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Overview

The Norwegian education system is characterized by an all-through system of education from grade 1 to 10 (primary and lower secondary education) with mixed ability classes. Since 1994 all pupils between 16 and 19 also has a statutory right to three years of upper secondary education, leading either to admission to higher education, to vocational qualifications or to basic skills. Pupils in vocational education and training can achieve the qualifications necessary for admission to universities and university colleges by taking a supplementary programme for general university admission certification. Kindergartens were transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research in 2005, in order to ensure coherence and continuity in the education of children and young people. All children in Norway have a statutory right to a place in Kindergarten from the year they turn one. All public education in Norway is free of charge, while kindergartens have parental fees. Also higher education at public universities and university colleges are free of charge. The State Education Loan Fund was founded in 1947, and provides financial support for educational purposes in the form of loans and grants.

In an international context, there are few private schools in Norway and they serve

only as a supplement to the state education system. 2010/2011 only 2.7 percent of the pupils in primary and lower secondary education attend private schools (Statistics Norway, 2012), while the percentage for upper secondary education and training is 7.6 (Skoleporten, 2012). Even though private schools are 85 percent state funded and subject to the same laws and regulations that state schools and therefor stands out more like semi-private institutions, they still are a contested political topic. Under the conservative coalition government 2001-2005, the freedom to establish non-state schools was regulated in the more liberal Free School Act of 2003, while this regulation was tightened when the red-green coalition government took power in 2005. Today private schools are regulated by a restricted Private School Act (LOV 2003-07-04 nr 84).

The main topic in today's political discussions about the Norwegian education system is the overall quest of quality, measured quality and improved learning outcomes. This discussion exploded after the publication of the PISA-result in 2000 and has continued ever since, even if Norway did perform above average and has improved slightly in the latest PISA-tests.¹ The PISA-shock imposed the idea of the Norwegian education system as the very best, and thereby enforced our latest educational reform on primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training, implemented in 2006 and known as the Knowledge Promotion.

The development of a state comprehensive education system

To understand the Norwegian education system as a highly unified comprehensive system, there is a need to look at its historical development, which is a history of continuously expanding state-driven education system within a democratic society where local authorities always have had a certain freedom, albeit to varying degrees.

The Norwegian public school system with compulsory attendance is generally dated to the year 1739, when the Danish-Norwegian King Christian VI issued an *Ordinance for the Rural Schools of Norway* as a part of his state-controlled pietism.² He introduced obligatory confirmation in 1736 as a means of ensuring that everyone had a sufficient basis for living in accordance with pietistic Lutheranism. As part of this ambition, the king and the state-pietistic clergy established a public school for all children aged 7 – 12 not already receiving schooling elsewhere. Wealthier groups and those living in the cities had access to bourgeois and Latin schools.³

The Peasantry Education Act of 1860 paved the way for the modern breakthrough of the Norwegian folk school with an extended period of education, expanded

curriculum content and permanent schools. The Folk School Act of 1889 established the folk school as a five-year comprehensive school for children from all social classes. It was run by municipal officials and was free. Thus, the Norwegian comprehensive school was a reality as far back as 1889.⁴ The old Latin and bourgeois schools in the cities were to some extent replaced by middle schools, and gymnasiums lost their Latin curricula and were instead transformed into schools for general education.

The 7-year folk school for all became a reality in 1920 when only those middle schools based on the seven-year folk school system received economic support from the state. The seven-year folk school became formal through the Folk School Act of 1936. In this period, from the 1860s onwards, Norway was a pioneering country in its efforts to establish a public folk school for all children.⁵

After the Second World War, Norway lagged behind in the further development of a comprehensive education system, and was now inspired by England, USA and especially Sweden in developing basic education for children until the age of sixteen. In 1954 the Experimental Act allowed a nine-year compulsory comprehensive school to be tried out, and after some experimental years a nine-year compulsory comprehensive school was established as a nation-wide arrangement through the Primary- and Lower Secondary Education Act in 1969. The basic belief was that in a 9-year compulsory primary and lower secondary including all pupils, it would be necessary to divide them into levels according to their abilities (organizational differentiation). After several attempts with various forms of organization differentiation in the final two years of lower secondary school, the principle of organizational differentiation in primary school was abandoned in 1974 and replaced by internal pedagogic differentiation within the classes, and cohesive classes from the first to the ninth grade. The problem of differentiation was expected to be resolved with the principle of adapted education which entailed the right of each pupil to an education suited to their individual abilities.⁶ In 1975 legislation on special schools was included within the general educational legislation. Separate, special needs schools were closed down and children with special needs were somewhat integrated into ordinary schools. While children with Sami or Kven-Finnish ancestry had previously been victims of a dominant policy of 'Norwegianization,' they were given the right to primary and lower secondary education in the Sami or Kven language in the seventies.

