



EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK **NORWAY**



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This **policy profile on education** in Norway is part of the new *Education Policy Outlook* series, which will present comparative analysis of education policies and reforms across OECD countries. Building on the substantial comparative and sectorial policy knowledge base available within the OECD, the series will result in a biennial publication (first volume in 2014). It will develop a comparative outlook on education policy by providing: a) analysis of individual countries' educational context, challenges and policies (education policy profiles) and of international trends and b) comparative insight on policies and reforms on selected topics.

Designed **for policy makers, analysts and practitioners** who seek information and analysis of education policy taking into account the importance of national context, the country policy profiles will offer constructive analysis of education policy in a comparative format. Each profile will review the current context and situation of the country's education system and examine its challenges and policy responses, according to six policy levers that support improvement:

- Students: How to raise outcomes for all in terms of 1) equity and quality and 2) preparing students for the future
- Institutions: How to raise quality through 3) school improvement and 4) evaluation and assessment
- System: How the system is organised to deliver education policy in terms of 5) governance and 6) funding.

Some country policy profiles will contain spotlight boxes on selected policy issues. They are meant to draw attention to specific policies that are promising or showing positive results and may be relevant for other countries.

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This country policy profile was prepared by the Education Policy Outlook team: Beatriz Pont, Annette Skalde, Etienne Albiser and Sylvain Fraccola (statistics and formatting) of the Education Policy Outlook team, which is part of the Policy Advice and Implementation Division, led by Richard Yelland. Editorial support was provided by Lynda Hawe and Susan Copeland. This profile builds on the knowledge and expertise of colleagues on many projects across the OECD's Directorate for Education and Skills, to whom we are grateful.

Sources: This country profile draws on OECD indicators from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) and the annual publication *Education at a Glance*, and refers to country and thematic studies such as OECD work on early childhood education and care, evaluation and assessment for improving school outcomes, equity and quality in education, governing complex education systems, vocational education and training, and tertiary education.

Most of the figures quoted in the different sections refer to Annex B, which presents a table of the main indicators for the different sources used throughout the country profile. Hyperlinks to the reference publications are included throughout the text for ease of reading, and the References and further reading section lists the OECD and non-OECD sources used throughout the document.

More information is available from the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills (www.oecd.org/edu) and its web pages on Education Policy Outlook (www.oecd.org/edu/policyoutlook.htm).



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HIGHLIGHTS

Norway's educational context

Students: Student performance in PISA is high, with significant improvement since 2006 in science and less dependence on socio-economic factors than in most OECD countries. Students with immigrant background face performance challenges, but completion rates for second-generation students are close to average. Adults have also significantly above-average proficiency levels of literacy skills across participating countries in PIAAC, with younger adults scoring lower than the average and, unlike the situation in most other countries, lower literacy skill levels than the adult population as a whole. Norway has a comprehensive education system until the age of 16 and high enrolment in pre-primary education. At upper secondary level, there is strong supply and student uptake of vocational education and training, but completion rates in general or vocational programmes are low compared to the OECD average. Tertiary education attainment is higher than the OECD average, resulting in a highly skilled workforce with a relatively small wage premium due to low income differential in Norway.

Institutions: With large within-school variation in performance, learning environments in schools are less positive than the OECD average according to views of students at age 15. Schools leaders focus more on administrative than pedagogical tasks. Teachers report a high degree of self-efficacy and motivation to teach, but they receive less feedback and participate in fewer professional development activities than the TALIS average. Norway has developed a multifaceted system for evaluation and assessment in schools, including quality assessment, which can be completed and made more coherent to support effective evaluation and assessment practices. The [Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education](#) (NOKUT), an independent government agency, provides quality control for tertiary education.

Governance and funding: Norway's central government sets the goals and framework, and decision-making is highly decentralised, with primary schools run by municipalities and secondary schools run by counties. Municipalities are also responsible for fulfilling the right to a place in Kindergarten for all children from 1 year of age. Tertiary institutions are mostly autonomous in their decisions, including those on how they allocate resources. Norway has generous funding at all levels of the education system: public and private educational institutions at all levels get most of their funding from public sources, and public education is free, except at pre-primary level where parents must pay some fees.

Key policy issues

Norway faces the challenge of ensuring that students remain in school until the end of upper secondary education. Efforts have been made to improve learning conditions for students by enhancing pedagogical support and strengthening assessment, but the system requires policy implementation strategies aligned to its decentralised governance structure.

Policy responses

Current education policies focus on increasing completion of upper secondary education. The [New Possibilities-Ny GIV](#) initiative (2010-13) aims to boost the completion rate from 69% to 75%, with specific measures for low-performing students and to motivate 16-21 year-olds who are neither in school nor in employment to participate in education. An action plan to raise performance in lower secondary education has been launched from the school year 2012-13 to improve mastery of basic skills, boost students' motivation for learning and develop structures for effective implementation.

