



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Report

# Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Norway

Status, Challenges and Areas of Priority





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## **Foreword**

This report provides a review of the status of Norwegian efforts for lifelong learning. It also indicates the main challenges we are facing and presents the areas of political priority in the time to come. The report has been drawn up by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

The need for a report in this area now is mainly due to two circumstances. Firstly, it is an objective of the EU Lisbon process that all associated countries, including Norway, should have a coherent and comprehensive strategy for lifelong learning. Secondly, the Ministry of Education and Research has wished to have a collected presentation of all the information and the numerous measures concerning lifelong learning which, being such a comprehensive and extensive area, is dealt with in many different processes.

Work on the report started in the spring of 2006. On 14 June the Ministry organised an seminar for the many stakeholders in this area. The seminar provided valuable feedback and led to adjustments, for example giving more space in the report to learning in working life.

There have been contributions from many professional environments in the preparation of the report.. We would especially like to thank Vox (the Norwegian Institute for Adult Learning), Norway Opening Universities and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training for their valuable input during the final stages of the work on the report.

The strategy has been translated from Norwegian by Ragnhild Evjen Andersen.



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# 1. Introduction

## What is lifelong learning?

“Lifelong learning” is the term for an ambitious political objective. Put simply it could be expressed as follows: The individual is to be given conditions for learning that are so favourable that he/she will continue to learn from childhood into adulthood and then into old age, in all the contexts where he/she may find him/herself. Lifelong learning is important for the individual’s personal development, for the development of democracy and social life and to ensure the creation of values in working life.

It has long been a political objective to make conditions favourable for lifelong learning but use of the concept has changed. Earlier it was closely linked to adults’ opportunities for participating in education and training but gradually the perspective has been extended to cover the entire span of life “from cradle to grave”. Research indicates that learning at different ages is closely interrelated and that among the most important things one can do to improve opportunities for adult learning is to make sure that the individual achieves a good basis for learning while young. This basis not only comprises knowledge and skills but also learning strategies and a positive attitude to learning. By “Lifelong learning”, as the concept is used in this report, we mean all forms of learning, throughout one’s whole life, inside and outside the educational system<sup>1</sup>.

## Short historical overview

As a result of the Buer Committee<sup>2</sup> in the mid 1990s the concept of lifelong learning was in earnest placed on the political agenda in Norway. However, the idea of “you live and learn” is much older. Norway has had a long tradition of adult education through correspondence courses and evening courses run by distance education institutions and study associations, traditions that can be traced back to the labour movement and the layman movement amongst others. Working life also has long traditions of providing an important context for learning, and the social partners have contractual cooperation on competence enhancement for employees. In addition, since the Second World War it has gradually become more usual for adults – especially women – to “go back to school again”, for example to complete upper secondary education or higher education – either as part of personal fulfilment or with a view to taking part in working life. Opportunities for adults to take part in such training and education have been discussed and researched a number of times. The passing of a separate Adult Education Act in 1976 and the “Lifelong Learning Report” from the Hernes Committee in 1986 are important milestones which also show how the discussion about lifelong learning has gradually evolved from the end of the 1950s from seeing it as popular enlightenment and cultural work to considering it a means of economic value creation and adaptation in working life.

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<sup>1</sup> This definition corresponds to the EU’s definition: “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective” (from the EU Commission’s Communication “Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality”, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> The Buer Committee was appointed as a result of a Private Proposal to the Storting (Parliament) (Doc. no. 8:71, 1994-95), presented by Øystein Djupedal (SV). The Committee presented the Proposal to the Storting NOU 1997:25 New Competence

So the *concept* of lifelong learning was not new in the 1990s; what was new was that the reasons given for the concept were more comprehensive and so was political support for more systematic efforts to realise the objective<sup>3</sup>. Among the most important reasons for giving political priority to lifelong learning were characteristics of modern working life.

Technological progress, globalisation of markets and more rapid rates of adaptation meant there was an increased need for competence in Norwegian enterprises. Another main reason was the wish for social inclusion, both in the sense that learning opportunities are in themselves positive and should therefore be shared as equally as possible, and because knowledge provides an admission ticket to modern working life and as such a source of a secure income. In other words, people with a low level of competence risk standing outside the labour market. In addition there was an increased awareness that learning helps personal development and the development of the civil society.

### The Competence Reform

The social partners' will to address systematically the task of realising the objective of lifelong learning was evident in the wake of the financial recession at the beginning of the 1990s. In 1993 the Congress of the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions (LO) passed a resolution stating that lifelong learning should be made available to all, and that the authorities should draw up a national action plan for continuing education and training. This initiative meant that in 1994 a new chapter on competence development was added to the Basic Agreement between LO and the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO). This supplement regulates the responsibilities for competence development linked to the needs of the company. In addition in connection with several wage revisions in the 90s there were demands that employees should have better opportunities for acquiring education and training also in excess of the company's needs. This process was intensified and transferred into the Government's work through the proposals of the Buer Committee<sup>4</sup>, and through the subsequent Report to the Storting (White Paper)<sup>5</sup>. This Report gave its name to the ensuing reform: The Competence Reform.

The objective of the Competence Reform was to satisfy the need for competence experienced by working life, society and the individual. When the Norwegian Storting (Parliament) discussed the White Paper in 1999 the Government received support for a number of measures, including an individual right to educational leave, a system for documentation and validation of non-formal and informal qualifications, and the right to upper secondary education and training<sup>6</sup> for adults who have not had such an opportunity earlier. However the Government did not reach agreement with the social partners on one of the other elements from the Buer Committee, namely who was to pay the wages of employees on educational leave.

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<sup>3</sup> White Paper no. 42 (1997-98) - The Competence Reform - states: "The development towards placing increasing emphasis on lifelong learning has been taking place for a long time. However the situation has now changed because of the rate of development and the dynamics of the changes. Lifelong competence building can no longer be left to chance. The development has reached a stage where the whole area must be given thorough consideration, systemisation and integration in how the nation's educational activities as a whole are organised."

<sup>4</sup> The mandate of the Committee was "to consider the basis for a national action plan for an adapted, goal-oriented and comprehensive system for adult education and competence development in working and social life".

<sup>5</sup> White Paper no. 42 (1997-98) The Competence Reform

<sup>6</sup> In 2002 adults without primary and/or lower secondary education were given a right to such education, on certain conditions.

The Competence Reform meant that Norway was right at the front of international development. As of the beginning of the new millennium the EU came into active play with the Lisbon process, and 2002 saw the accompanying ambitious plans for “Education and Training 2010” which Norway endorsed. Lifelong learning is an important component of the EU’s strategy for making Europe “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world”<sup>7</sup>. One of the main partial objectives is that all Member States and associates are by the end of 2006 to have implemented “coherent and comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning”.<sup>8</sup> In order to follow up and support this process a number of groups and activities connected with the EU Commission were appointed, and in cooperation with the Member States reports are regularly being made about progress in the processes. The funding of these activities and general EU efforts aimed at attaining these objectives have now been gathered in the EU education programme the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007–2013<sup>9</sup>.

The OECD has also had a central role as expert support for Norwegian efforts on lifelong learning. The OECD’s surveys of e.g. the Norwegian systems for career guidance and lifelong learning have provided valuable feedback to both ministries and other national participants.

From the beginning of the millennium Norway put in more efforts on implementing the Competence Reform through a national action plan covering a number of areas of priority and measures. Vox was established in 2001 as an important instrument for implementing the reform and *inter alia* led the development of a national system for documentation and validation of non-formal and informal qualifications. Vox has also administered the Competence Development Programme, a government-funded programme managed by the social partners, which between 1999 and 2006 has granted NOK 329 million to 740 different competence enhancement projects where working life and the education system have collaborated on developing continuing education and training courses adapted to the needs of working life. In addition Vox has also played an important role in building up knowledge about how adults learn and about the workplace as a learning context.

To stimulate the development of flexible and lifelong learning in higher education Norway Opening Universities was established as a subordinate agency of the Ministry of Education and Research in 2004<sup>10</sup>. The Board of Norway Opening Universities consists of representatives for the educational institutions, student organisations and the social partners. A main objective for Norway Opening Universities is to strengthen the contact between working life and higher education, in addition to supporting Norwegian universities and colleges in their work on developing ICT-supported education and distance education. Good and relevant offers of education and training are essential both for individuals to achieve their career plans and for Norwegian enterprises and the Norwegian economy as a whole to be competitive in a global economy increasingly based on competence.

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<sup>7</sup> The EU Commission, the Lisbon Declaration, 2000

<sup>8</sup> The EU Commission, “Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality”, 2001

<sup>9</sup> Resolution no. 1720/2006/EF of 15 November from the European Parliament and the Council concerning the establishment of an action plan for lifelong learning. EEA resolution on participation in the programme is expected in the spring of 2007.

<sup>10</sup> The agency Norway Opening Universities as it is today was established by a merger with the Central Agency for Distance education (SOFF).

### Subsequent educational reforms

One result of the work on the Competence Reform was that the concept of lifelong learning at the beginning of the new millennium was often closely associated with continuing education and training and with competence development in working life. However since then lifelong learning has been further developed as a “perspective from cradle to grave” which also formed the basis of the subsequent educational reforms after year 2000.

Many of the objectives of the Quality Reform in higher education, which was implemented in 2003, were determined from the perspective of lifelong learning. The new degree system (Bachelor, Master and PhD.) and the grading system (A-F) became the same as in the other countries in the Bologna process, thus making it easier, both nationally and internationally, to document and validate qualifications. The reform has also led to more emphasis on relevance to working life and more coherent study programmes.

The recently implemented reform of primary and secondary education called the Knowledge Promotion has focused very strongly on one main element of lifelong learning: the importance of having substantial basic skills. These skills are included in each subject curriculum thus making all teachers responsible for pupils and apprentices developing their basic skills through work in the various subjects. The new curricula also have clear objectives for what the pupils are to master at various stages. In addition this reform has simplified the study structure in upper secondary education, with fewer and broader education programmes and greater flexibility as regards adapting the education for the individual pupil, school, apprentice and training establishment.

The Kindergarten Promotion should also be mentioned in this connection. The goal is to ensure full kindergarten coverage, high quality and low fees. A new framework plan for the contents and tasks of kindergartens has focused on improving the quality of kindergartens. Kindergartens are defined as a voluntary start to the lifelong learning process. For this reason responsibility for kindergartens has been moved from the Ministry of Children and Equality to the Ministry of Education and Research as of 2006.

In White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) “...and none were left outside” lifelong learning, in the sense of learning “from cradle to grave”, was the dominant perspective. In this White Paper, presented in December 2006, the Government places special emphasis on the importance of including all children in good learning communities in kindergartens and primary and lower secondary schools, as a fundament for developing basic skills and learning one’s whole life through. The sub-title “Early Efforts for Lifelong Learning” underlines this main perspective. The White Paper presents the Government’s proposals for future work concerning basic skills, career guidance and adult learning, etc. Many of the areas of priority presented in the present report have been taken from the measures in the White Paper.

The development from the Competence Reform for adults, via the Quality Reform, the Knowledge Promotion, the Kindergarten Promotion to the White Paper on Early Efforts, indicates how areas of priority in the promotion of lifelong learning have changed over time, how the different levels of the education system must increasingly be seen in conjunction with each other, and how awareness of the importance of early efforts in the lifelong learning process has gradually increased.

## The Knowledge Basis

Over the last few years it has been important to gather data, make analyses and construct a knowledge basis for policy-making in this area. In 2003 the Ministry of Education and Research published the Competence Statement for Norway, which consisted of several reports, including an analytical policy report called “Lifelong Learning – More than Words?” An important part of the underlying material for the Competence Statement was a research-based monitor with indicators for the learning of adults, the Learning Conditions Monitor. This survey has since been repeated annually. The governing idea from this work was taken up in the Ministry of Education and Research’s project “The Pattern Breakers” from 2004-2005. The final report from this project, “A Leading Knowledge Nation?”, pointed out the following three recommended areas of priority: 1) more learning organisations, 2) increased interaction between education and working life, and 3) a more inclusive knowledge society. In addition to this the Vox publications “The Vox barometer” and “Basis!” have contributed to our knowledge basis concerning lifelong learning in Norway.

