

CONSULTATION ON SCHOOLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research

Question 1: How can schools be organised in such a way as to provide all students with a full range of key competences?

In 2006 the Norwegian Government introduced a comprehensive reform for primary and secondary education called the Knowledge Promotion Reform. The reform is currently being implemented. It focuses strongly on one main element of lifelong learning: the importance of having substantial basic skills. These skills are defined as the ability to express oneself orally; the ability to read; the ability to develop numeracy the ability to express oneself in writing, and the ability to use digital tools. These skills are included in each subject's 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 supposed to master at various stages. In addition, the organisation of upper secondary education is being simplified, with fewer and broader education programmes and greater flexibility as regards adapting the education for the individual pupil, school, apprentice and training establishment.

Question 2: How can schools equip young people with the competences and motivation to make learning a lifelong activity?

The Knowledge Promotion Reform emphasises the acquisition of basic skills as a prerequisite to pursue learning as a lifelong activity. In White Paper no. 16, *Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning (2006 - 2007)*, the Government introduced the "*The Knowledge Promotion for Adults*" - a set of actions concerning adults, including a financing programme for providers of courses in basic competences for adults, and an information campaign designed to change attitudes to learning.

The Norwegian educational system has many flexible features, such as open learning pathways, extended use of ICT for the purpose of decentralized education, and an integrated use of working life as a learning arena in regular vocational education and training.

Question 3: How can school systems contribute to supporting long-term sustainable economic growth in Europe?

The Norwegian Government considers the strengthening of basic competences and in general an increased level of education as essential to the contribution of long-term sustainable economic growth and innovation

Through the new subject curricula developed as a part of the Knowledge Reform the Government will promote a learning outcome based national curriculum. Various monitor systems have been put into place to monitor the effects of the measures.

Norway will continue to participate in international surveys and studies like PISA and TIMSS to monitor progress and plan for the future (evidence based policy development).

Measures to promote basic skills in maths, science and technology will be implemented through a new strategy for Maths, Science and Technology (*A Joint Promotion of Mathematics, Science and Technology 2006 - 2009*). Surveys show that the strategy has already been efficient since more young people choose MST in school.

Competence in foreign languages is essential for mobility in the labour market and for international trade and cooperation.

The Government launched a policy plan for language learning in 2005. The policy plan *Languages Open Doors, A Strategy for Promoting Foreign Languages in Primary and Secondary Education, and Training* (2005-2009) covers all foreign languages, its general objective being "Improved skills in more foreign languages for pupils, apprentices and teachers in primary and secondary education, and an increased interest in and motivation for language teaching".

Entrepreneurship is considered an important element of the contribution to economic growth and the government has introduced measures to promote entrepreneurial skills in education through a strategy for entrepreneurial education. Based on the strategy *See the Opportunities and Make them Work – strategy for entrepreneurship in education and training 2004 – 2008* several measures have been introduced to ensure the inclusion of entrepreneurship in education. A programme subject in entrepreneurship for upper secondary education and training was introduced in the autumn of 2006.

Question 4: How can school systems best respond to the need to promote equity, to respond to cultural diversity and to reduce early school leaving?

The Quality Framework, which is part of the Knowledge Promotion Reform, states the responsibility for schools and training establishments to organize and adapt the teaching and learning processes for the purpose of developing broad competences for pupils and apprentices. Key Competences are integrated into the Quality Framework, such as learning strategies (leaning to learn), developing social and cultural competence, and motivation to learn, in addition to emphasis on pupil participation. National tests in key competences in reading and numeracy for pupils in primary education were introduced from the autumn of 2007. The test results will determine whether pupils' skills are consistent with the learning outcomes for basic skills.

To promote better integration and employability of immigrants the Government has introduced compulsory Norwegian and civics courses for new immigrants. A set of actions to promote better integration of immigrants and linguistic minorities have been implemented through the strategy *Equal Education in Practice !* (2007 – 2009). These are measures aiming at ensuring better teaching and greater participation of linguistic minorities in kindergartens, schools and in education in general.