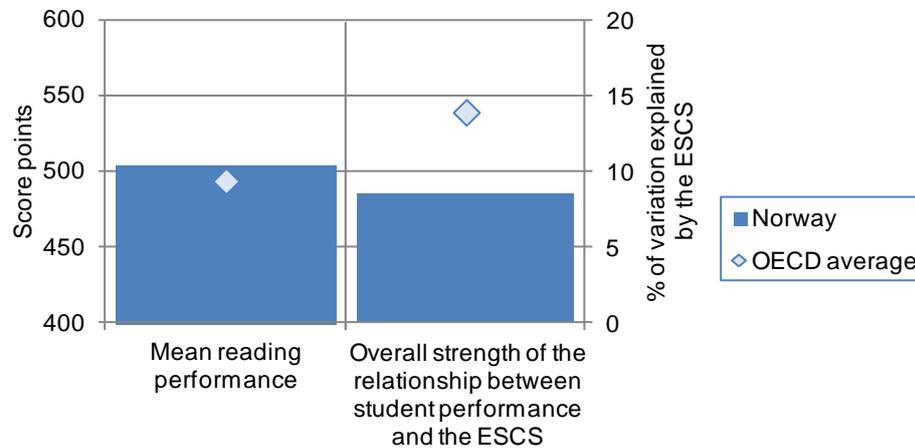
Efforts have also been made to improve the quality of teachers, notably through the [GNIST initiative](#), (GNIST is Norwegian for "spark"). This national partnership between the Ministry of Education and the main stakeholders and municipalities/counties (2009-14) aims to increase the quality and status of the teaching profession, teacher education and school leadership. A yearly teacher recruitment campaign is an important part of GNIST. Another initiative is the development of [National Guidelines for Differentiated Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher Education Programmes for Years 1-7 and Years 5-10](#) (2010 and 2013) to support implementation of the new teacher education reform.

Efforts to strengthen assessment have been made since the launch of the [Knowledge Promotion Reform](#) (2006), a curriculum complementing the National Quality Assessment System (NKVS, 2004) to support effective evaluation and assessment practice in schools. Furthermore, a national four-year programme to improve formative assessment at the school level, Assessment for Learning (2010), is already showing positive results.



Norway achieves higher-than-average scores in PISA, and the impact of socio-economic status on performance is lower than the OECD average, although its PISA results have not improved since 2000 (Figure 1).

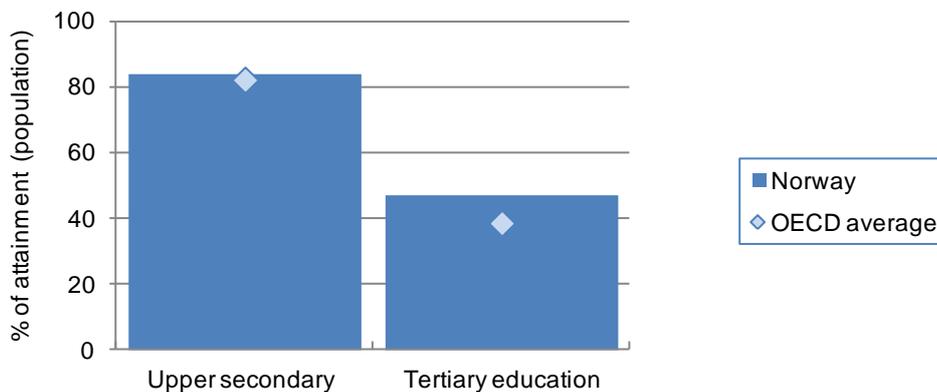
Figure 1. Student performance in reading and relationship between student performance and the economic, social and cultural status (ESCS), for 15-year-olds, PISA 2009



Source: OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do: Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science (Volume I)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091450-en>.

Secondary and tertiary education attainment in Norway is at the OECD average or higher: 84% of 25-34 year-olds have attained secondary education (compared to the OECD average of 82%) and 47% have attained tertiary education (compared to the OECD average of 39%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Upper secondary and tertiary attainment for 25-34 year-olds, 2010



Source: OECD (2013), *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en>.



EQUITY AND QUALITY: FAVOURABLE SYSTEM-LEVEL POLICIES AND EFFORTS TO ADDRESS STUDENT NEEDS

Norway has **positive equity indicators** compared to the OECD average. Performance in reading, mathematics and science was at or slightly above the OECD average in PISA 2009, and performance in science increased significantly between 2006 and 2009. A below-average proportion of 15 year-olds are low performers in reading (15% compared to the OECD average of 19%) (Figure 3). Student performance seems to depend less on socio-economic factors than in most OECD countries (Figure 1). The gender gap in favour of girls in reading skills is one of the largest across OECD (a difference of 47 points compared to the OECD average of 39 points).

Fair and inclusive policies contribute to an equitable system from early childhood through tertiary education. Norway has early childhood education and care and comprehensive education until the age of 16. Practically all 3- and 4-year-olds attend early childhood education and care services (95% and 97% respectively in 2011, compared to the OECD average of 67% for 3-year-olds and 82% for 4-year-olds). Municipalities are obliged to ensure that there are sufficient kindergarten places (since 2009, all children have the right to a place from 1 year of age).

Norway has one of the smallest variations in performance between schools across OECD countries in PISA 2009. School assignments are done by catchment area rather than **school choice** and there is no grade repetition. There are also restrictions on ability grouping set out in the Education Act: pupils cannot be organised in groups according to abilities, sex or ethnicity except to respond to a defined pedagogical need for a short time.

The system appears to be providing mixed opportunities for **students with immigrant background**. In PISA 2009, they have lower scores in reading than native students, after accounting for socio-economic background (a difference of 33 points in Norway compared to 27 points on average across OECD countries), but the results improve for second-generation immigrants. While 40% of first-generation immigrant students complete upper secondary education, completion rates for second-generation immigrants increase to align to the national average (57% for the whole population).

An [OECD study on Norway](#) highlighted that students may be leaving lower secondary without sufficient knowledge. It found that a decline in motivation at this level may be triggered by external factors and lack of incentives, as well as by how schools respond to students' needs. Also, students from smaller municipalities seem to show weaker average skills in national and international assessments than those from larger municipalities.

The challenge: Continuing to promote equity while fostering student motivation and excellence.