All of these reports and analyses form the basis for this situation report.

### Lifelong learning in practice

If lifelong learning is to be more than a slogan we have to ask what it is to mean in practice. Who are the target groups for lifelong learning, and which use will they have for it? To illustrate what lifelong learning means in practice it may be useful to look at a few typical situations that might arise during one’s life.

#### *Get'em young...*

Research has shown that a person starts learning even before being born. But the first type of *organised* learning many children encounter is in the kindergarten. The Framework Plan for Kindergartens defines “objectives for developing *basic competence*, i.e. social aptitude and communicative skills”. In addition to the value of this basic competence for the children’s activities there and then, it is intended to provide the children with the best possible start to their lifelong learning. The fact is that a child’s linguistic development during the pre-school stage is of decisive significance for its reading and writing skills in school and later in life.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Learning to learn...*

School pupils have always been told that they learn so that they can use their knowledge later, when they are grown up. So schools have always had a lifelong perspective. However the objective of lifelong learning requires us to go one step further. It is no longer enough for the knowledge to be useful later in life: the learning process itself is to continue. This means that the children, in addition to learning, must “learn how to learn”. As the Core Curriculum says, “Education is not only meant to transfer knowledge – it is also to provide the pupils with the competence to acquire and win new knowledge”.

#### *Difficult decisions...*

A pupil leaving the lower secondary school has to make some difficult decisions: “Shall I take programmes for general studies, so that I can study medicine or go to nursing college, or should I instead choose the programme for health and social care and become a health care worker or perhaps a medical secretary? What does a medical secretary actually do? What happens if I start a vocational education programme, and then later decide to take higher education?” Decisions about education and careers have become so complicated that mistakes are easy to make, because of either a misunderstanding or a mistaken impulse. If one lands on the “wrong track”, it could mean impaired motivation or drop-out. So an important instrument for ensuring lifelong learning is therefore educational and career guidance that can help pupils make their decisions in accordance with their

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Vibeke Grøver Aukrust: “Early Language Stimulation and Lifelong Learning – a Survey of Knowledge”, a report prepared for the Ministry of Education and Research in 2005

abilities and ambitions, based on correct information about the different alternatives and their consequences.

#### *Refill...*

Basically, a psychologist or a carpenter with a licence or a craft certificate is considered competent and "qualified". However psychological research keeps bringing forth new methods of treatment and the construction trade keeps developing new materials. So it does not take long before one needs professional up-dating. How this need is to be met will vary – it could be by courses run by a university or the Psychological Association, through contact with suppliers or guidance from colleagues – but it is paramount that there are opportunities of high quality, and that the education and training can be combined with work, family life and other obligations adults may have. It is equally important that the individual carpenter or psychologist is motivated and has enough basic competence to participate.

#### *Making up for lost ground...*

Not everyone succeeds at achieving the desired level of competence during their school years, and for some people working life after school is so deficient in learning opportunities that the competence they once had disintegrates. Recent research shows that the reading skills of as many as 400,000 adults in Norway are so poor that they may have problems surviving in working life. To compensate this deficiency it is important that the individual has access to adapted education, either in basic skills, if necessary, or to attain the desired level in the education system.

#### *Change of career...*

However good the education system and however carefully one has planned one's own career pathway, one day the situation may arise when it becomes necessary to "change one's hunting ground". A teacher with substantial education may for various reasons (changes in motivation, health, labour market) wish to achieve other qualifications for other work, for example in child welfare or journalism. The question will then be how flexible our education system is when it comes to offering necessary competence and whether we have career guidance services that can provide good support through this kind of career change.

### **Status and challenges**

On the whole Norway has a good education system with relatively open and flexible openings between the various parts compared to other countries. Specialisation decisions in primary and secondary education are made relatively late. In vocational education and training there are several flexible schemes, and the vocational colleges provide opportunities for shorter vocational education based on upper secondary education. With respect to admission to higher education there are shared national regulations governing requirements and ranking rules. There is also a system for admission on the basis of non-formal and informal learning, and through the so-called v-path it is possible to gain admission on the basis of vocational education and training. There is full public funding of most of what is offered in the education system so that practically everybody receives an initial education without having to pay school fees. In addition there are reasonably good public loan and grant schemes for pupils and students through the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund. All of these help give Norway good conditions for realising the objective of lifelong learning.

In order to strengthen this Norwegian education system there has been, as mentioned earlier, a number of extensive reforms. The Kindergarten Promotion, the Knowledge Promotion for primary and secondary education and the Quality Reform for higher education together make for a renewal of the Norwegian system for lifelong learning. However it is clear that more must be done to realise the objective of lifelong learning in practice. This report will indicate especially five challenges that must be given special attention:

1. too many people have too poor basic skills

2. many people lack documentation of their actual qualifications, which hinders their participation in further learning
3. it is difficult to orient oneself with respect to choosing an education and career – and many people make the wrong decision
4. many people find it difficult to combine learning with other obligations
5. parts of Norwegian working life are too little oriented towards learning

The Ministry of Education and Research is of the opinion that these five areas are especially important for realising the objective of lifelong learning. In addition the Ministry is aware that earlier and current processes have not let us come far enough. We have therefore chosen to analyse more thoroughly the five themes in this report. In the concluding chapter the Ministry will point out some radical challenges in the work that remains for the achievement of the objective of lifelong learning.

## 2. Basic skills and basic competence for lifelong learning

It is internationally agreed that some skills are so fundamental that everybody needs them to be able to function in social and working life. These are skills that are not only important in their own right but are also prerequisites for all other learning. In other words it is impossible to achieve the objective of lifelong learning without them.

### Definition of concepts

The concepts “basic skills”, “basic competence”, “key competences” and “overall competence” have slightly different yet slightly overlapping meanings. “Basic skills” are narrower than “(overall) competence” and the EU’s “key competences”<sup>12</sup>. This report defines “basic skills” as they are described in the Knowledge Promotion, which says that basic skills are “important skills, independent of subjects, which are fundamental tools for learning and development”: the ability to express oneself orally, the ability to read, the ability to do arithmetic, the ability to express oneself in writing and the ability to use digital tools. These basic skills are considered the minimum skills needed for being able to participate in working and social life and further learning. “Basic competence” is a collective term for basic skills in *working life*<sup>13</sup>. The term “a broader basic competence, which was used in the Soria-Moria Declaration, comprises “basic skills” and also learning strategies, motivation and social competence.

### Status

#### The kindergartens

The Government considers kindergartens to be a voluntary part of the educational pathway and the new Framework Plan for Kindergartens, which came into force 1 August 2006, states that “kindergartens are to support the children’s curiosity, thirst for knowledge and desire to learn and to contribute to making a good foundation for lifelong learning”. According to the Framework Plan the education offered by kindergartens consists of seven subject areas, of which the most relevant for basic skills as they are defined here are “communication, language and text” and “number, space and shape”. The kindergartens provide both informal and more formalised learning activities in these subjects. Children from minority backgrounds will be followed up especially to ensure that they learn both their mother tongue and Norwegian. The OECD has on several occasions pointed to positive aspects of how Norwegian kindergartens view children and learning. There is however little research-based knowledge about learning outcome in Norwegian kindergartens.

#### Primary and secondary education

The ten years of primary and lower secondary school are compulsory for all, but there are in part great variations in the pupils’ learning outcome at school. The Principles for the

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<sup>12</sup> For many years the EU has worked on defining some *key competences* and have arrived at the following eight: 1) ability to communicate in the mother tongue, 2) competence in foreign languages, 3) competence in mathematics and science, 4) digital competence, 5) competence in learning to learn, 6) social competence, 7) ability to take initiatives and entrepreneurship and 8) cultural awareness.

<sup>13</sup> In NOU 2003:16 First and Foremost, the Quality Committee defines basic competence as part of an overall competence that comprises knowledge, skills and attitudes, incl. reading and writing skills, skills in mathematics and numeracy, proficiency in English, digital competence, learning strategies and motivation (efforts and perseverance) and social competence.

Education state that “education is to promote the pupils’ all-round development and their knowledge and skills”. The pupils’ abilities must be considered, but they must all have challenges and objectives they must strive to achieve (National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training). In addition to a defined subject competence primary and secondary education is to provide the pupils with good basic skills. The basic skills are a foundation for the pupils’ further learning and development.

International surveys have shown that Norwegian levels in skills like reading and mathematics are on a par with and partly below the OECD average, despite Norway being one of the OECD countries using most resources per pupil in primary and secondary education. Furthermore, surveys of reading and arithmetic skills show that Norway is one of the countries with the greatest variations in learning outcome among the pupils and that Norway has a large percentage of pupils with poor basic skills. National tests, charting tests, grade statistics and international surveys show that variations in learning outcome for Norwegian pupils can to a large degree be linked to social background. The percentage of 15-year-olds with low reading skills is higher than in the other Nordic countries and is about 18 percent. The percentage of 15-year-olds with poor skills in mathematics is just over 20 percent, which is high compared to the other Nordic countries.<sup>14</sup>

Poor learning strategies, expecting too little of the pupils, little relevant feed-back to the pupils, unrest in the classroom and low motivation are explanatory factors. These factors are also probably interrelated. A strong correlation between motivation, interest for learning and achievements has been proved in for example mathematics (PISA). Poor basic skills from primary and lower secondary school are among the main reasons why many pupils drop out of upper secondary education and therefore do not achieve vocational competence or the opportunity to carry on to higher education.

It is necessary to intensify efforts directed at pupils with poor academic achievement earlier than has been usual up to now. This will give the pupils a better chance for further development. Early efforts mean efforts both implemented early in life but also early with relation to when problems are revealed.

### Adults

When it comes to the adult population results from the OECD surveys IALS (Adult Literacy Survey) 2000 and ALL (Adult Literacy and Lifeskill Survey) 2005 show that approx. one third have reading skills which OECD experts define as inadequate with regard to requirements in today’s social and working life. 40 percent of the adult population has too poor numeracy according to the OECD’s definition.

People from minority language backgrounds are overrepresented in the group of people with little education and poor basic skills, especially reading skills. The figures from Statistics Norway (SSB) in the third quarter of 2006 show that one out of five unemployed people in Norway is an immigrant, and 87 percent of these are from non-western countries. There is comprehensive research to substantiate the claim that immigrants’ skills in reading, writing and talking in their “new” language are of essential importance for the quality of their lives, for admission to working life and for settling down and participating in social life.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> OECD (2004): *Learning in Tomorrow’s World. First Results from PISA 2003*

<sup>15</sup> E. Gabrielsen and B.O.Lagerstrøm. In SSB: The Social Mirror no. 2, 2005 *Many Immigrants are Poor at Reading Norwegian*

Many people with poor basic skills, both employed and un-employed, develop strategies to avoid difficult situations.<sup>16</sup> These strategies may work quite well but problems often arise when applying for jobs or in adaptation situations where new routines or new production equipment are to be introduced.

The Competence Reform has over the last few years meant the implementation of several measures to enhance the competence of the adult population. Amongst other things the national funding scheme called the Competence Development Programme (KUP) was started to give partial funding to development projects run with cooperation between education and training providers and enterprises. KUP was also meant to help make education at primary and secondary levels more easily available to adults<sup>17</sup>.

All the same, these measures have not resulted in increased participation in primary and lower secondary education for those with lowest prior education. There are many and complex reasons for this: little demand among the target group, lack of offers of good and adapted education, deficient motivation from the individual (often due to negative experiences from school<sup>18</sup>), and deficient knowledge of rights and education on offer.