The next major educational reform came in the 1990s and involved both primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training. The starting age for primary school was lowered from seven to six years, which led to the extension of the Norwegian primary and lower secondary school from nine to ten years. At the same

time, a decision was adopted on the statutory right to three-year upper secondary education which should either offer vocational competencies or qualify for further studies. Academic and vocational courses at upper secondary level were integrated and coordinated in a single institution for upper secondary education. A new Education Act in 1998 established a principle which put the entire six to nineteen age group within a single context. For the first time, a common core curriculum was implemented for primary, lower and upper secondary education, including vocational training. The subject curriculum was specified for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school. The curriculum was detailed with clear instructions on *what* should be taught, *when* and *how*.⁷ The detailed curriculum however broke with the prevailing performance management principle, and thereby contributing to a perception that Norway stood out as a different country this decade.⁸

The structure of schooling

The Norwegian Parliament and the Government define the goals and decide the framework for the education sector, the kindergarten sector included. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for carrying out the national educational policy. National standards are ensured through legislation, regulations, curricula and framework plans.⁹

The Government has the overall responsibility for quality development, management and financing of the kindergarten sector. The municipalities are responsible for providing and running municipal kindergartens, as well as for approving and supervising both public and private kindergartens in the municipalities. They must ensure that the kindergartens are operated in compliance with legislation, regulation and the framework plan. Since 2009 all children have statutory right to a place in kindergarten from age one. In contrast to education in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools, the authorities have accepted private kindergartens. Additionally kindergartens have parental fees and private kindergartens are able to make profit. The kindergarten owners are responsible for the contents of the individual kindergarten, but in collaboration with parents and staff. The Parents' Council determines an annual plan.

The state bears the overall responsibility for the Education Act with regulations, contents and financing of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training. The municipalities are responsible for operating and administering primary and secondary schools, whereas the county authorities are responsible for upper secondary education and training. Legislations and regulations, including the

National Curriculum, form a binding framework, but within this framework the municipal and county authorities, schools and teachers can influence the implementation and content of education. Each school has a head teacher and various boards, councils and committees. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is an executive subordinate agency for the Ministry of Education and Research. Its main tasks are to promote quality development, quality assessment, analysis and documentation in primary and secondary education and training, and to perform administrative tasks connected to education at these stages. In addition the Directorate has the overall national responsibility for supervision of primary and secondary education and training.

Compulsory comprehensive schooling starts at age six and have two levels; Primary Education (*barnetrinnet*): grades one to seven (ages six to twelve) and Lower Secondary Education (*ungdomstrinnet*): grade eight to ten (age thirteen to sixteen).

All pupils who have completed primary and lower secondary education, or the equivalent, have a statutory right to three years of upper secondary education and training (*videregående opplæring*) leading either to admission to higher education, to vocational qualifications or to basic skills. Pupils in vocational education and training can achieve the qualifications necessary for admission to universities and university colleges by taking a supplementary programme for general university admission certification. The county authorities are legally obliged to follow up young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one who neither attend a course of education nor are employed. The main goal is to get young people back to school to complete secondary education.

The National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion applies to all levels of primary and secondary education and training and comprises a core curriculum, a quality framework, subject curricula, distribution of teaching hours per subject and individual assessment. The subject curricula include competence aims after grades four, seven, and ten and after each level in upper secondary education and training. Some subjects also have competence aims after grade 2. In the subject curricula five basic skills are integrated in a way that is adapted to each subject. These skills are: being able to read, being able to express one orally, being able to express oneself in writing, being able to develop numeracy and being able to use digital tools. This subject curriculum then is in striking contrast to the previous subject curriculum, clearly defining the content of schooling as a shared national knowledge and cultural base, telling what to learn when and how.¹⁰

In collaboration with the Sami Parliament (*the Sameting*) the Government has developed a separate curriculum for primary and secondary education and training

in Sami districts. The curriculum is ensuring that pupils in primary and secondary education and training in Sami districts receive their education in Sami. It also gives the Sami pupil an individual right to learn Sami language where they live.

Pupils in grades one to four have relative short school days and from 1 January 1999 all municipalities have been legally obliged to provide day care facilities before and after school (*SFO – Skole Fritids Ordning*) for this group. In SFO the children play and have cultural and leisure activities.

