools to enter into general teacher education.