We also know that how county and municipal authorities deal with adults' rights to education varies greatly. Many municipalities downgrade offers of education to adults. This may be connected with limited resources and lack of competence, but it must also be seen in connection with lack of demand.

To counteract drop-out from working life because of poor basic skills the Government has initiated the Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life (BKA). The awarded funds are to be spent on giving employees instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic and basic use of ICT. As far as possible this teaching should be given in the workplace and be related to the job. Courses meant for job seekers will also be started through the Labour and Welfare Organisation. The programme is to help both job seekers and employees have the opportunity to acquire the competence they need to master the requirements of working life. The BKA will give enterprises an incentive to give more attention and more of their own resources to those with the lowest competence. Vox is responsible for the programme. A strategy group connected with the programme has been appointed, with amongst others representatives from the social partners.

## **Challenges**

### *1. Too little knowledge about quality and competence in kindergartens*

On several occasions the OECD has praised Norway for the view of children and childhood which underlies Norwegian kindergartens. There is however little research-based empirical knowledge about the quality of Norwegian kindergartens. There is reason to assume that there are great variations. This is a challenge considering the objective of providing equivalent services of good quality.

### *2. Too many pupils with poor basic skills*

A number of surveys have shown that a relatively large percentage of Norwegian pupils (about 20 %) have too poor basic skills. This applies especially to pupils with parents with

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Vox (2006): *Basic Skills among the Norwegian Adult Population*

<sup>17</sup> A more detailed description of KUP can be found in the introduction and in Chapter 6, Working Life as a Learning Context

<sup>18</sup> Opheim, Vibeke (2004): *Equity in Education. Country Analytical Reprot.* Norway. NIFU STEP-report 7/2004

little education. We therefore have a situation where social inequality is reproduced in primary and secondary education.

### *3. Available education and courses for adults with poor basic skills are not sufficiently motivating*

Education in basic skills for adults should take place within framework and learning contexts that motivate and boost self-confidence. There are many indications that current schemes and contexts do not have the desired effect. Many adults need to strengthen their basic skills without necessarily taking a full primary and lower secondary education. However the municipalities seldom offer goal-oriented courses for basic skills, and there are seldom adapted courses at the workplace or in connection with vocational training or other job-related training.

However it is not possible to reach everyone in the target group through primary and secondary education or at a workplace. One possible alternative could be education in basic skills for parents with school children. Surveys show that being able to supervise the children's schooling motivates many parents to participate in the education.<sup>19</sup>

### *4. Lack of knowledge about the needs of adults*

One main challenge ahead is a better charting of adults' need for either basic skills or for completion of primary/secondary education. A charting of the needs of adults from a minority language background (whether they have formal rights or not) is part of this challenge. It will be especially important to distinguish between needs that come from a low educational level or poor basic skills in general, dyslexia or similar problems, poor proficiency in Norwegian or different combinations of these problems. Both learning objectives and pedagogy will have to consider the individual's starting level and needs.

### *5. Lack of learning pressure on adults with little education*

A culture for learning and a learning pressure in working life involving everyone, not only the best qualified, are also important for reducing the percentage of the population with a low level of competence and poor basic skills. FAFO (2000) reports that 9 out of 10 employees are interested in learning more in order to do a better job. They furthermore point out that the people who experience strong demands for competence in their daily work also show interest in formal continuing education and training. This indicates that putting learning pressure on and making demands of all employees, also those with less education and poorer qualifications, may lead to a good deal of improvement both with regards to the individual's and the enterprise's development. Learning which comes as a result of the enterprise's own need for competence is the responsibility of the enterprise. But the authorities have supported and will continue to support measures in working life directed towards poorly educated employees with poor basic skills. The challenge is also in this instance to chart and satisfy the needs as precisely as possible and to find suitable ways of teaching so that it does not stigmatise and create exclusion.

## **Areas of priority**

### *1. Early efforts*

The greatest opportunities for lifelong learning are to be found in early efforts and early learning. In addition, in order to identify children's need for extra stimulation it will be

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<sup>19</sup> White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) "...and none were left outside. Early efforts for lifelong learning"

necessary to have a systematic use of charting instruments and diagnostic tests in mother and child clinics, in kindergartens and the first years of primary school. There will be a review of municipal obligations to provide language stimulation to all children of pre-school age who need such stimulation, regardless of whether they attend kindergarten or not.

### *2. The Knowledge Promotion in primary and secondary education*

It is necessary to increase learning pressure and intensify work on basic skills in primary and secondary education. Nobody is to drop out or have a faulty development because the system malfunctions. The Knowledge Promotion is to be the best guarantee for allowing the pupils a good development based on the foundation given them by parents, health service and kindergarten. The Knowledge Promotion places significant emphasis on basic skills, which have now been integrated into the various subject curricula, and on the education system having academic ambitions on behalf of the pupils and apprentices. Efforts in the time to come must be in compliance with this. This in turn is meant to reduce the risk of drop-out from upper secondary education and lost opportunities regarding higher education. At the same time, the message is that it is never too late to enter on a good learning pathway.

### *3. "The Knowledge Promotion for Adults"*

In White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) "...and none were left outside" a number of measures are proposed with a view to improving the basic competence of adults. Among other things it is proposed to strengthen the Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life (BKA) and to consider if this programme is to be made a permanent scheme. More efforts concerning motivation and information for the target group are suggested. The White Paper also suggests a review of which national framework conditions could provide increased learning pressure for employees with little education.

### *4. Norwegian and civics for recent immigrants*

With the aid of the scheme (as of 1 September 2005) giving recently arrived immigrants from countries outside the EEA-area rights and obligations concerning Norwegian and civics it will in the future be possible to obtain a more precise overview of needs and therefore offer better adapted education. The scheme entails a right and an obligation to 300 periods of instruction, comprising 250 periods Norwegian and 50 periods civics in a language the participant understands. Completed education provides a basis for a settlement permit and Norwegian citizenship. The people with rights and obligations for this education, and who need it, may receive additional education for up to 2,700 periods.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The Proposal from the Review Committee for the Recognition and Validation of Higher Education in Norway (the Brautaset Committee), which was presented on 24 January 2006 and sent for consultation with a deadline of 30 April 2007, asks the Ministry to clarify who is responsible for education in Norwegian for immigrants. It refers to the fact that the courses offered are spread to many providers and are over-complex and deficient for immigrants who have or wish to take higher education.

### 3. Documentation and Assessment of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

The EU is in the process of developing a framework for qualifications which will be an instrument for evaluating qualifications across borders. The framework is to consider both formal, informal and non-formal qualifications<sup>21</sup>. A proposed framework is scheduled to be presented to the Member States during 2007. Norway has also taken preparatory steps for preparing a national qualification framework that is to correspond with the European one. A national framework is to consider specifically national aspects of education and working life. Norway and the other Nordic countries are also taking part in a Leonardo da Vinci project with the objective of ascertaining what such national aspects should be.

Another relevant project is the work done in the Bologna Process to develop a qualifications framework for higher education. In the same way as the EU framework, the framework of the Bologna Process focuses on learning outcomes and final qualifications at the various levels, and as such moves away from largely focusing on the contents of the education or training. The formal levels, three cycles in higher education, will naturally be a starting point for the descriptions, but the descriptions are phrased so that they do not specifically refer to the formal levels.

As these processes and how they will be related are not yet finally determined, the Ministry does not find the time ripe to describe in this report the general topics of recognition and documentation of qualifications. However, in the following one of the important schemes in this area will be described, namely the documentation and validation of *non-formal and informal learning*.

Documentation and validation of non-formal and informal learning form one of the main pillars of the Competence Reform and are considered among the most important means for facilitating continuing education and training for adults. An evaluation of non-formal and informal learning is important for the individual so that his or her competence can be validated when applying for admission to continuing education and during changes in working life. Documentation and validation of non-formal and informal learning may show competence that the individual him/herself is unaware of thus increasing his/her possibilities for career development in work and education. It could also contribute to the individual's personal growth, development and participation in community life.

#### **What is non-formal and informal learning?**

By non-formal and informal learning we mean the knowledge, skills and experiences each person has achieved through education and training, salaried and unpaid work, and active

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<sup>21</sup> "Formal learning" is typically provided by a public education or training system or other approved education or training provider, and is structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time and learning support, and which leads to public certification. "Non-formal learning" is learning offered by an education or training provider (private, organisation, study associations) and is structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time and learning support. "Non-formal learning" is learning that is intentional on the part of the learner, but does not lead to public certification. "Informal learning" is learning that results from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. The learning is not structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support, and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning is in most cases non-intentional on the part of the learner.

participation in organisations and social life<sup>22</sup>. Non-formal and informal learning includes all the adult's non-formal and informal learning outcome.

### **Status**

The Non-Formal and Informal Learning Project (1999-2002) was a follow-up to the Competence Reform and was initiated in order to establish a national system for documenting and validating non-formal and informal learning. The objective of the project was to establish a national system that would be respected both in working life and in the education system. It was therefore important to make a system that was based on national principles that safeguarded schemes for documenting and validating non-formal and informal learning with regard to upper secondary education and training, from working life, from courses and participation in voluntary activities, and for admission and shortening the time for studies in higher education.

Today there are many good examples showing that schemes for documenting and validating non-formal and informal learning are satisfactorily safeguarded, but there is no unified national practice for this work.

#### Primary and lower secondary education and training

Section 4A-1 of the Education Act states that primary and lower secondary education is to be adapted to the individual learner's needs. This means that before education starts the individual applicant's educational needs with respect to time, place and extent must be charted. There has however been no desire to have a system as comprehensive as the one for evaluating non-formal and informal learning in upper secondary education.

#### Upper secondary education.

The County authorities are responsible for documenting and validating non-formal and informal learning with regards to upper secondary education and training. How this is done in practice varies from county to county, both with regard to structure and to the assignment of responsibility<sup>23</sup>.

Recommendations from the Non-formal and Informal Learning Project<sup>24</sup> say that the evaluation of non-formal and informal learning must be done in the manner best suited the individual. The three methods that prove best suited for evaluating non-formal and informal learning are:

- 1) the dialogue-based method: requires individual adaptation, personal encounter, safeguards adults with difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics, uncovers silent knowledge
- 2) evaluation of submitted documentation: no personal encounter, does not uncover silent knowledge
- 3) vocational trial: an assessment method adapted to adults who lack documentation of education/training and/or work experience. This assessment takes place through practical tests in relation to benchmarks in the Norwegian system for craft/journeyman's certificates or other vocational training pathways at upper secondary level. Approved competence on the basis of a vocational trial is not validated in the scheme for external craft certificate candidates.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Vox (2002): *The Non-formal and Informal Qualifications Project 1999-2002- Finishing line or scratch line*. Oslo: Vox. Final Report

<sup>23</sup> Haugerud, Røstad, Stubbe (2004): *Intentions and Realities* Oslo: Vox. Report no. 6 The Foundation of Knowledge

<sup>24</sup> Vox Report (2002): *The Non-formal and Informal Learning Project 1999-2002- Finishing line or scratch line*. Oslo: Vox Final Report

Surveys show that evaluation of submitted written documentation is the most usual evaluation method (82 %) whereas interview/conversation has been carried out in 33 % of the cases.<sup>25</sup> All of the counties use a combination of evaluation methods when validating non-formal and informal learning. In 2006 there were 8,270 people who completed upper secondary education on the basis of validation of non-formal and informal learning, 70 % of whom were women.

### Higher education

Applications for admission to higher education based on non-formal and informal learning are sent directly to the institutions at which the applicant wishes to study and it is the individual university or college that assesses each applicant's non-formal and informal learning with respect to the relevant study programme.

In reality non-formal and informal learning is evaluated either by submitting personal statements and documents or by tests. Admission based on non-formal and informal learning will necessarily involve a certain use of discretion. The decision also depends on the profile of the relevant study programme at the institution in question. Applicants will therefore be assessed somewhat differently, depending on which institution they are applying to.