The legal framework

The objectives of primary and secondary education and training.

The Education Act of 1998 (with last amendments as of 25 June and 31 May 2011) regulates Primary and Secondary Education and Training. The very first paragraph, the objectives of education and training (*Formålsparagrafen*), constitute the overall purpose of education and serves as a framework and guideline for all other educational documents and activities. The first explicit formulated common objective for education came into the Education Act of 1848, and has since been a controversial issue several times throughout history. One of the main controversial questions has been the relationship between the Church and Education and the role of Christianity in this goals clause. In this question we have to bear in mind the state-controlled pietism as the basis for the establishment of a public school for all children aged seven to twelve not already receiving schooling elsewhere, which main purpose was to prepare the children for the obligatory Church confirmation. Despite several disputes and changes over time, the goals clause has been known as the Christian clause, due to the dominant position Christianity have had until quite recently. This question again relates to the fact that Norway still has a State Church, built on the evangelic tradition of the Lutheran Church.

However, in June 2007, the European Court of Human Rights, tried a case where a couple of Norwegian parents had made complaints against the obligatory subject Christian knowledge, religious and ethical education, introduced in 1997. The European Court of Human Rights made it clear that the subject did not respect the parents' religious and philosophical conviction, and thereby violated The European Convention on Human Rights, especially in combination with the Christian goals clause. This verdict, and the fact that a Christian goals clause increasingly was seen as inappropriate in a multicultural and multireligious Norwegian society, resulted in the appointment of an official committee with the mandate to evaluate and suggest revisions of the object clause. After hearings, the committee's final report, and debate

in the Parliament, the Parliament passed new national goals, one for Kindergarten and one for Primary and Secondary Education and Training. The new goals clause for Primary and Secondary Education and Training came into force 1 January 2009:

Section 1-1. The objectives of education and training

Education and training in schools and training establishments shall, in collaboration and agreement with the home, open doors to the world and give the pupils and apprentices historical and cultural insight and anchorage.

Education and training shall be based on fundamental values in Christian and humanist heritage and traditions, such as respect for human dignity and nature, on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity, values that also appear in different religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights.

Education and training shall help increase the knowledge and understanding of the national cultural heritage and our common international cultural traditions.

Education and training shall provide insight into cultural diversity and show respect for the individual's convictions. They are to promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking.

The pupils and apprentices shall develop knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can master their lives and can take part in working life and society. They shall have the opportunity to be creative, committed and inquisitive.

The pupils and apprentices shall learn to think critically and act ethically and with environmental awareness. They shall have joint responsibility and the right to participate.

Schools and training establishments shall meet the pupils and apprentices with trust, respect and demands, and give them challenges that promote formation and the desire to learn. All forms of discrimination shall be combated.

Amended by Acts of 17 Sep 1999 no. 74 (in force 17 Sep 1999, pursuant to the Decree of 17 Sep 1999 no. 1011), 30 June 2000 no. 63 (in force 1 Aug 2000, pursuant to the Decree of 30 June 2000 no. 645), 4 July 2003 no. 84 (in force 1 Oct 2003), 19 Dec 2008 no. 118 (in force 1 Jan 2009, of 19 des 2008 no. 1424).

This paragraph is no longer referred to as the Christian goals clause, but rather as a value paragraph, defining the value base for all Primary and Secondary Education

and Training. It should be noted that the new value paragraph passed in Parliament was less radical than the national committee's suggestions, in that it placed Christian heritage and traditions once again in front.

The Education Act of 1998 forms further education policy regulations for education and training for all levels, and also for adults, for special education and for Sami education. It has regulations regarding transport and accommodation, organization of teaching, equipment, school staff, bodies for user participations, allocation of responsibility between the State, the county authority and the municipalities. The Education Act also includes regulations towards private schools and thereby refers directly to the Private School Act. Both the private and state schools must comply with state regulations in the Education Act.

Norway has two official written languages (*Bokmål* and *Nynorsk*) and according to The Education Act the municipalities issue regulations concerning which form shall be primary form in any given school. The primary form of Norwegian shall be used for written teaching and written work. In cases where at least ten pupils attending one of grades one to seven in a municipality wish to receive written instruction in a primary form of language other than that decided by the municipalities, they have the right to belong to a separate pupil group. From grade 8 onwards the pupils choose which written form of Norwegian they wish to use. During the final two years of primary and lower secondary school, pupils shall receive instruction in both forms of Norwegian. Textbooks and other teaching aids must be available in both *Bokmål* and *Nynorsk* at the same price.