Recent policies and practices

A kindergarten reform (2004) increased accessibility to kindergarten by providing new places, setting maximum fees to parents, and funding public and private kindergartens. Over 2004-12, participation of 1-5 year-olds increased from 72% to 90%. The reform also included the revision of the [Kindergarten Act](#) in 2005 and a revised framework for the content and role of kindergarten in 2006. A national strategy for raising the competence of staff (2007-10) and a strategy for recruitment of kindergarten teachers (2007-11) were also implemented. With the Kindergarten reform, formal education and care has replaced informal care, even for children under 3 years of age. The number of minority language children in ECEC also doubled.

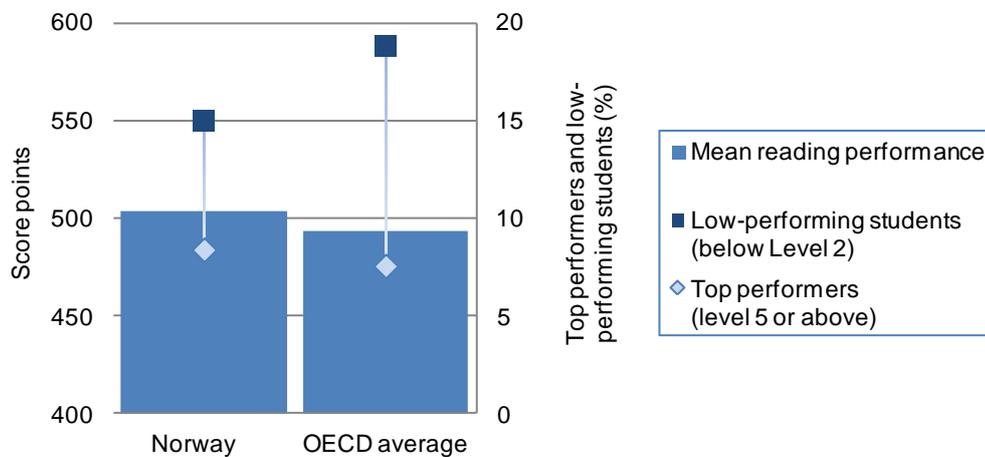
The Homework Assistance Programme (2010) for students in Years 1-4 aims to reduce differences caused by the impact of parents' education on student achievement by focusing resources on the youngest pupils and enabling more learning to take place at school.

The Action Plan to Raise Performance in Lower Secondary Education (implemented in 2012-13) aims to increase the mastery of basic skills and boost student motivation for learning (see Spotlight 3). It includes provisions on professional development for teachers in numeracy and literacy, guiding materials for good practices and school-based programmes for class management. To increase student motivation and reduce the differences in motivation between boys and girls and between students from different social backgrounds, the action plan introduces more practical and varied instruction methods in lower secondary education, as well as a new subject with a practical approach, the Working Life Course (*Arbeidslivsfaget*). This reform builds on the [Knowledge Promotion Reform](#) (2006), a major curricular reform of the whole system (see Spotlight 1).

To support equity, Norway provides free higher education, supported by student grants and loans, and also offers a strong provision of adult learning. The [Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life](#) (2006) targets adults who lack basic skills. Firms with a high proportion of unskilled workers can apply for financial support for courses in literacy, numeracy and basic ICT skills.



Figure 3. Mean score in student performance on the reading scale and percentage of top performers and low-performing students, for 15-year-olds, PISA 2009



Source: OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do: Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science (Volume I)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091450-en>.

Spotlight 1. The national curriculum for primary and secondary education

In 2006, the *Knowledge Promotion Reform* was introduced in primary and secondary education. The reform placed increased focus on basic skills and knowledge promotion and entailed a shift to outcome-based learning, new distribution of teaching and training hours per subject, a new structure of available courses within education programmes and more autonomy at the local level. The main elements of the reform are:

- **Focus on basic skills:** In the subject curricula, five basic skills (reading, oral expression, writing, numeracy and use of digital tools) are integrated to adapt to each subject. The number of lessons in primary school was increased, especially in the first four years, in order to improve pupils' basic skills. Following this is a priority to ensure that individual students receive learning adapted to their abilities. In addition, for Years 1-4, municipalities have to ensure that adapted teaching in Norwegian/Sami language and mathematics is provided and is especially directed towards pupils with weak abilities in reading and mathematics.
- **Clear standards for learning:** Subject curricula include clear objectives specifying the level of competence expected from students after Years 4, 7 and 10 and after each level in upper secondary education and training. Some subjects also have competence aims after Year 2. A Quality Framework defines the principles for developing optimal learning environments and learning achievements.
- **Decentralisation of decision-making:** The reform also gives municipalities more authority for decision-making in methods of instruction, choice of learning materials, development of curricula and organisation of instruction.

Evaluations of the reform, including one by the *Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education* (NIFU), show that the reform has contributed to school owners being more engaged as a result of more accessible information about their school and school results, and that some objectives are well on the way to being achieved. The new curricula (which shifted from content-based to competency-based) have been well received. They have stimulated development of local curricula and contributed to co-operation and sharing of experiences between teachers and schools. The assessment aspect of the reform has been particularly positive for primary and secondary education. Teachers' work with student assessment has contributed to their gaining a stronger understanding of the new subject curricula. However, large variations between schools remain during the implementation, and while all schools are undergoing change, the pace is often very different. Researchers pointed out that there is no coherent strategic plan for implementation of the reform, and stakeholders signaled the need for more support and guidance during the implementation period. As a result, governance policy moved toward providing additional support and guidance from the central level.