Figures from the Universities and Colleges Admission Service show that in 2006 there were 2,709 people who applied for admission to higher education based on non-formal and informal learning. Of these 1,908 were considered qualified for admission, and 1,324 were offered places. Half of the applicants applied for admission to studies in health and social care studies<sup>26</sup>.

The Act relating to Universities and University Colleges<sup>27</sup> also allows for exemption from parts of a study programme on the basis of an evaluation of non-formal and informal learning, cf. Section 3-5 *Exemption from examinations or tests*

Exemption from an examination or test shall be granted when it has been shown that a corresponding examination or test has been taken at the same or another institution. Such exemption may also be granted on the basis of another suitable examination or test. Documentation of prior learning (formal and non-formal) may also provide a basis for exemption. The Ministry may order the institutions to coordinate their practice. The Board decides whether the faculty concerned or a special authority at the institution shall decide on exemptions.

During the years of 2001-2004 Norwegian universities and colleges received 123 applications from students for exemption from subjects/examinations/tests on the basis of non-formal and informal learning. At the colleges 74 % of the applications were granted, while 65 % were granted at the universities<sup>28</sup>. This small number would indicate that enough information has not yet reached the target group.

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<sup>25</sup> Engesbak, Stubbe (2004): *Attending Upper Secondary School as an Adult* Oslo: Vox Report no. 4 The Foundation of Knowledge

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.samordnaopptak.no/statistikk/>

<sup>27</sup> Act no. 15 of 1 April 2005 Relating to Universities and University Colleges

<sup>28</sup> Brandt (2005): *Shortening the Time for Studies based On Non-formal and Informal Qualifications* Oslo: NIFU STEP Skriftserie 5/2005

### Working life.

Working life is important both as a recipient of competence and as a learning context and producer of competence, and as such can act as a link between the ordinary education system and working life.

Unlike the documentation schemes in the counties and in higher education, which presuppose that the individual takes a personal initiative to apply to have his/her non-formal and informal learning assessed in connection with further schooling or studies, the documentation scheme in working life is meant to be a running process in the enterprise. In many companies charting and documentation of competence is part of the internal quality development.

The Basic Agreement between the social partners LO and NHO for 2006-2009 now says: "*Section 16-4 Documentation of non-formal and informal learning: The enterprise is encouraged to have a system for documenting the individual employee's experience, courses and practical experience related to his/her work situation.*" In the Vox barometer in the autumn of 2006<sup>29</sup> 44 % of the employers answered that they perform competence charting. However the concept is then interpreted broadly so that it also includes appraisal interviews and informal talks. 63% of those who said they performed competence charting stated that the reason they did so was so that they could write a testimonial that described the employee's actual qualifications, but consideration of the enterprise's needs was ranked even higher.

Vox has developed two software programs: "The Competence Testimonial" for the documentation of non-formal and informal learning from work experience, and "Enterprise Competence", which is a database that can be used for easy search of the employees' documentation<sup>30</sup>.

### Voluntary sector.

The voluntary organisations have little or no history of issuing certification of competence from courses, voluntary posts or other activities. The learning associations, distance education institutions and folk high schools are obliged to issue certificates of completed education. However this sort of certificate barely includes the informal side of the learning, apart from Section 2 of the Folk High School Act, which says that "*The school must prepare documentation of the pupils' learning programmes and participation. This documentation must be drawn up so that it provides a basis for evaluation non-formal and informal learning for use in the education system and working life.*"

As part of the Non-Formal and Informal Learning Project several organisations were involved in developing methods for documenting non-formal and informal learning which could safeguard the specific nature of the organisations, make the documentations transferable to the rest of the education system and working life and increase awareness of the learning acquired through participation in various organisations.

Vofo (the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning) and LNU (the Norwegian Children and Youth Council) have developed and tried out an electronic charting tool, the Personal Learning Document<sup>31</sup>, with an accompanying glossary of concepts which can be used when filling in the documents. The individual him/herself is to use the tool which consists of a form for a CV-summary and a basic form, both accompanied by user guides.

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<sup>29</sup> Vox barometer autumn 2006- in printing process

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=1698>

<sup>31</sup> <http://193.212.214.18/pkd/>

In connection with the EU/the EEA the Europass scheme is a special initiative in this area. It was started as a separate programme from 2005 and is part of the Lifelong Learning Programme from 2007. It provides a framework for documenting qualifications and learning combining formal and informal documentation as it combines a CV in a special format (“Europass CV”) with the Europass Language Passport<sup>32</sup>, the Europass Diploma Supplement (DS) for higher education<sup>33</sup>, the Europass Certificate Supplement for vocational education and training, and Europass mobility, which is a confirmation of mobility stays abroad in connection with education and training. This will in time also be extended to other forms of documentation of learning.

## Challenges

### 1. Information.

A main challenge facing the work on documentation and validation of non-formal and informal learning is making the scheme better known. According to the Vox barometer in the spring of 2004<sup>34</sup> only 26 % of employees know of the scheme for documenting non-formal and informal learning. Employees with upper secondary school as their highest education have less knowledge of the scheme than employees with higher education. Employees with vocational education from upper secondary have better knowledge of the scheme than those who have attended programmes for general studies. When they hear of the scheme 56 % are interested in having their non-formal and informal learning documented. The need for access to important information is also one of the conclusions in the Econ Report called “Adult Education: Obstacles and Incentives for Providers”<sup>35</sup>.

### 2. Too poorly developed system for documentation

Norway has currently a working system for *validating* non-formal and informal learning, but we still have a long way to go before we have a good system for *documentation* of non-formal and informal learning. These challenges apply especially to documentation of non-formal and informal learning from working life, even though important progress has been made over the last few years.

### 3. Uniform practice

Surveys undertaken by Vox and Econ conclude that the municipalities and county authorities exercise their obligations towards adults in different ways. It is important that the county authorities develop a more uniform practice for documentation so as to ensure equal treatment for everybody. In this connection it is important to ensure a universal understanding of legislation and regulations so that adults are treated in a more uniform manner.

### 4. Reporting routines

Work done on the Norwegian contribution to the OECD report called “Recognition of non-formal and informal learning”, the national project called “the Foundation of Knowledge” and the Econ project called “Adult Education: Obstacles and Incentives for Providers”, shows that

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<sup>32</sup> It is based on the European Language Portfolio, a system for self-assessment and documentation of proficiency in foreign languages, developed under the aegis of the Council of Europe.

<sup>33</sup> Originally developed under the aegis of the Council of Europe and UNESCO as a follow-up to the Lisbon Convention (“The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region”)

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=323>

<sup>35</sup> Econ (2006): *Adult Education: Obstacles and Incentives for Providers* Oslo: Econ Analyse, 2006-055

current reporting on adult education and non-formal and informal learning evaluation is deficient and of poor quality. By setting objective goals that reflect what is needed, work can become more goal-oriented.

## 5. Cooperation

It is necessary to strengthen cooperation between sectors and between administrative levels so that more authorities and institutions request an evaluation of non-formal and informal learning for their user groups.

### **Areas of priority:**

#### 1. Information and guidance

In White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) "...and none were left outside" the Government proposes to implement motivation and information measures to provide information about the right to primary and secondary education, and about the value of taking part in such education. This also comprises the right to evaluation of non-formal and informal learning.

The White Paper also proposes the discussion of a national implementation of county partnerships for career guidance and the establishment of a national authority for coordinating these. Adults are the main target group for county partnerships and an important topic when giving them guidance will be their options for evaluation of their non-formal and informal learning.

#### 2. Cooperation

There are plans to develop cooperation agreements between the Labour and Welfare Organisation and the county authorities with one of the objectives being to contribute to a more uniform documentation of the evaluation of non-formal and informal learning, cf. measures in White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) "...and none were left outside" and White Paper no. 9 (2006-2007) "Work, Welfare and Inclusion".

#### 3. Uniform practice

The Ministry of Education and Research has commissioned Vox, in cooperation with the Directorate for Education and Training and the County Governors, to consider the practice of the county authorities with respect to validation of non-formal and informal learning and shortening the time for and adapting upper secondary education, and to provide each county with suggestions for measures to create a more uniform practice.

#### 4. Reporting routines and data

In White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) "...and none were left outside" the Government proposes to implement measures to provide better data about adults' participation in the evaluation of non-formal and informal learning, shorten the time for education and participation and drop-out among adults.

## 4. Flexible learning

In order to achieve the objective of lifelong learning it is essential that the learning activities being offered are adapted as well as possible to the users' learning needs and abilities. This applies to all learning contexts, but may possibly be especially important for learning contexts for adults since their learning must often be combined with many other activities. Experience shows that people have the opportunity and the motivation to participate in learning activities only when education and training are perceived as relevant to the rest of the learner's working and social life, when a practical combination of such activities with work and family life is possible and when the activities do not cost a lot.

### What is flexible learning?

"Flexibility" is not used of any one type of learning activity in particular, but is an aspect of all organised learning. A learning activity can be perceived as "flexible" if it is the users themselves who decide time, place, progression and educational/practical methods (including the use of ICT) for the learning. We could also talk of flexibility in the wider sense of adapting the actual learning objectives to the learning needs of the users. It is true of both types of flexibility that the objective is not necessarily *as much flexibility as possible*, which in many cases would make the learning more expensive than necessary and besides could lead to poorer academic standards. In flexible learning activities of the more formal kind the learning objectives would for instance be determined beforehand, whereas the flexibility usually applies to time, place and progression and in part also to educational/practical methods. The overall objective is *adequate* flexibility so that as many people as possible are motivated and have a reasonable opportunity to participate.

### Description of status

Below there are descriptions of the various types of flexibility for the many educational levels and learning contexts. Special emphasis is placed on flexibility that affects participation.

#### Kindergartens

In the autumn of 2005 the parties of the coalition government said in their Soria-Moria Declaration that they consider kindergartens a voluntary start to the educational pathway and as of 1 January 2006 responsibility for kindergartens was transferred from the Ministry of Children and Equality to the Ministry of Education and Research. Through the Kindergarten Promotion the Government aims to achieve kindergarten places for all children, with high quality and low prices. Kindergartens are to provide both educational activities and a welfare service for parents with small children, and improve children's opportunities for learning and active participation in social contact with children of their own age.

As people have different needs many kindergartens provide either full-time or half-time places and some experiment with a core period which is free of charge so that all children can take part in some activities, without having to have a permanent place.

#### Primary and secondary education

Ordinary primary and secondary education for children and young people is often linked to standardised procedures and methods. However Section 1-2 of the Education Act determines that it is an object of the teaching that it "be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of individual pupils, apprentices and trainees". Even though time, place and a number of practical aspects

of the education are standardised, it is a distinct requirement that there is educational *flexibility*.

Adapted teaching is not an objective in itself but a means to achieve learning. Adapted teaching is characterised by variation in exercises, subject matter, working methods, teaching aids and variation in the organisation and intensity of the teaching. Adapted teaching entails great awareness of which teaching aids and methods one chooses with a view to promoting the individual's and the community's learning. Teaching must not only be adapted to the subject and the subject matter, but also to the pupil's age and development level.

Special education may prove necessary to fulfil the obligation of adapted teaching. The Education Act provides regulations for special education both in primary and secondary education. Compared with other countries Norway has few pupils at special schools or receiving other types of education outside their catchment school. There is however a significant number of pupils (5-6 %) receiving special education as the result of an individual decision<sup>36</sup>.

Pupils from minority languages with poor proficiency in Norwegian have a special need for flexibility and adapted teaching. This group has a statutory right to special Norwegian lessons until sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to be able to follow ordinary Norwegian classes. According to the Administration Act this teaching may be provided as the result of an individual decision at the school, based on an assessment of the individual pupil's linguistic skills. In 2005 almost 30,000 pupils followed the curriculum for Norwegian as a second language. A recent evaluation indicates that this scheme faces a number of challenges, *inter alia* because of varying practice in the municipalities, inadequate teacher qualifications and deficiency of charting instruments. This has meant that about half of the pupils who follow the curriculum for Norwegian as a second language never make the transition into ordinary Norwegian lessons<sup>37</sup>.