Knowledge Promotion is a comprehensive education reform covering all education in primary and secondary education and training. It contains a wide- ranging amount of official documents and regulations, which in sum constitute a body of education policy reflecting major international educational trends (Volckmar, 2011). The overall aim of the Knowledge Promotion has been to strengthen the school as a knowledge-based institution. In this case it is worth mentioning some of the most important white papers, St.meld.nr. 30 (2003- 2004) *Kultur for læring [Culture of Learning]*, St.meld.nr. 31 (2007-2008) *Kvalitet i skolen [Quality in School]* and St.meld.nr. 41 (2008-2009) *Kvalitet i barnehagen [Quality in Kindergarten]*, where quality (at least in education) most of all is referred to as what is measurable.¹¹ In addition there is an important white paper concerning education and social inequality, St.meld.nr. 16 (2006-2007)

... og ingen stod igjen og hang. Tidlig innsats for livslang læring [... and no one was left behind. Early intervention for lifelong learning], which is strongly linked to the No child left behind-ideology. This document showed that the Norwegian education

system still reproduce social inequality, despite our comprehensive education system and equal rights to education, and to a greater extent than other countries we like to compare ourselves with in this case.

The Knowledge Promotion was implemented in 2006, and its main instrument for implementation is the *National Curriculum for The Knowledge Promotion [Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet]*. Here the objectives and the quality framework for primary and secondary education is put into action, because it is a regulation pursuant to the Education Act and committed to basic education. As mentioned earlier the Nation Curriculum comprises a shared Core Curriculum that elaborates the value base in the Object Clause and a Subject Curricula defining competence aims for each subject. The National Curriculum also includes a quality framework that defines the school owners' responsibility for an education in accordance with laws and regulations. Adapted education is a superior principle in the national curriculum.

Freedom to establish non-state schools

As earlier mentioned, the freedom to establish non-state schools is regulated in the Private School Act (LOV 2003-07-04 nr 84). And because private schools at primary and secondary level are 85 percent state funded and are subject to the same laws and regulations as state schools, they are not in an international context actually private but, rather, "non-state." When we add that it is not allowed to earn a profit by operating private schools, it is clear that there is strict regulation of non-state schools in Norway. The Private School Act facilitates the establishment of non-state schools as an alternative to state schools according to clear criteria; 1) an alternative religious or denominational practice, 2) an alternative well established pedagogical alternative such as Steiner- and Montessori education, 3) an international school, or 4) an upper secondary education particularly organized for top athletics. When it comes to practice, it is of course up to the current government and ministry to interpret and enforce the regulations.

Parents in some rural areas establish private schools in protest against centralization and the closing down of the public primary and lower secondary school. Local communities tend to close down small schools to the benefit of bigger schools with a larger and more competent teacher staff and less operating costs (economy of scale). This requires that many young students have to take bus to a school far away from home, and that local communities lose their local school as a natural meeting place and their local cultural centre. Even if the decision to close down the local school has

been taken by the local authorities based on democratic rules, the parental protests have been severe in several places. Parents have made use of the Private School Act to reopen the local school as a Montessori School or another alternative school. It is obvious that the reason for doing so is not the Montessori pedagogy, but to maintain the local school, also often with the same teachers as before.¹²

Homeschooling

Education in Norway is compulsory, but need not necessarily take place in an educational institution. It may take place at home. Tuition in the home is regulated in the Education Act, and in this context some sections are of particular importance, such as the § 1-1. The objectives for education and training, § 1-3. Adapted education, § 2-3. Content and assessment of primary and secondary education and § 2-4. Teaching in the subject Religion, Philosophies of life and Ethics. However, tuition in the home is not particularly prevalent in Norway. Some parents choose home schooling in principle, but most of all it seems to be a pragmatic solution to more or less acute challenges such as illness and dissatisfaction. Some also choose home schooling for longer stays abroad.

School choice not limited by family income

All public education in Norway is free of charge, while kindergartens have parental fees. Non-state schools are ensured 85 % percent state funding through the Private School Act. According to the Education Act, Section 2-15:

Pupils have the right to free public primary and lower secondary education. The municipality may not require pupils or their parents to cover costs in connection with primary and lower secondary education, for example costs associated with teaching material, transport during school hours, stays at school camps, excursions or other outings that are part of primary and lower secondary education.