Question 5: If schools are to respond to each pupil's learning needs, what can be done as regards, curricula, school organisation and the roles of teachers?

The Norwegian Education Act states that pupils have the right to individually adapted subject curricula. The teacher has the responsibility to adapt the teaching to the pupil's capacities and needs. The previously mentioned Knowledge Reform gives the teacher more freedom in the choice of teaching methods than previously. This facilitates individual adaptation of teaching. This also implies more responsibility for the teacher and stronger requirements to their pedagogical competence.

Question 6: How can school communities help prepare young people to be responsible citizens, in line with fundamental values such as peace and tolerance of diversity?

In the Quality Framework and the Core Curriculum active citizenship is defined as a principal theme for education. A clear value base and a broad cultural understanding are fundamental elements of an inclusive social community and of a learning community where diversity is acknowledged and respected. Such a learning environment encourages cooperation, dialogue and differences in opinion. The pupils shall participate in democratic processes, thus developing their democratic ideals and understanding of importance of active and committed participation in a multicultural society.

The teaching of democracy is embedded in the core curricula subject curricula in subject curricula for history and civics.

In the Knowledge Promotion Reform pupils' council work is introduced as an independent subject and is part of the curriculum. School shall be an important democratic arena for children and young people, a place where they can experience empowerment. Participation in the pupil's council and other cooperative pupil participation bodies in school shall help satisfy this goal. The education in pupils' council work shall therefore contribute to independence, empathy and participation and also to encouraging reflection and a critical perspective. Christianity and Religious and Ethical Education (CREE) has been a subject in the Norwegian school since 1997. The current curriculum has been revised and has broader scope that is intended to give the student common knowledge and the cultural and value base on which today's society is based, with inputs from different cultures, religions and philosophies of life.

Question 7: How can school staff be trained and supported to meet the challenges they face?

As a follow-up of White Paper No. 30 (2003 -2004) Culture for Learning, as part of the implementation of the Knowledge Promotion Reform, the Government launched a strategy for competence development (*Competence for Development Strategy in Basic Education 2005 – 2008*). The main objective of this strategy is to promote the professional renewal for teachers. In the framework of the strategy activities for both in-service training and further education have been supported. The target groups are administrative staff in schools, teachers in primary and secondary schools, professional leaders and instructors engaged in training at the workplace. School owners at local and regional level are responsible for the implementation the competence development measures of the strategy.

The Government has recently finalised a comprehensive evaluation of the teacher training programmes. The teacher training institutions are required to develop individual follow-up plans to meet the results of the evaluation.

Question 8: How can school communities best receive the leadership and motivation they need to succeed? How can they be empowered to develop in response to changing needs and demands?

In 2008 the Government will launch a *Strategy for Quality Development in Schools*. The strategy will, among many topics, focus on competence among school leaders. In the past the school leader's role has to a large extent in practice been limited to administrative and practical functions. It is now important to implement the role of a school leader in a broader perspective. Today's school leaders are expected to play an active role in innovation and as leaders of processes for change. They shall be open for impulses from outside and at the same time inspire and motivate the pedagogical personnel.

Research on school management in Norway is at present rather limited. Few researchers have been concerned with the connection between leadership and the pupils' learning progress and social development. Norway has participated in the OECD project "Improving School

Leadership”. Among the themes considered in this project are the school leader’s role, tasks and responsibilities. OECD will respond to the participating countries with recommendations on how to improve school leadership.

The previously mentioned *Competence for Development in Basic Education Strategy* also targets school leaders. Local and regional authorities have in cooperation with universities and university colleges developed courses for school leaders. Participation has not been compulsory and has not been formalised through the accreditation system.

In the same way as the Government at present is going through the teacher training programmes, the Government will look into the school leader training and consider requirements to competence and education.