Pupils with functional disabilities have individual statutory rights in accordance with the Education Act. The objects clause of the Act states that the teaching is to be adapted to the individual pupil's abilities and aptitudes. This rule applies where pupils with impaired functional abilities need an education that is individually adapted. If the need for adaptation is more comprehensive, the pupil may have a right to special education, cf. Section 5 of the Education Act. Standards for the pupils' school environment and their physical surroundings are also stipulated in the Act. The normal requirement is that the planning, building, adaptation and management of schools must consider the pupil's security, health, well-being and learning.

The school and its physical premises (classrooms, library, etc) provide the most important learning context for primary and secondary education. However each pupil's home has also always been involved in the learning activities, especially through homework. Lately organised homework support has given additional focus on the home as a learning context<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. White Paper no.16 (2006-2007) "...and none were left outside", Chap. 3.2.2

<sup>37</sup> Rambøll Norway(2006): "Evaluation of Norwegian as a second language for minority language backgrounds in primary and lower secondary school"

<sup>38</sup> In White Paper no.16 (2006-2007) "...and none were left outside" the Government says that from now on homework support schemes are to be developed and implemented.

Part II of the Knowledge Promotion, Principles for the Education, therefore underlines how important the home is for the pupil's motivation and learning outcome<sup>39</sup>.

Learning Management Systems (LMS) may be perceived as a third learning context in addition to school and home, or as a tool to make the use of the physical learning contexts more flexible. In 2005<sup>40</sup> 17 % of primary and lower secondary schools and 96 % of the upper secondary schools had acquired learning management systems. There is now rapid development in this field and there is reason to believe that more schools have acquired this kind of tools since 2005, and that many more will acquire them in the time ahead. A recent study shows that the acquisition of learning management systems could be an important step on the path to increased flexibility and learning outcomes, but that this requires that each school makes strategic choices. In addition it is highly dependent on the teachers' competence<sup>41</sup>.

#### Adults in primary and secondary education

Adults make up a group with a special need for flexibility in primary and secondary education. As of August 2000, adults born before 1978 who have not completed upper secondary school, have the right to such an education if they have completed Norwegian primary and lower secondary school or its equivalent. As of August 2002 adults who need it, were also given the right to primary or lower secondary education. It is the municipalities and county authorities respectively who bear the responsibility for providing adults with primary and lower education and upper secondary education. The teaching must be adapted to the individual's needs with respect to time, place and contents, and can be given by the public education systems, by distance education institutions or in the workplace.

As of 1 October 2006 11,000 adults were receiving various types of primary and lower secondary education. 4,363 adults were receiving primary and lower education in accordance with Section 4a-1 of the Education Act. 3,135 of these came from minority language backgrounds. Then there were 6,575 adults receiving teaching in accordance with Section 4A-2, concerning the right to special education in primary and lower secondary education. Of these there were 362 from a minority language background.<sup>42</sup> The high percentage of adult learners from minority language backgrounds may indicate that these schemes are used to solve other municipal challenges than the Competence Reform had intended.

As regards adults in upper secondary school, the statistics are not completely to be trusted, but it is estimated that there have been about 20,000 adult pupils in recent years<sup>43</sup>. Approximately three quarters of them attend courses specially organised for adults. Two thirds of them say that academic level, time and place for the tuition have been adapted to their level. Half of them felt that the pace was adapted to their needs<sup>44</sup>. About 16 percent take part in ordinary

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<sup>39</sup> Cooperation between school and home is the field of activity of the National Parents' Committee for Primary and Lower Secondary Education (FUG). FUG was started in 1976 in accordance with Section 11-9 of the Education Act, and is an advisory body for the Ministry of Education and Research. FUG's work is directed towards parents with children in primary and lower secondary education and safeguard parental interests in educational questions.

<sup>40</sup> The Directorate for Education and Training (2005): "Charting and Report on the Equipment and Operating Situation in Primary and Secondary Education"

<sup>41</sup> The Directorate for Education and Training (2006): " Learning Management Systems in Primary and Secondary Education"

<sup>42</sup> Information system for Primary and Lower Secondary Education (GSI): <http://www.wis.no/gsi/>

<sup>43</sup> The Directorate for Education and Training (2005): "The Educational Mirror"

<sup>44</sup> Vox (2004): "In Upper Secondary as an Adult"

classes and 8 percent private courses. As many as 70 percent of the participants are women<sup>45</sup>. Upper secondary education offered by various study associations is not included in these figures.

Adults with a statutory right to upper secondary education also have the right to have their non-formal and informal learning evaluated so as to shorten the education correspondingly. This represents an important type of flexibility in relation to the user's actual learning needs. A survey shows however that only 36 % of adult participants in upper secondary education have had their non-formal and informal learning evaluated.<sup>46</sup> There is more about this topic in Chapter 3.

Whether the number of adults actually participating in primary and secondary education mirrors the real need in the adult population is difficult to evaluate on the basis of available information. In connection with the Competence Reform TNS Gallup carried out a survey in 1997 that showed that about 265,000 people wanted upper secondary education. So there are grounds to say that an annual participation of about 20,000 is lower than expected. Further surveys are needed to show if expectations were too high or whether participation has been too low – or both.

There is also insufficient information about whether the flexibility is good enough. As mentioned earlier, satisfaction with the adaptation is relatively high among those participating in upper secondary education. We have no information to say whether the many people in the target group who do not participate think the adaptation suits their needs or whether deficient adaptation could be one explanation for what appears to be a relatively low participation rate.

### Higher education

In recent decades universities and colleges have experienced increased demand generally speaking and also for flexible solutions of various kinds. With our scattered settlement pattern *distance education* is one of the most important forms of flexibility that Norwegian higher education institutions can offer. In addition the structure of scattered institutions is also important, with several study places and also study centres away from the ordinary campuses of the universities and colleges. As mentioned earlier, flexibility can also mean adaptation for various user groups. In this connection it is worth noting that the Act relating to Universities and Colleges states that it is the universities and colleges themselves that are responsible for the students' learning environment. This also means being responsible for students with functional impairments. The Act says that the institutions shall "... to the extent possible and reasonable.." facilitate an adapted and flexible "learning environment (that) is designed according to the principles of universal design".

Higher education in Norway is characterised by among other things a structure of scattered institutions, often spread over several study locations and with a cluster of study centres in addition<sup>47</sup>. The OECD has criticised us for spreading our resources too thinly to allow for the

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<sup>45</sup> The Directorate for Education and Training (2005): "The Educational Mirror"

<sup>46</sup> The Directorate for Education and Training (2005): "The Educational Mirror"

<sup>47</sup> As an example we could mention [Studiesenteret.no](http://Studiesenteret.no), which is a network of study centres, with the participation of 40 municipalities from Finnmark in the north to Vest-Agder in the south. It offers virtual instruction given by the colleges that are partners in the scheme. The tuition at the study centres is a mixture of directly broadcast lectures, local group work and independent studies.

construction and preservation of sustainable academic environments, most recently in a country review in connection with a current survey of higher education<sup>48</sup>. One could however argue that this structure has helped eliminate differences in geographical background as regards recruitment to higher education: from 1992 to 2002 the difference in tendency to take higher education between young people from urban areas and those from rural areas sank from 10 % to 2 %. In May 2006 the Government appointed a separate committee to consider the structure of higher education.<sup>49</sup> Many people use distance education courses to get an initial education, but this sort of education is still most important for continuing and supplementary education and training.

In 1990 the Government established an agency for stimulating the higher education institutions in their work on flexible education. Norway Opening Universities (before 2004: SOFF<sup>50</sup>) awards project funds, evaluates and creates meeting points and contributes to experience sharing in this area.

Distance education has increased greatly with the development of ICT-supported learning. The most usual model is a combination of study meetings in person and the use of technology. In addition ICT is now part of ordinary campus teaching and by the end of 2004 all public and the larger private institution had acquired learning management systems for course administration and learning (LMS).<sup>51</sup> A more advanced use of ICT in the teaching is now developing while the institutions and academic environments develop their own competence in the pedagogical use of ICT.

Students in continuing or supplementary education or training often have an especially great need for flexibility to combine studies with work or other obligations. Between 1998 and 2005 the number of registered students taking continuing and supplementary education or training<sup>52</sup> in Norway has fluctuated between 120,000 and 143,936 students<sup>53</sup>. It is however difficult to measure the precise extent of these activities as these figures include everything from 1-day conferences to Master degree studies adapted to people at work.

The continuing and supplementary courses cover a broad range of subjects and topics and may be designed for individuals or for enterprises. The courses vary from being similar to those ordinarily offered at the institutes, to tailor-made courses for specific target groups. As a group students at continuing and supplementary courses are older than students at the ordinary study programmes; they include an even higher percentage of women; and they have a higher level of education than the average for the population<sup>54</sup>. Surveys<sup>55</sup> indicate that social

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<sup>48</sup> OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education, Norway Country Note, September 2006

<sup>49</sup> Committee for Higher Education (Stjernø-utvalget) is to give recommendations on the further development of the university and college sector in Norway during a perspective of 10-20 years. The starting point is the role of universities and colleges as central social institutions that are to contribute to the country's financial, social and cultural development. The Committee is to present its proposals to the Storting in December 2007.

<sup>50</sup> The Central Agency for Distance education

<sup>51</sup> With respect to participation in distance education and decentralised education in higher education in general, the number has increased from about 15,000 students in 2001 to approx. 21,000 students in 2005. Of the 21,000 in 2005, 12,000 took part in distance education as Internet students, whereas the rest took part in decentralised schemes. The independent distance education institutions had by comparison 5,700 Internet students at the tertiary level in 2005.

<sup>52</sup> I.e. students registered at universities and colleges, plus number of students or course completions at tertiary level through study associations and independent distance education institutions.

<sup>53</sup> Norway Opening Universities: <http://norgesuniversitetet.no/artikler/2005/deltakelse-UH>

<sup>54</sup> More information can be accessed at <http://norgesuniversitetet.no/seksjoner/prosjektanalyser>

recruitment to studies adapted for adult students is broader than recruitment to ordinary campus education for young people in their twenties. The picture of the average student in a flexible education course seems to show that these courses fulfil the intention that flexible study schemes are meant to contribute to lifelong learning.

However it is important to remember that it is not always easy to differentiate between students of continuing and supplementary education and ordinary students, statistically speaking. Even though some colleges report as many as 50 – 80 % students of continuing and supplementary education, we can assume that there is a de facto underreporting of such students. Many students, especially at the universities, take individual courses that belong to the ordinary study programmes, either to supplement or complete previous studies, or to obtain extra qualifications. Many of the people registered as ordinary full-time or part-time students therefore view themselves as attending continuing or supplementary courses. The extremely diverse student population in higher education is an indication of how difficult it is to make sharp divisions between ordinary initial education and supplementary education in particular. It can also be seen as an indication that the system is flexible but perhaps also that the demands for flexibility will increase even more in the years to come.

#### The study associations

There are 19 publicly authorised study associations in Norway with over 400 member organisations. In 2005 the study associations had a total of 600,000 registered participants<sup>56</sup> on a total of about 43,000 courses. The study associations offer both courses leading to qualifications and courses without a set curriculum. Arts and crafts make up about half the courses offered. 57 % of the participants are women and number of participants over 50 years of age is increasing. The courses vary in length, with an average of 2.5 hours. There has been a significant reduction in courses over the last few years, but the number of participants has not decreased at the same rate.