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE: ENGAGING STUDENTS TO PREVENT DROPOUT

The capacity of education systems to effectively develop **skills and labour market perspectives** can play an important role in educational decisions of young people. In Norway, the level of literacy skills of adults (16-64 year-olds) is significantly above the average for countries participating in PIAAC. Young adults (16-24 year-olds) have below-average literacy skills levels, and unlike the situation in most other countries, they have lower literacy skills levels than the adult population as a whole. Overall, an average proportion of workers are well matched to their literacy skills level. In 2011, unemployment rates were the lowest among OECD countries for those who attained upper secondary or tertiary education (2.2% and 1.5% respectively). The economic crisis (2008-11) has had little impact in Norway compared to other countries (an increase of less than 1 percentage point between 2008 and 2011 for those with at least upper secondary education). More youths combine school with work than the OECD average (Figure 4). However, the share of 15-29 year-olds not in education and not employed (8.5%, below the OECD average of 15.8% in 2011) increased by 1.7 percentage points from 2008 to 2011. This evidence suggests challenges in finding a job or returning to education.

Countries share the need to provide relevant and engaging **upper secondary education** to prepare young adults for work or education and, at the same time, foster the capacity for further learning. In Norway, an above-average proportion of 25-34 year-olds attained at least upper secondary education in 2011 (84% compared to 82% in OECD countries) (Figure 2). Nevertheless, [completion rates](#) are lower than average based on data from 21 OECD countries. Two years after the formal end of studies, this rate reached 72% (compared to the OECD average of 85%). Students from an immigrant background are less likely to complete upper secondary education. Low salary differences between people with different attainment levels, as well as an unemployment rate lower than the OECD average for those without an upper secondary qualification can contribute to low student motivation, as shown by PISA 2009. This may explain concerns about dropout in upper secondary schools.

Vocational education and training (VET) has a strong tradition in Norway. A comprehensive upper secondary system combines academic education and vocational training, offering students three general academic programmes and nine vocational programmes. After two years of vocational studies, or after completing the four-year vocational studies programme, students can enter university if they complete a supplementary year. The majority of students enter vocational upper secondary education (53% in 2011, compared to the OECD average of 44%), but completion rates are below OECD average. According to [OECD sources](#), the challenges facing the VET system are dropout, ageing of school-based trainers and ensuring quality assurance mechanisms.

Attainment of **tertiary education** in Norway is higher than the OECD average (47% of 25-34 year-olds attained this level in 2011, compared with the OECD average of 39%) (Figure 2). Tertiary students do not have to pay tuition fees in state-owned institutions, and tertiary graduates benefit from a relatively small wage premium compared to upper secondary graduates (28% premium compared to 57% on average in OECD countries), due to the wage negotiations system and low income differential in Norway. As in other OECD countries, the expansion of tertiary education implies providing a sufficiently wide offer of studies to address the interests of the student population and the needs of the labour market.

The challenge: Providing conditions and incentives to motivate students to remain in upper secondary and vocational education.

Recent policies and practices

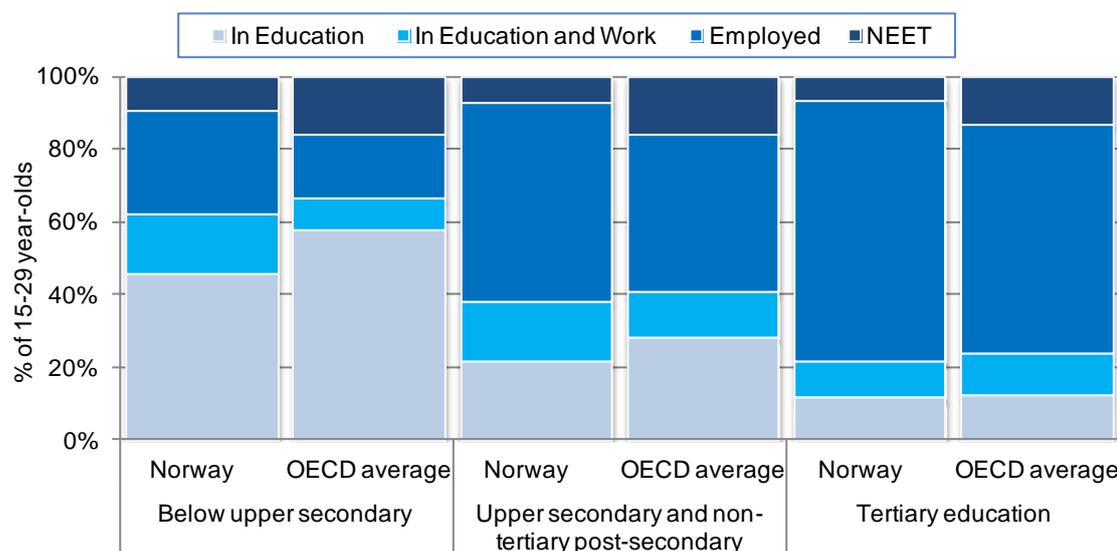
[New Possibilities-Ny GIV](#) (2010 through 2013) is a national effort to increase successful completion in upper secondary education and training from 69% to 75%, as defined at the national level (see Spotlight 2).

The pilot project on the *Certificate of Practice Scheme* (2008) aimed to reduce dropout in upper secondary education by giving students at risk the possibility to opt for a two-year training programme (instead of the four-year model). Candidates worked in a firm four days a week and attended school to take general subjects one day a week. After obtaining a certificate of practice, these candidates could apply for an apprenticeship or a job. An [evaluation of the project](#) showed positive results in completion and transitions to further study or employment, with the most important success factor being the 80% of practical work in an enterprise for a two-year period, which boosted applicants' self-esteem. In spring 2013, it was decided to incorporate the Certificate of Practice Scheme into the regular structure of secondary VET. The pilot project will be continued until necessary changes in the education law are implemented by Parliament.