According to the Education Act, Section 3-1:

Education and training provided at publicly-maintained upper secondary schools or training establishments are free of charge. The county authority is responsible for providing the pupils with the necessary printed and digital teaching materials and digital equipment. The pupils cannot be required to pay and costs for such materials and equipment in excess of that which is decided in the regulations. The county authority may require the pupils, the apprentices and training candidates to provide themselves with

other individual materials and equipment that are normally needed for the course they are attending. The Ministry may issue further regulations.

State funded private schools can claim tuition fees up to 15 percent of the per pupil budget for state schools, since they receive government funding for the other 85 percent. Pupils in state funded private schools have the same rights to transport to and from school as those in public schools. For pupils in primary and lower secondary education this right applies only within the municipal boundary, and for pupils in upper secondary education only within the county boundary.

Thereby school choice is not limited by family income; the question is rather to what extent school choice actually exists. As long as school choice largely is limited to the municipal boundaries at primary and lower secondary level and to the county boundaries at upper secondary education and training, urban areas can to a much greater extent offer school choice in real terms. People in rural areas have less choice. There are more private alternatives in the cities.

School distinctiveness protected by law and policy

As we see from the story told here, all schools in Norway, at all levels and whether they are state schools or state-funded private schools, or even home schooling, are regulated by the Education Act and the National Curriculum. The state framework prevents large differences between the schools, but within the framework there is room for distinctiveness, both intended and unintended.

Distinctive character

The Municipal Act of 1993 paved the way for decentralization and increased municipal freedom. State subsidies are no longer given as earmarked funds, but as a collective fund for distribution at municipal and county level. Thereby there may be differences according to the economy and priorities of the municipalities at primary and lower secondary level and the counties at upper secondary level.

As mentioned earlier the Subject Curricula in the National Curriculum contains competence aims for each subject after grade four, seven, and ten and after each level in upper secondary education and training. Training in the five basic skills are integrated in all subject curricula. Beyond this, further specification of the content is placed at the single school or at the municipality level. Thereby schools have the

opportunity to shape the content of schooling to a certain extent. They can choose what should be learned and with what methods, as long as they reach the targets for learning outcomes in the curriculum. However, the specification and choice of textbooks and other teaching aids, such as digital teaching aids and programs, are under strong influence of private providers in this market.

Further, within the state regulations the municipalities have the opportunity to stress the national quality assessment program, additionally testing, parental choice and individual salaries (the accountability regime) differently, and thus some municipalities' education program stand out in one direction or the other.

Even if private schools are strongly regulated by the Education Act and the Private School Act, they represent an alternative, either on religious grounds, recognized pedagogical direction, internationally, upper secondary education in combination with top sport or especially adapted education for disabilities. Within the state framework private providers may create an alternative on the basis of these criteria.

Decisions about admitting pupils

Children and young people are obliged to attend primary and lower secondary education, and have the right to public primary and lower secondary education. Young people who have completed primary and lower secondary education or the equivalent have, on application (according to grades), the right to three years of upper secondary education and training. Private schools are obliged to admit all pupils that meet the requirements for admission to public schools, and they have the whole country as the intake area. Neither state nor private schools are thereby permitted to choose which pupils they will admit.

Individual rights are strong in Norwegian schools. Corporal punishment and other humiliating forms of treatment are prohibited. Pupils attending grades one to seven who are guilty of serious or repeated violation of the schools' rules may be excluded from the teaching for individual periods or for the rest of the day, pupils attending grades eight to ten for up to three days, and pupils at upper secondary education and training for up to five days. In cases of persistent disturbing behavior and violation of disciplinary rules, the pupil may be excluded from teaching for the remainder of the school year.

Decisions about staff

Decisions about staff are regulated in the Education Act, Section 10. Persons appointed to teaching posts in primary and lower secondary and in upper secondary education shall have relevant professional and educational qualifications. Teaching posts and head teacher posts shall be publicly advertised (not for posts vacant for a period shorter than six months). When choosing between two or more applicants to a post, emphasis shall be placed on education and experience, and the teaching needs that the appointment aims to fulfill. Thereby the school has the opportunity to define its need through the announcement. All staff appointed in education (kindergarten, primary and secondary education, day-care facilities, cultural schools and providers of help with homework) must present a police certificate.

In 2010 a new teacher education programme for primary and lower secondary education was implemented, and accordingly with the Knowledge Promotion the new teacher education programme has a stronger emphasis on subject knowledge and teaching skills than previous. The really new is that the students may choose between two equal programmes geared to different levels of schooling, one which qualifies for teaching grades one to seven and the other qualifying for teaching in grades five to ten. In addition there is a new and expanded educational science subject focusing on pedagogy and pupil-related skills [pedagogikk og elevkunnskap]. The new programme also includes mentoring of newly qualified teachers at their own schools. Teacher education for primary and lower secondary education is a four year programme. Saami College in Kautokeino in the north of Norway has a special four year programme for teacher education.