#### Independent distance education institutions

Independent distance education institutions have for a long time played an important role in offering adults flexible education. NKI and NKS are among the largest independent distance education institutions in Norway. In 2005 NKI Distance Education had a total of 11,739 course completions, spread over approx. 450 shorter or longer studies and courses. The tuition is provided by postal correspondence, Internet and also partly by classroom teaching. NKS Distance Education provides continuing and supplementary education and training via Internet and postal correspondence. NKS is one of the schools in Campus Kristiania and in 2005 had 3,257 course completions. The total number of course completions organised by independent distance education institutions has been almost halved in the period of 2000-2005<sup>57</sup>. State grants have been reduced in the same period, but not so much that it could explain the decrease in activities. This question needs more clarification.

#### Education and training in the prison service

Since 1969 the school authorities have been responsible for providing education and training for prisoners with the same statutory rights according to the Education Act as other citizens. 7.2 % of the prisoners have not completed primary and lower secondary education and 38 %

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<sup>55</sup>Evaluation of the Swedish Internet University "Survey of Sweden's Internet University 1 and 2 – Accessibility, Recruitment and Extra Compensation" Högskoleverkets report series 2004:30 and 2005: 49 and the NIFU-STEP memo *Who Are the New Students* (Næss, T. and Støren, L.A., 2006)

<sup>56</sup> A person who participates on more than one course is registered several times

<sup>57</sup> Statistics Norway: <http://www.ssb.no/emner/04/02/50/fjernund/tab-2006-05-15-06.html>

have primary and lower secondary school as their highest completed level of education. There is in other words a great demand for education and training among inmates of Norwegian prisons. 54.3 % of the prisoners wish to have education or training. The education and training is organised to follow the ordinary school year, which may not always correspond with the prisoner's term of sentence. This is a challenge, especially for prisoners with short sentences.

## **Challenges**

### *1. Adaptation of primary and secondary education for adults*

A knowledge nation marked by diversity also requires a diversity of organisations and working methods. The relatively low participation in primary and secondary education for adults could be an indication that it is necessary to continue working to adapt the teaching schemes.

### *2. Norwegian classes for pupils from minority language backgrounds*

Special Norwegian tuition for pupils from minority language backgrounds has not been good enough. Most pupils from a minority language background have had special Norwegian classes following the curriculum for Norwegian as a second language. Surveys show that many pupils have followed this subject curriculum throughout all their school years. There are also many examples of pupils having received tuition according to this curriculum for incorrect reasons, and that their Norwegian skills have been undervalued. Many pupils have perceived this as discriminatory and it has meant that for many people the teaching has not been good enough. The challenge is to give the pupils adapted education in both Norwegian as a tool and in Norwegian as a knowledge subject. As it stands today many children from minority languages lose a lot of the teaching because they do not know enough Norwegian to be able to follow the subject lessons.

### *3. Continuing and supplementary courses for the private sector*

A relatively small percentage of the continuing and supplementary courses offered by universities and colleges are today designed for enterprises and employees in private sector. Even though this has changed a little over recent years the institutions still have an unexploited potential when it comes to the private market. Private enterprises and their employees will in their turn be able to benefit from making better use of the competence to be found in universities and colleges.

### *4. Relatively low incentives for universities and colleges to provide continuing and supplementary courses*

The funding system for universities and colleges does not currently give any extra incentives for continuing education as these courses do not give credits. Extra funds come from supplementary courses, but the potential for creating credits is relatively small compared with the ordinary study programmes. At the same time work on continuing and supplementary education does not merit as qualifications to the same degree as research and ordinary courses. In sum these conditions could entail these institutions not giving sufficient priority to continuing and supplementary education.

### *5. The need for increased ICT qualifications among staff in primary and secondary education*

In order to develop further ICT as a flexible tool in primary and secondary education, it is necessary to strengthen the ICT qualifications of the teachers.

#### *6. Pay during continuing and supplementary education and training*

A challenge indicated by the Buer Committee, but for which only a limited number of new measures were developed during the tripartite cooperation and negotiations during the Competence Reform, was the question of the financing of pay (wages/salaries) for employees taking educational leave. It is possible to take out loans and grants through the State Educational Loan Fund, but there were no new schemes for wage supplements, learning accounts or suchlike which could mean a significantly lower financial risk for the person participating in continuing or supplementary education or training<sup>58</sup>.

### **Areas of priority**

#### *1. Determination of competence objectives in primary and secondary education*

The Knowledge Promotion has entailed new subject curricula with clear competence aims stating what the individual is to know on completing the education. School owners, schools and teachers must themselves define how best to achieve these competence aims and prepare adapted teaching plans for the different target groups. Clear objectives and a high degree of organisational freedom facilitate better flexibility in the teaching.

#### *2. Review of the role of the study associations*

In the autumn of 2006 a committee (the Tron Committee) was appointed to evaluate the place of the study associations in working life and society. The Government wishes to strengthen the position of the study associations in education and training. The Committee is to present its report to the Ministry of Education and Research by 1 September 2007.

#### *3. Improving Norwegian lessons for pupils from minority language backgrounds*

When the new school year starts in August 2007, a new level-based curriculum, Basic Norwegian, will replace the curriculum for Norwegian as a second language. A new level-based curriculum for mother-tongue for language minorities will also be introduced. In addition work is being done on developing standardised charting material designed to make it easier to find out if the pupil is ready to take part in the ordinary Norwegian classes. There will also be guidance material for teachers of Basic Norwegian and a continuing course for these teachers. In White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) "...and none were left outside" the Government proposes to introduce new legislation concerning the rights of pupils from a minority language background.

#### *4. More knowledge about teaching pupils from minority language backgrounds*

It is necessary to gather more knowledge about the contents of, the quality of and not least the extent of mother tongue teaching for language minorities and Norwegian for language minorities. By 1 April 2007 a knowledge survey will be presented showing a summary of all existing research in this area.

#### *5. Strengthening primary and secondary education for adults*

In White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) "...and none were left outside" the Government proposes to invite KS and other stakeholders to collaborate on strengthening primary and secondary education for adults. It is also proposed to review who is responsible for what in adult education in municipalities and counties and to see this in relation to the Government's work on the administration reform. It is proposed to remove the clause in the Education Act that says that only adults born before 1978 have a right to upper secondary school and replace it by a lower age limit of 25 years.

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<sup>58</sup> Some experiments with different funding schemes were tried out as part of the Competence Development Programme.

#### *6. Review of the work done by universities and colleges on continuing and supplementary education*

The mandate for the committee (the Stjernø Committee) that is now considering the university and college sector states that the committee is to "... consider efforts to ensure that the structure of universities and colleges (...) satisfies the needs of adults for continuing and supplementary education at the higher level, among other things by using ICT-based study schemes and decentralised courses".

#### *7. Legislation about discrimination and accessibility*

Work is currently being done on preparing legislation about discrimination and accessibility which is to apply to everyone with reduced functional abilities. This legislation is to ensure equality and promote equal opportunities for participation in community life for everyone, whatever their functional ability, and to hinder discrimination because of reduced functional abilities. The proposed legislation includes clauses concerning an obligation for general adaptation (universal design) and an obligation for individual adaptation.

#### *8. School and public libraries as learning contexts*

The development of school libraries will be an important topic in the Ministry of Education and Research's publication "Give room for reading! - The way ahead" which will be launched in the spring of 2007. White Paper no. 17 (2006-2007) An Information Society for Everyone, indicates that the Government also wishes to strengthen the position of public libraries as learning contexts, especially with regard to ICT.

## 5. Career Guidance

In modern society education and its relationship to career opportunities in working life are so varied and complex that it is difficult for the individual to choose between the available alternatives. The provision of career guidance is a service aimed to strengthen the individual's information, reflection and motivation with respect to his/her options so that he/she will be in a position to make informed and reflected decisions. By making it possible for each individual to make good decisions, one will also facilitate a balance between educational and working systems and markets.

A synthesis report from 2003 (the OECD, World Bank and the EU) about career guidance in 36 countries<sup>59</sup> concludes that there are three political objectives for career guidance which are shared across countries and systems. Guidance is to 1) promote learning objectives and lifelong learning, 2) promote employment objectives, and 3) promote social objectives (inclusion and equality) and hinder drop-out. The EU<sup>60</sup> and the OECD<sup>61</sup> have made educational and career guidance a priority area and have recommended that Norway also does so.

### What is career guidance?

“Career guidance” is here used as a collective term for services aimed to help individuals of all ages to make educational and career decisions and to manage their own career development. These services may include school counselling, guidance at universities and colleges, in other training establishments, in the Labour and Welfare Organisation, in enterprises and in the voluntary sector. Since decisions about education and careers are an individual matter, the central element of career guidance will in most cases be the individual guidance conversation. Other methods could be group guidance, visits to study places or workplaces, printed and electronic information, interest and personality tests and various types of practical placement or trials.

In keeping with research the concept “guidance” is used, as the concept of “giving advice” could be interpreted as the adviser being responsible for pointing out the direction, whilst “guidance” places the user at the helm and emphasises the individual's own mastering strategies and independence. The concept “career” is used to cover both the education and the occupational side of the guidance. This terminology accords with conceptual use in this field nationally and internationally.

### Description of status

In Norway pupils in primary and secondary education have a statutory right “to necessary guidance on education, careers and social matters” (Section 9-2 of the Education Act). School owners are free to choose how to ensure this right and how the scheme is organised. The most usual way is that the role of being school counsellor is given to one or more of the school's teachers. There is little systematic knowledge about how counselling/guidance is performed in practice. At many schools guidance about education and careers is organised with the social educational counselling service.

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<sup>59</sup> [http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects\\_Networks/Guidance/Career\\_Guidance\\_survey/synthesis\\_report.asp](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/Guidance/Career_Guidance_survey/synthesis_report.asp)

<sup>60</sup> Cf. the EU's resolution concerning lifelong guidance:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/resolution2004\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/resolution2004_en.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Cf. for example OECD: “Career Guidance: A Guidebook for Policy Makers”, 2004:  
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/53/53/34060761.pdf#search=%22oecd%20career%20policy%22>

Applicants to education and students do not have a statutory right to guidance, but most universities and colleges offer applicants and own students guidance about their own study programmes. All universities and some colleges also offer career guidance about the transition to working life for students in the final stages of their studies. There is little documentation of how this guidance takes place and which qualifications the counsellors have.

Even though it is not mandatory the Labour and Welfare Organisation is in practice responsible for educational and career guidance for job seekers. It is still unclear how this new organisation is to safeguard this responsibility, but White Paper no. 9 (2006-2007) "Work, Welfare and Inclusion" refers to a future collaboration in this field with the Ministry of Education and Research.

The majority of job seekers have to go to the private market for career guidance and coaching. There has been a private market for a long time which offers advisory services to enterprises undergoing major changes (the advice has in those cases been especially offered to the "supernumerary"), but increasingly one now sees the emergence of companies servicing individuals.

The responsibility for guidance about adults' rights to and opportunities for primary and secondary education lies with the municipalities and the county authorities. This responsibility is in many places met by offering guidance at Training and Development Centres (OPUS), resource centres etc, but apart from this there is a great diversity in how guidance is performed.

Regional "partnerships for career guidance" are being tried out in Nordland, Akershus and Telemark Counties as a follow-up to White Paper no. 30 (2003-2004) Culture for Learning. These experimental projects entail collaboration on career guidance between county authorities, municipalities, the Labour and Welfare Organisation, universities/colleges and local social partners. Research funds have been channelled to the three projects via the Directorate for Education and Training, and at the same time the other county authorities have been encouraged to initiate their own partnerships. Vox has recently carried out a survey that shows that twelve out of eighteen counties have established or will soon establish partnerships for career guidance. The counties' perception of the partnership model varies greatly, as do the ways in which they organise their services. For this reason the Vox report recommends greater national coordination<sup>62</sup>.