The Working Life Course (*Arbeidslivsforløp*) is a new subject piloted in some lower secondary schools in 2009 and 2010. Based on a 2013 evaluation of this experience, it will be decided whether the subject will become a permanent part of the curriculum. This practically oriented course aims to help students experience working life by developing products and services. The objective is also to give students an opportunity to explore their interest in vocational training, and it is seen as an alternative way to enhance academic motivation.



Figure 4. Percentage of 15-29 year-olds in education and not in education, by educational attainment and work status, 2011



Source: OECD (2013), *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en>.

Spotlight 2. Increasing the completion of upper secondary education

To respond to its key challenge of raising completion rates, *New Possibilities-Ny GIV* (2010 through 2013) is a national effort to increase successful completion of upper secondary education and training from 69% to 75%. The government works with county and municipal authorities to provide better support for students at risk of dropping out through three sub-projects:

- The **Completion Statistics Project** establishes common goals for better completion of upper secondary education and training and a common data and statistical basis for assessing the achievement of goals.
- The **Transition Project** targets low performing students at the end of Year 10 and in upper secondary education and training. It focuses on reading literacy, writing and numeracy skills.
- The **Follow-Up Project** targets 16-21 year-olds who are neither in school nor in employment to motivate them to participate in education leading to basic competence or university and college admissions certification. The project includes professional development for officers in the follow-up service.

More concretely, the initiative includes:

- For **students**: intensified follow-up workshops for pupils with the lowest results; more relevant and practice-oriented vocational education and training; more robust follow-up of every pupil and apprentice; free homework assistance for all pupils on levels 1-4 (2010); mandatory screening tests in the first year of upper secondary; and a survey for schools and teachers to identify pupils with low skills in need of further follow-up.
- For **teachers**: courses in how to develop pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy; teacher networks to guide teachers' classroom practice in a more practical manner in three core subjects (Norwegian, English and mathematics); professionalisation of the careers and guidance service.
- For the **system**: improved co-operation between different levels of government and different measures. Additional funding for counties and municipalities and for training establishments.



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The key to raising achievement in primary and secondary schools is developing the conditions for school leaders and teachers to succeed. [Norway](#) has about 3 000 primary and lower secondary schools in 2011, with an increasing proportion of large schools (more than 300 students) enrolling about 55% of students in 2011. According to PISA 2009, there are large within-school variations in results, and learning environments and student-teacher relations show less positive results than the OECD average, based on an index combining students' views on their relations with teachers on different aspects of school life (Figure 5). Low student motivation appears to play a role in [lower secondary student performance](#) in Norway. The annual number of hours students are taught is lower than the OECD average at primary and lower secondary levels, but over the whole duration of primary and lower secondary, students are taught 50 hours more than the OECD average.

School leaders are required to have pedagogical competence and the leadership skills set out in the [Education Act](#). Recruitment of qualified school leaders can be a problem in some sparsely populated areas. School leaders tend to focus on administrative tasks rather than on instructional leadership (supervision of instruction, supporting teachers' professional development, setting school goals). Their involvement in instructional leadership is weaker than in most other TALIS countries and an [OECD study on improving school leadership](#) points to evidence that school leaders can strongly influence performance by establishing positive environments for learning.

In Norway **teachers** are required to have a bachelor's or master's degree. From 2010, the new teacher training programme differentiates the course of studies required to teach in years 1-7 (with specialisation in at least four school subjects) and in years 5-10 (with specialisation in three school subjects). The annual number of teaching hours in schools in 2011 (primary 741, lower secondary 663, upper secondary 523) is below the OECD average (primary 790, lower secondary 709, upper secondary 664), and the ratio of teachers' salaries to the earnings of tertiary-educated workers is below the OECD average. Nearly 40% of lower secondary teachers are in schools where the principal reported in 2008 that teacher absenteeism hindered instruction (26% on average in TALIS).

Teachers in Norway reported the highest levels of self-efficacy and job satisfaction among all countries that participated in TALIS. They reported less participation in professional development than the TALIS average (9 days of training in the previous 18 months, compared to the TALIS average of 15 days), and higher than average unsatisfied demand for development (70% of teachers wanted more development, compared to the TALIS average of 55%). Teachers in Norway also received less feedback or appraisal than the TALIS average (16% of teachers never received appraisal or feedback, seventh highest of the 23 participating countries).

The challenge: Improving learning environments by strengthening pedagogical links between school principals, teachers and students.

Recent policies and practices

The Better Learning Environment initiative (2009-14) includes local school development projects and evidence-based guidance materials on what works to create better learning environments for pupils.