There is also an ongoing review of teacher educations for grades eight to thirteen, which include offers for one year teacher training program, five year integrated teacher education (*lektor*) and four year integrated teacher education (*adjunkt*), and three-year vocational teacher education and teacher training for vocational programs. Teacher education and training institutions are scattered around the universities and colleges around the country. The authorities want to increase the number of teachers in primary schools with a master's degree.

Teachers in municipal day care institutions and public schools at primary and lower secondary levels are employed by the municipalities, and teachers at upper secondary level are employed by the counties. Almost all teachers are unionized, and the teachers' unions negotiate wages and working conditions. In addition there are local

negotiations on local pay increases, and here it is possible for the state, the municipality and the individual school leaders to reward special effort or offer higher wages to workers particularly sought after.

In practice it may be difficult to fill all vacancies with qualified teachers, especially in rural areas. Qualified teachers seem to prefer urban areas, large schools and a good professional and competent work environment.

Accountability for school quality

The design of the National Curriculum for the Knowledge Promotion is adapted to the new performance management ideology, its test regimes and the emphasis on measuring skills and learning outcomes. The Education Act and the subject syllabuses stipulate when pupil assessments are to be made with and without grades. There are final examinations after tenth grade and during upper secondary education and training. In the seventies Norway abandoned a psychological oriented test regime with standardized test that were implemented in the fifties and sixties. The shock after the first PISA-test publication in 2000 resulted in a political process to bring education policy more in line with international trends and the emphasis on testing and measurable knowledge.

National tests were first introduced in 2004, but then withdrawn after major protests among teachers and students. One reason for this was that the tests were not in line with the current National Curriculum (L97), and the other was a critique of the design of the tests. The national tests were re-implemented in 2007, but this time without any ranking of schools and more designed as a pedagogical tool for better learning. The aim of the national tests is to determine whether the schools are succeeding in developing pupils' basic skills, and they serve as platform for qualitative development on the part of the schools and the school owners, also at the regional and national level. Tests in Norwegian, English and mathematics are to be held for fifth and eighth graders in autumn, to determine whether the pupils' skills are consistent with the subject syllabus goal for basics skills after fourth and seventh grade.¹³

Additionally compulsory mapping tests in reading, numeracy and arithmetic skills are implemented for grade one to three, in addition to voluntary mapping tests in English, numeracy and arithmetic skills. This well-developed test regime is administered by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, an executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research. Both public and state funded

private schools are subject to the same test regime. Next to this the teachers are imposed increased requirements for documentation of students' academic and social development. After 2006 the National Directorate for Education and Training has published an annual report on how well the Norwegian education system are doing, *The Education Mirror. Analysis of primary and secondary education and training in Norway*.

Teaching of values

The Education Act, § 1.1 forms the overall objectives of education and training, and these objectives apply to both state-funded private schools and public schools. The section forms the school's value base and serves as a guideline for all other activities in school. It stresses values in Christian and humanist heritage such as human dignity and nature, intellectual freedom, forgiveness, equality and solidarity, which also appear in other religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights. An important aim is to promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking. All forms of discrimination should be combated. Thereby the Norwegian education system plays an important role in the overall political goal of a more democratic society. Norwegian pupils do very well in the international ICCS-study (International Civic and Citizenship Study), even though they performed better in 1999 than they did in 2009.¹⁴

Endnotes

¹ The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2011.

² Norway was in union with Denmark from 1537 until 1814, and was in practice subordinated to the Danish Crown. However, from 1660 onwards, the twin-kingsdoms had their own separate laws, militaries and systems of finance.

³ Telhaug & Mediås, 2003.

⁴ Slagstad, 1998; Telhaug & Mediås, 2003.

⁵ Telhaug & Mediås, 2003.

⁶ Volckmar, 2008.

⁷ Volckmar, 2008.

⁸ Ahonen, 2001.

⁹ Ministry of Education and Research, 2007, here and following paragraphs.

¹⁰ Volckmar, 2011.

¹¹ Volckmar, 2011.

¹² Volckmar & Wiborg, in progress.

¹³ The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2012.

¹⁴ Fjeldstad, Lauglo and Mikkelsen, 2010.

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