In addition to these services there are several Internet-based suppliers of information about educational and career pathways. Utdanning.no is a gateway established by the Ministry of Education and Research which collects Internet-based resources about education in Norway. Vilbli.no is an information service for applicants to upper secondary education, established by the county authorities, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and the Directorate for Education and Training. The Labour and Welfare Organisation operates two net-based guidance services: Veivalg for applicants to upper secondary or higher education, and Akademia for students in transition from higher education to working life.

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<sup>62</sup> Vox: "Career Guidance and Adults", 2006

## Challenges

The Norwegian system for career guidance has been subjected to several reports, amongst others a country report from the OECD (2002)<sup>63</sup>, the report “Strengthening Career and Educational Guidance” prepared by a task force appointed by the Ministries of Education and Research and of Labour and Administration (2003)<sup>64</sup>, as well as “Completion of Upper Secondary Education” (2006)<sup>65</sup> prepared by a broadly representative task force led by the Directorate for Education and Training. All these reports point to the same challenges:

### *1. The services in the various sectors are not coordinated well enough*

Both the counsellors and the services they represent are too often focused on the sector *in which* the users are now, and do not have enough knowledge of the sector(s) *to which* the pupils/students/users are to be guided. This applies both to the relationship between the education levels, and to the relationship between the education sector and working life. One reason for this is that each sector has its own career pathway for “its” counsellors and there is very little mobility of counsellors between the sectors. This could to some extent have been balanced by frequent contact, exchange of experiences and coordination of service chains, but collaboration between the sectors has so far lacked stability and long-term perspectives.

### *2. The counsellors have deficient competence*

In addition to often lacking knowledge about the sector(s) the users are in transition to, there are too many counsellors who do not possess competence in guidance methodology (dialogue pedagogies, use of guidance tools, psychological and sociological perspectives on decisions, etc.). There are some continuing and supplementary courses in career guidance at some university colleges but the courses supplied are too few to meet the demand. Another aspect is that even when counsellors have formal qualifications (for example as a result of attending relevant continuing or supplementary training) there are too few counsellors to facilitate continuous competence development.

### *3. There is a lack of services for adults*

Users who are not connected with primary, secondary or higher education or with the Labour and Welfare Organisation have currently very limited opportunities for receiving career guidance. A 22-year-old applicant to higher education must approach every single institution for guidance, and the guidance then offered is usually linked to admission regulations and general information about the study programmes at that particular institution. So in practice there is no neutral guidance available with respect to *choice* of study location and programme. The guidance service for adult employees contemplating a change of career, or wishing to have continuing or supplementary education, is also too poor today. This is worrying considering a policy which aims to ensure that older employees remain at work for as long as possible. How career guidance can meet the challenges of the labour market, including demographical challenges, is one of the questions currently being discussed most frequently internationally<sup>66</sup>.

### *4. Deficient knowledge base*

There is relatively little up-to-date information about the provision of guidance services, the demand for, the actual use and quality of guidance services in Norway. The guidance services are currently not covered by the national system for quality assessment and quality

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<sup>63</sup> [http://www.dep.no/filarkiv/155763/CN\\_Norway.pdf](http://www.dep.no/filarkiv/155763/CN_Norway.pdf)

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.dep.no/filarkiv/209008/Utdanningsveiledning.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> [http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/Rapporter/tiltak\\_bedre\\_gjennomforing\\_vgo.pdf](http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/Rapporter/tiltak_bedre_gjennomforing_vgo.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Cf. OECD and the EU. Cf. also Australian Journal of Career Development vol 15., no. 3, 2006

development for primary and secondary education (Skoleporten.no), or in the quality assurance systems of the higher education sector. In order to advance development work in this area it is essential that guidance data are gathered and analysed. In order to defend investments in the further development of a public quality provision of guidance services, adapted to the idea of lifelong learning for all, it is important to be able to measure results and acquire knowledge about what works. So it is necessary to define some precise national indicators that enable comparison between results/services, over time.

### **Efforts ahead**

White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) "...and none were left outside", which is to be presented to the Storting during the spring session of 2007, gives notice of a comprehensive boost of the career guidance services by the following measures:

*1. An evaluation of the county partnerships for career guidance with a view to nationwide implementation*

A cross-ministerial task force is to evaluate the experiences from the three pilot counties and recommend suitable organisation models and national guidelines. The purpose of the partnerships is partly to coordinate and professionalise the existing services, partly to develop services for groups that currently do not have a natural place to go to for guidance, and also to open up the possibilities for a more integrated service through shared organisation and funding. The national authority for educational and career guidance is intended to have a coordinating role with regards to the county partnerships.

*2. The establishment of a national authority for educational and career guidance is to be considered*

Since developing county partnerships entails a certain degree of local adaptation, there may be a need for a shared body to ensure coherence and equivalence in the services provided. This kind of body will provide a leading competence environment in this area and help the various partners and sectors adapt their guidance work. In addition the body will draw up national qualification and quality benchmarks for the guidance service, initiate measures for enhancing competence and act as a motivator and driving force for the whole practical area. As the field of action is cross-sectoral, the report and the establishment of such a body will also be cross-ministerial.

*3. Strengthening of the school counselling service*

It is proposed to divide the school counselling service into two functions: one for social-educational counselling, and one for educational and career guidance. Each of these functions will be attempted strengthened and professionalised by introducing specific criteria for qualifications, by defining their tasks and by surveying the resource situation. In addition the introduction of an individual development plan for guidance is to be considered. One is also to consider how guidance can be linked to programme subjects and in-depth study projects.

*4. Further development of Internet services for career guidance*

Both educational and job applicants are completely dependent on receiving good, objective and up-to-date facts about education and working life. Utdanning.no and Vilbli.no are to be further developed so as to meet this demand.

*5. Systematic follow-up of work done by higher education institutions with respect to career guidance*

The higher education institutions have a separate responsibility for providing applicants and students with guidance concerning the studies they offer and the subsequent career opportunities. The Ministry will follow up the institutions' efforts in this area.

## 6. Working Life as a Learning Context

Working life is the most important learning context for adult employees. It is in the workplace that adults participate *most* in learning activities, in terms of time used, and competence development in working life is also regarded as especially important for the individual employee's ability to maintain a good and stable connection with the world of work.

Working life is also an important learning context for pupils and students, through various collaboration schemes between the education sector and enterprises and the public sector. One of the purposes of this collaboration is to prepare the pupils and students for their careers by providing practical experience in realistic surroundings. Using working life as a learning context can also be a means of increasing learning motivation for pupils or students who find it better or more inspiring than the classroom or lecture hall. Learning in working life can provide pupils and students with challenges and learning resources that are not available in the educational institutions. For the labour market, closer collaboration with these educational institutions from as early as the primary and secondary level could make for increased recruitment and a better supply of workers with the relevant qualifications.

### Status

#### Collaboration education – working life

The Knowledge Promotion has introduced two new subjects involving the use of working life as a learning context: the optional programme subject in lower secondary and the in-depth study project in upper secondary school. The optional programme subject is designed to let lower secondary pupils become acquainted with topics from subjects in programmes for general studies and vocational education programmes in upper secondary school. The in-depth study project is designed to let the pupils specialise in a chosen subject from day one in upper secondary school or to get to know different subject areas. Both subjects will require close collaboration with local working life.

The apprenticeship scheme in upper secondary education is the best established scheme for learning in working life. Vocational training normally consists of two years in school and two years in a training establishment, one year of which is counted as value creation. Apprentices are educated in a broad range of subjects covering most of the labour market sectors. At any given time there are between 25,000 and 30,000 apprentices in training establishments.

In connection with the Knowledge Promotion funds have been allocated for competence enhancement for everyone responsible for training pupils and apprentices in primary and secondary education, including instructors in the enterprises. It is an objective that teachers and instructors are to have the same competence enhancement measures as far as it is practicable.

In higher education many study programmes still have a sharp distinction between education and working life. Some studies have a long tradition of placements in working life, such as e.g. in the health sector and the teacher training institutions. But in many other sectors it is still necessary to create greater relevance and better cohesion between theory and practice. The three employer federations NHO, HSH and NAVO, with support from the nationally funded Competence Development Programme, have therefore initiated a collaboration project to try out an "apprenticeship scheme" for higher education, to examine challenges and

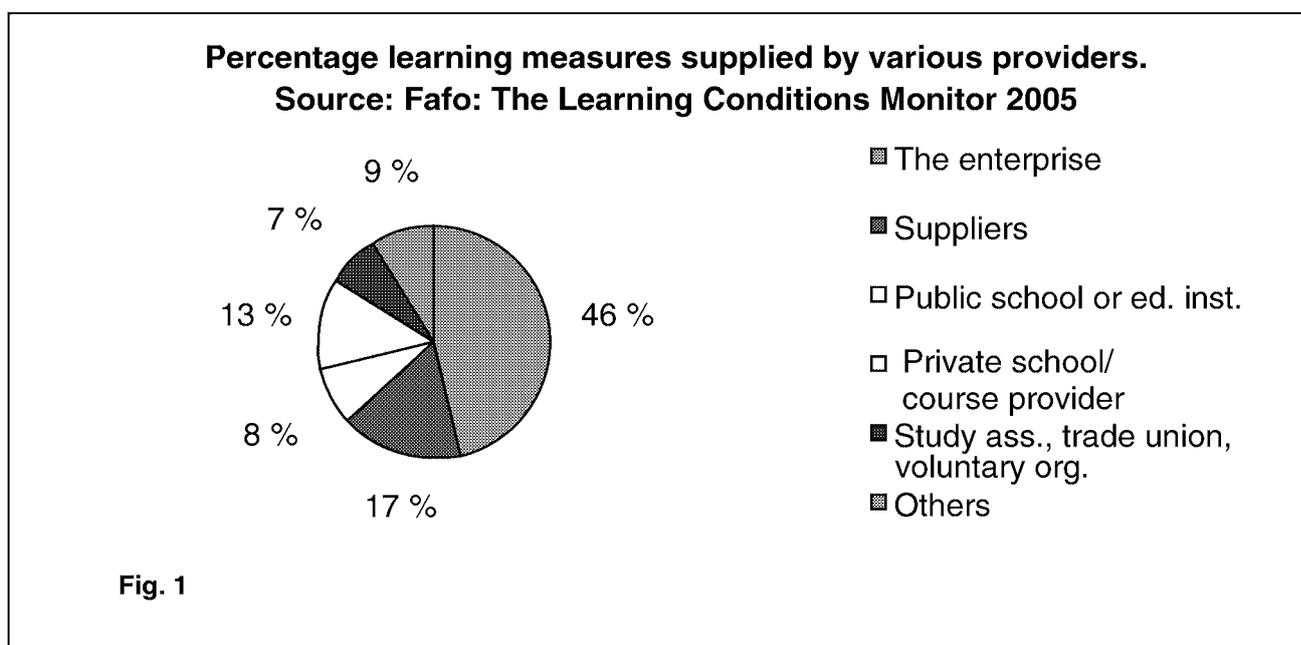
opportunities for trainee education in three sectors. Results so far show that it is necessary with close supervision and adaptation during the placement periods if they are to succeed<sup>67</sup>.

### Employees' learning in the workplace

Employees' learning in the workplace differs significantly from the other topics dealt with in this report. For one thing, according to the Basic Agreement it is the employer who is responsible for most of this learning, namely the learning initiated because the enterprise needed the competence. With this responsibility follows the responsibility for funding the learning activities. Employees' learning is also an important concern for the trade unions and is a constant topic for negotiations and discussions among the social partners in addition to provisions laid down in the Basic Agreement. Learning for employees in working life also differs from the formal education system in that it involves many more and more varied providers, with a greater percentage of private suppliers of for example courses, seminars and conferences.

The extent of employees' learning in the workplace can be shown by the following figures: About half of the workforce participates in courses, seminars etc. (non-formal learning) during a year, while approx. 7 percent take part in formal continuing education or training. Approx. 60 percent say they have learning-intensive work. These figures have been relatively stable in the period of 2003-2006<sup>68</sup>

As mentioned above, there are many providers of learning activities. The biggest provider is the enterprise itself, cf. fig. 1.