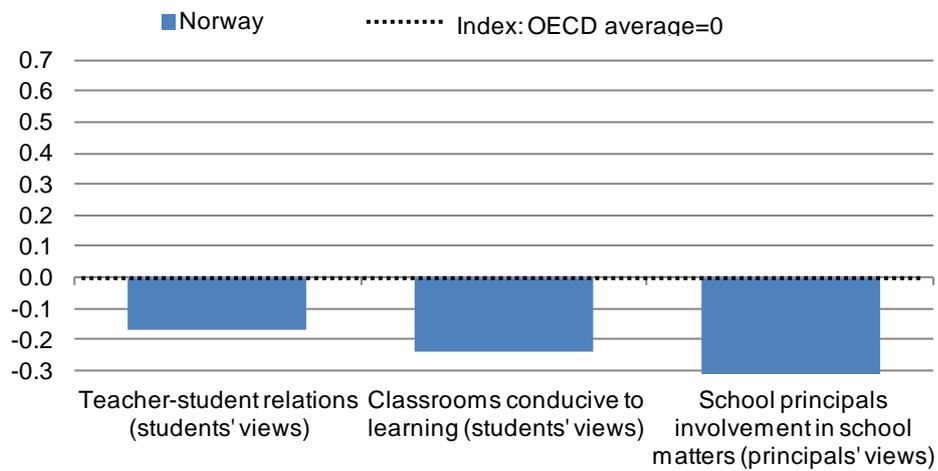
New teacher training programmes have been introduced through the [National Guidelines for Differentiated Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher Education Programmes for Years 1-7 and Years 5-10](#) (2010), designed to raise quality and help ensure a unified national structure in teacher education programmes for primary and lower secondary education. They include more practical training, more in-depth academic work in fewer subject areas, and new and expanded studies in education science, covering pedagogy and pupil related skills. Also, from January 2014, teachers will be required to have the relevant competence in all the subjects they actually teach.

The [GNIST Partnership \(SPARK\) teacher recruitment campaign](#) (2009-14) is a national partnership between the Ministry of Education and key stakeholders and municipalities/counties to ensure enough well qualified teachers in schools. It aims to increase the quality and status of the teaching profession, teacher education, and school leadership. A campaign is part of the GNIST Partnership and includes yearly short films promoting the teaching profession and an [official website](#). Applications to teacher education programmes have risen by almost 60% during the campaign period (2008-13). In comparison, applications for higher education increased by 27% in the same period. A similar campaign (GLOW) has been introduced to improve recruitment to preschool teacher education.

A leadership training and development programme (2009) provides training to school leaders, with priority to those who have been in their position for less than two years. The training focuses on five key areas: pupils' learning outcomes and learning environment, management and administration, co-operation and organisational development, development and change, and the leadership role. Evaluation of this programme found its content to be of good educational quality and relevant to the position of head of school.



Figure 5. The learning environment, PISA 2009



Source: OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: What Makes a School Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091559-en>.



EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES: COMPLETING THE SYSTEM AND USING IT FULLY

Norway does not have a comprehensive **evaluation and assessment framework** at primary and secondary levels, but evaluation and assessment are undertaken at all levels of the education system and provide evidence for policy making (Figure 6). The National Quality Assessment System (NKVS) was introduced in 2004, and according to an [OECD study on evaluation and assessment in Norway](#) (2011), appraisal of teaching practices should be integrated into this framework to form a complete and coherent system and to build capacity and partnerships to support effective evaluation and assessment practice.

System evaluation is mainly the responsibility of the [Directorate for Education and Training](#), through the National Quality Assessment System, which monitors quality via a range of statistical indicators and commissioned research studies. Key indicators to measure performance of the education system are results of international assessments, national tests, students' final assessments and the Pupil Survey, presented annually in [The Education Mirror](#). The Directorate for Education and Training conducts inspections of private schools and the 18 county governors are responsible for regular inspection of public school owners to ensure that they comply with legislation. Since 2006, there has also been a coordinated national inspection focused on school owners' systems (municipalities or private schools) to assess school compliance with the Education Act.

In Norway's highly decentralised education system, **school evaluation** requires schools to undertake self-evaluation, using data provided by the national assessment system and methodological tools developed by the Directorate for Education and Training to help review their practice. School owners are required to implement a quality framework and ensure that their schools have self-evaluation processes in place. There are no national systematic inspections or external reviews of individual schools. While there has been increasing focus on quality work, the extent, rigour and quality of evaluation across schools is variable. In **higher education**, the [Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education](#) (NOKUT), a professionally independent government agency, is in charge of quality control and stimulating quality development of educational provision.

Teacher appraisal must be implemented according to national regulations, but there are no common processes, national performance criteria or reference standards. Teacher appraisal is not considered part of the National Quality Assessment System. The most common source of feedback for teachers in Norway is an annual employee dialogue with the school leader. In 2008, 17% of lower secondary teachers were in schools where there had been no school evaluation in the previous five years.

Student assessment in Norway is based on a mix of teacher-based classroom assessments and central examinations. Three types of nationally designed student assessments complement teacher-based classroom assessment: mapping tests focused on identifying students in need of additional support (in Years 1-3 and first year of upper secondary education) and national basic skills tests (in Years 5, 8 and 9). At the end of compulsory education and in upper secondary education, a sample of students is drawn to take a limited number of written examinations (given centrally) and oral examinations (given locally).

The challenge: Improving consistency, coherence and quality of evaluation and assessment.

Recent policies and practices

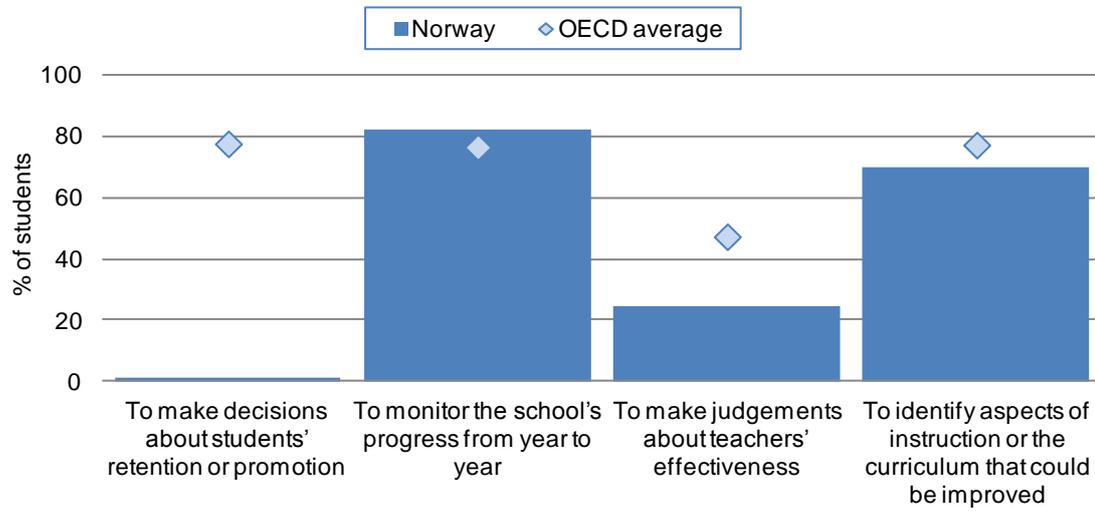
The [Education Act](#) was modified in 2009 to include requirements for schools/municipalities to create a Quality Report based on data from the national quality assessment system. A template and other guidance materials have been developed to help municipalities analyse their schools and develop the report.

The Assessment for Learning (2010) is a national four-year programme to improve formative assessments. Just over 40% of municipalities (184 out of 428) participate in this programme, which aims to support systematic reflection about schools, development of their assessment practices, networking of schools, and professional development. This programme builds on a similar initiative that ran from 2007 to 2009. A preliminary study for an OECD review found that success in implementation was often due to clear objectives, good communication, and trust among those involved, as well as capacity building for smaller municipalities. Further recommendations have been developed.

The National Qualification Framework was adopted for higher education in 2009 and is implemented in all higher education institutions. A [National Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning](#) (NQF) for all levels of education and training was decided in 2011 and is currently being implemented. It gives a view of the Norwegian education and training system and its levels of qualifications, with levels formulated on the basis of what a person knows, can do, and is capable of doing as a result of a learning process (*i.e.* in learning outcomes).



Figure 6. Percentage of students in schools where the principal reported assessments of students in national modal grade for 15-year-olds, PISA 2009



Source: OECD (2010), *PISA 2009 Results: What Makes a School Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264091559-en>.



GOVERNANCE: A DECENTRALISED SYSTEM WITH AUTONOMOUS MUNICIPALITIES

The Norwegian Parliament (*Storting*) and Government set the goals and framework for the **education system** from early childhood education and care to higher education. The Ministry of Education and Research steers national education policy. National standards are ensured through legislation, regulations, curricula and framework plans. The Ministry of Education and Research has direct responsibility for universities and university colleges. Other bodies help shape education policy:

- The [Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training](#) (UDIR, 2004) is an executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research, with national responsibility for supervising quality and governance of pre-primary, primary and secondary education and training. It ensures the implementation of acts and regulations and assists the different levels of the education system in implementation of national education policy.
- The [Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education](#) (NOKUT) is an independent government agency, established in 2003 with the task of carrying out external quality assurance of higher education and tertiary vocational education. NOKUT's responsibilities include foreign as well as Norwegian higher education.
- The Association of Municipalities represents the views and interests of public kindergarten and school owners. Municipalities are also the local authorities for kindergartens (public and private).
- Other education stakeholders are: trade unions (e.g. Union of Education Norway), student and parent organisations, the Norwegian Association of School Leaders, the Association of Private Kindergarten Owners, the National Council for Teacher Education (NRLU) and the Research Council of Norway.

Decisions in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary institutions are decentralised. County governors' offices ensure the link between central education authorities and the municipalities and counties. There are 430 municipalities that operate and administer kindergartens, primary and lower secondary schools, while 19 county authorities have responsibility for upper secondary education and training. Schooling decisions are mostly taken at the local level, with just 20% of decisions taken at the state level compared to the OECD average of 36% (Figure 7). According to an [OECD study on Norway](#), imbalanced governance and inefficient use of resources make implementation challenging, as often there are no clearly defined implementation strategies for education reforms that are adapted to Norway's decentralised framework.

In **higher education, decision-making** in universities and university colleges rests with boards responsible for the direction and organisation of operations. Accredited institutions have been granted extensive academic powers and may define their own courses of study and the extent of their academic powers (depending on their category: university, specialised university institution or university college). NOKUT accredits private higher education institutions applying for accreditation, or state-owned institutions applying for a change in category.

The challenge: Ensuring capacity building and consistent implementation across all municipalities.

Recent policies and practices

Responsibility for kindergartens was transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research in 2006 to ensure coherence and continuity in education of children and young people.

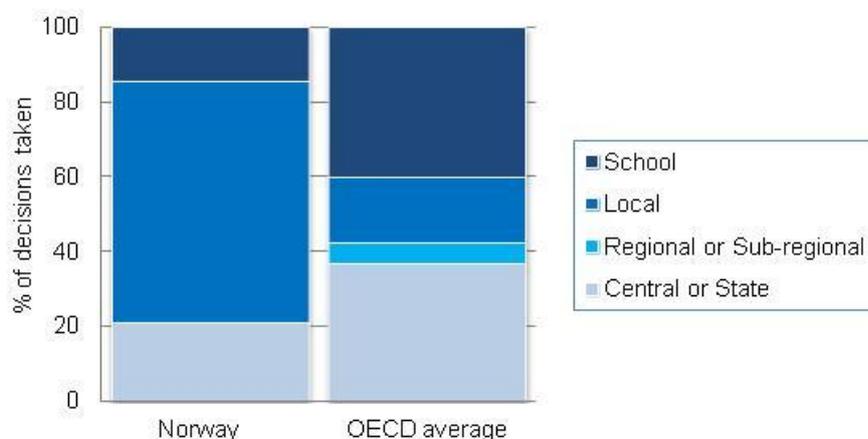
One of the objectives of the [Knowledge Promotion Reform](#) (2006) was to decentralise responsibilities to the local level and create a clear governance structure (See Spotlight 1).