<sup>67</sup> On commission from the Ministry of Education and Research Rambøll Norway is currently reviewing which types of collaboration between higher education and working life have been established, their extent and effect. The results of this survey will be available in the spring of 2007.

<sup>68</sup> All figures from Fafo's Learning Conditions Monitor, 2006

Learning activities also vary greatly among the different sectors. Employees in public sector participate more in formal continuing education and training than those in private employment. Participation is especially high in the education sector, but it is more usual for employees in health and social services and public administration to take continuing education and training than for people in the private sector. Public workers also have a high level of participation in courses and training, i.e. non-formal training. In private sector the petroleum, energy and mining industries stand out with a high level of participation in courses, while the primary industries and the hotel and restaurant trade have the lowest level. Petroleum, energy and mining, and finance, insurance and other services are sectors which are highly learning-intensive in their daily work, whereas the hotel and restaurant trade and the primary industries are least characterised by learning in the workplace.

Other major differences in participation are linked to education level and age. Generally speaking employees with a high education level both are more motivated for and participate in more courses and seminars and take more formal continuing education and training than those with a low level of education. In addition the well-educated have more learning-intensive work. The tendency as regards age is also clear. Both motivation and participation decrease after the age of 50, markedly so after the age of 60.

In an international perspective Norway does relatively well with regards to employees' learning in working life. With regards to participation in non-formal learning, Norway is on a par with the best countries in the OECD, that is to say the Nordic countries and the USA. It is also a challenge for the other OECD countries that people with a low level of education participate less, and also in other countries there are great variations in learning pressure between the various trades and industries<sup>69</sup>.

Calculations show that Norwegian working life spent 44 million working hours on education or training in 2005, corresponding to 8.2 billion NOK in wages to employees attending education or training. About three quarters of these costs are paid by the enterprises<sup>70</sup>. In addition there are expenses for the education/training itself, premises, travel expenses etc. for which there are only approximate estimates<sup>71</sup>. These are large sums, yet all the same one could ask if these investments are large enough in a social perspective, or whether there is an underinvestment in learning in Norwegian working life<sup>72</sup>. Other interesting questions are whether investments are made in such a way that the labour market as a whole has an optimal competence development. And ultimately the question is whether enough is being done to ensure that investments in learning yield results, or in other words whether the learning is used.

### Employees' learning – public measures

As employees' learning is regulated by agreement between the social partners it is natural that the central government does not have the same role or the same steering ambitions for learning in working life that it has for learning in the education system.

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<sup>69</sup> OECD, Education at a Glance, 2005

<sup>70</sup> Fafo/SSB: The Learning Conditions Monitor 2006.

<sup>71</sup> In 2001 Fafo estimated that collected costs of training in working life came to about NOK 23-31 billion (NOU 2001:11 From Insight to Industry)

<sup>72</sup> The report from the Competence Statement "Lifelong Learning – More than Words?" (2003) points out that there is a large danger of underinvestment in a system where employers have main responsibility for funding, while at the same time the individual employer cannot count on receiving the whole of the yield of the investment.

All the same, when learning in the workplace is so decisive for the individual and for the competitive power of the Norwegian economy as a whole it is important that the central government monitors this area closely, considering whether they could play an indirect role as facilitators for learning in working life by providing various incentives and support schemes, or by adapting the framework conditions. The question of whether it is right for the central government to exercise a more active policy in this area will depend on whether it can be proved that market mechanisms alone do not produce positive results for society. If the central government from this perspective wished to play a more active role, close collaboration with the social partners will be necessary.

Since the Competence Reform the central government has contributed to strengthening the workplace as a learning context, maybe first and foremost by funding the Competence Development Programme and the Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life, and by funding research projects about working life as a learning context.

During the years of 2000-2006 the Competence Development Programme has been a national funding scheme with three main objectives: to make it possible for enterprises to express and fill their competence requirements, to facilitate cooperation between education and training providers, and to develop continuing education courses in accordance with the requirements of working life. The programme's target group has included the whole labour market, i.e. small and large private and public enterprises. The programme has been a grant scheme which has partially funded development projects in cooperation between education providers and enterprises. Priority has been given to development projects ensuring that continuing education could to a greater degree take place in the workplace. The programme has also had the objective of making primary and secondary education more available to adults. The Ministry of Education and Research granted NOK 329 million from 2000 to 2005. Funds have been granted to 740 local development projects, including 60 dissemination projects aimed at ensuring the dissemination of experiences from successful projects to other parts of working life and the education system. A prerequisite for receiving funds was that the development projects should be rooted both with the enterprises' employers and with the employees.

The evaluation of the Competence Development Programme has been mostly positive<sup>73</sup>. The main conclusion is that it has facilitated the development of many good projects and triggered development work that would otherwise not have been initiated. At least 80,000 employees have participated in education or training in connection with projects supported by the programme. More than half the participants have achieved formal qualifications as part of this education. 6 out of 10 educational measures will be available also in the future. 90 percent of those who have received education or training characterise their learning outcome as very or quite good. The participants who are most satisfied are those that have received education or training which is closely linked to tasks and challenges at their workplace. Participants with the shortest education prove to have the greatest benefit from training in new tasks. For these people the education or training has meant increased self-assurance, greater job security and increased motivation for more learning. Participants who have achieved formal qualifications as part of the education or training express better learning outcome than those who did not achieve formal qualifications. Half of the recipients of education or training say that the enterprise's management has generally become more aware of education requirements, while

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<sup>73</sup> Fafo (2006): *The Competence Development Programme 2000-2006. Final evaluation*

only 1 out of 5 think their trade union representatives have become more committed to education or training.

Several of the major finds from the Competence Development Programme underlie the Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life, which is a national funding scheme intended to make it easier and financially more attractive for employers to facilitate education in basic skills in the workplace. The Competence Development Programme has shown that many adults with deficient basic skills prefer to enhance their own qualifications in connection with their job situation rather than by school-based learning<sup>74</sup>.

An important public task connected to employees' learning is that of facilitating research and the dissemination of experiences in this area. Some of the nationally funded research activities into learning in working life are KUNNE, run by Sintef, and the programme called "Competence, Education and Value Creation", which was administered by the Research Council of Norway (NFR). KUNNE is a portfolio of research projects on knowledge and learning in organisations, with especial emphasis on the collective aspects of knowledge. KUNNE started up in 1997. One third of the funding comes from public sources. The NFR's research programme "Competence, Education and Value Creation" has awarded approx. NOK 11 million per year to various research projects in the period of 1996-2002.

In addition to all this, the central government, *inter alia* by developing the competence centres of Vox and Norway Opening Universities, has contributed to the development of the knowledge foundation for further work on lifelong learning and competence policy.

## **Challenges**

The Ministry of Education and Research regards the following challenges as the most important ones we currently face:

### 1. The need for improved collaboration between education and working life

The evaluation of the Competence Development Programme showed that education and training provided by upper secondary schools or universities and colleges was considered of little relevance for the requirements of working life. This applied especially to courses offered to workers with a lower level of education. Both the Competence Statement and the Learning Conditions Monitor showed similar results. It will therefore still be necessary to strengthen collaboration between the education system and working life in order to increase the relevance of the education and training offered.

### 2. People with little education take little part in learning

This is a problem for many reasons. In so far as learning is positive in itself it is a problem that this is a benefit that is unequally shared. Besides, people with a low education level have a greater need of learning than those with a high level of education with respect to maintaining a good and stable relationship with the labour market. Deficient qualifications among employees with a low level of education may in addition lead to impaired efficiency for the enterprises.

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<sup>74</sup> The Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life has been described in more detail in Chapter 2.

### 3. Older workers take little part in learning

If the objective of keeping more people at work longer is to be achieved, which will be necessary for demographic reasons, etc, learning in working life must in the future also concern employees over the ages of 50 and 60. Unless they have sufficient and relevant competence the older workers will either become less productive than their younger colleagues or risk dropping out of the workforce.

### 4. Poor “learning pressure” in parts of working life

Research indicates that the decisive factor for learning activity in working life is the sum of demands and expectations (also called the “learning pressure”) that the workplace places on the individual employee. This learning pressure varies greatly among the different parts of the labour market. In some trades and professions competitive conditions, certification requirements, company culture or other conditions all contribute to making the individual employee feel the need for or develop a personal motivation for learning. In other trades or types of enterprise not much attention is paid to the individual’s learning. For example, in the hotel and restaurant trade only about half as many of the employees perceive a distinct learning pressure as compared with the petroleum and energy industries<sup>75</sup>. It is also worth noting that employees in small and medium-sized businesses (especially medium-sized) fewer employees participate in courses and training than in the largest enterprises<sup>76</sup>.

### 5. Too little focus on the *use* of learning

Over the last few years increased attention has been given to learning in working life, but for several reasons this attention has been directed more towards *participation* in learning activities than in the *effect* of the learning. Not all learning activities contribute equally to quality development and increased productivity in the enterprises. For example, non-formal learning that takes place completely separately from the learner’s usual work and that in addition has a number of other objectives (social gathering, “reward”, etc), runs a great risk of not being activated later, unless the enterprise has special procedure for it. In so far as learning happens in a “vacuum”, with little practical relevance, it could in some cases have a negative effect on the enterprises’ competitive power and the individual’s motivation for further learning. However we lack knowledge in this area. More research in this field may show if there is an unexploited potential here and if so, indicate how it could be achieved.

## **Efforts in the time to come**

### 1. Basic competence in working life

The programme Basic Competence in Working Life is to be intensified and perhaps made permanent. There is more information about this in Chapter 2.

### 2. Collaboration with the social partners on increased learning work in the enterprises

As heralded in White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) ”...and none were left outside”, the Ministry of Education and Research will take the initiative to consider incentives for learning activities in enterprises which could contribute to greater participation in learning and competence development from employees with a lower education level. Relevant ministries and the social partners will be invited to take part.

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<sup>75</sup> Fafo: The Learning Conditions Monitor 2006

<sup>76</sup> Fafo: The Learning Conditions Monitor 2003

### 3. Research and statistics

The Ministry of Education and Research is continuously working on developing qualifications policy, including learning in working life. The following R&D projects, amongst others, are being planned:

- Norwegian participation in Eurostat's Third Continuing Vocational Training Study 2006
- Norwegian participation in Eurostat's Adult Education Survey (AES) in 2007
- Survey of how different framework conditions affect how much enterprises invest in education and training

## Conclusion

In addition to the five specific topics covered in this report, the Ministry would like to conclude by indicating some more general and overall experiences from efforts concerned with lifelong learning. Since the 1990s Norway has come quite far on the path to making lifelong learning a reality. We have however met obstacles, and we have become aware of structural mechanisms that it will cost significant efforts to counteract. The following list is not necessarily exhaustive, but all the same it summarises some of the main challenges that efforts ahead must take as their starting point:

### *Drop-out*

There are relatively large challenges connected with drop-out/outsiderness in primary, secondary and higher education and in working life.

### *Rights*

Individual rights to learning will only be effective when they are well-known to the user group and are matched by a well-developed system from the authority with the legal obligation for providing the learning activity.

### *People with little education*

People with little education generally have a low motivation for learning, and it is not obvious how to increase it.

### *Older workers*

Many receive too little stimulation and support for learning, adaptation or career changes at later stages in their vocational careers.

### *Informal learning*

Informal learning is important, but it is difficult to measure and it is difficult to express goal-oriented policy for it.

### *Cooperation between sectors*

There are not any adequate means or incentives in the education pathway to create good cooperation between educational levels and between education and work.

### *The knowledge basis*

We need a better knowledge basis about the need for, participation in and learning outcome of learning activities throughout the education system.

### *The effects of learning*

By placing more emphasis on the *effect* of learning when it is used, individuals and society could get a better return on their investments in learning activities.

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