The [action plan to raise performance in lower secondary education](#) was launched to respond to the challenge of policy implementation at this level of education. This action plan was developed in co-operation with stakeholders and with advice from the OECD (See Spotlight 3).

The Advisory Team Programme (2009) provides support to schools and school owners that face special challenges in core areas and need guidance for school improvement. The programme recruits experienced school leaders and administrators from local government to support schools and municipalities. Previously, the School and Municipality Development Programme (SKUP) supported municipalities facing such challenges.



Figure 7. Percentage of decisions taken in public lower secondary schools at each level of government, 2011



Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2012-en>.

Spotlight 3. Action Plan to raise performance in lower secondary education

To help raise performance in lower secondary education schools in Norway, an action plan was developed by 30 key Norwegian education policy makers during an OECD Seminar for Leaders in Education Improvement in June 2012.

The action plan targets improvement of lower secondary education, based on the objectives of the Norwegian White Paper on Quality in Lower Secondary Education (2011). Participants at the seminar agreed to work on two basic goals: 1) improving student outcomes in literacy and numeracy and 2) improving teachers' classroom practices.

The participants agreed on four key actions to implement these objectives. Defining and communicating the action plan and its strategy for implementation are the first step before implementing the following actions:

- Define, measure and communicate what **good literacy, numeracy and classroom practices** mean.
- Identify **effective practices** for teachers, school leaders and municipalities in relation to literacy and numeracy improvement.
- Develop **support strategies** for teachers to deliver improved outcomes in literacy and numeracy. This includes four different aspects: select, develop and make support materials available; provide school-based professional training, including classroom management/instructional leadership; ensure availability of time for teacher collaboration, with the principal's pedagogic guidance, focused on improved instruction; and develop teacher networks to share and work together on improving instruction.
- Strengthen **school leadership** to deliver improved outcomes in literacy and numeracy. This encompasses the following actions: define and communicate the role of instructional leaders; provide school leaders with training, support and capacity enhancement; develop networks for school leaders to share and work together on improving instruction.

This draft action plan has been used by Norwegian stakeholders to guide further discussions to shape new education policy efforts.

Norwegian Education Authorities have launched a strategy for implementing the action plan over the period 2012-17. A pilot project was developed in preparation for school-based programmes on class management and professional development for teachers in numeracy and literacy. It resulted in recommendations for full-scale implementation of the programme: strengthen the competence of school leaders in pedagogical and collaborative leadership; establish and communicate clear goals for the project to all participants; strengthen professional working environments for teachers within schools (particularly the capacity of schools to reflect on their organisational and pedagogical practices and implement collective learning processes); and increase the quality of teaching methods and practices, including the learning and social environments for pupils.



FUNDING: LARGE PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

Investment in educational institutions in Norway is above the OECD average. Expenditure on educational institutions at all levels was 7.6% of the GDP in 2010, compared to the OECD average of 6.3% (Figure 8). When taking into account public subsidies to households (scholarships and grants to students/households), public spending on education represented a larger proportion of the GDP (8.8%) than the average in OECD countries (5.8%). As in most OECD countries, a large portion of expenditure on educational institutions is from public sources: 84.6% at the pre-primary level (compared to the 2010 OECD average of 82.1%) and 96.0% at the tertiary level (compared to the 2010 OECD average of 68.4%). Municipalities and counties are key actors for allocation of funding.

Annual expenditure per student from primary to tertiary education was USD 14 081 in 2010, higher than the OECD average of USD 9 313. Between 2005 and 2010, expenditure per student in primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education increased by 11%, with expenditure growing by 13% while enrolment increased by only 2%. At the tertiary level, expenditure per student did not increase, as expenditure and enrolment increased at the same pace (by 6%).

Pre-primary and school education is funded by county and municipal budgets, composed of local tax revenues and central state transfers. Funding for early childhood education and care and for primary and lower secondary education is channelled through a block grant to municipalities. The block grant is based on the size of the population and other factors such as socio-economic background. This grant covers a range of services, including health and social services, and municipalities are free to determine the proportion spent on education. This high degree of local control leads away from more systemic alignments. Parents pay a maximum fee for kindergarten only (between 15.8% and 22.5% of total costs in 2011, depending on whether the kindergarten is public or private). Counties are responsible for upper secondary education, which they finance through taxes and block grants. Costs in this sector vary considerably from one region to another. Additional state subsidies and provisions are given to avoid regional disparities.

Private schools receive financial support that covers 85% of the operating costs of publicly owned schools. Private kindergartens (50% of all kindergartens) are also financed by the state through the block grants to municipalities. The share of private primary and lower secondary schools reached about 3% in 2010. In upper secondary education, private alternatives are more common, with 12% of students enrolled in government-dependent private schools.

Higher education institutions are mostly financed by the state, with 30% of the budget dependent on outputs (e.g. the number of graduates and publications). There are no student fees in public institutions, and students receive support from the State Educational Loan Fund to cover their living costs. Boards of the institutions are responsible for managing the block grant, which gives each institution a considerable degree of autonomy.

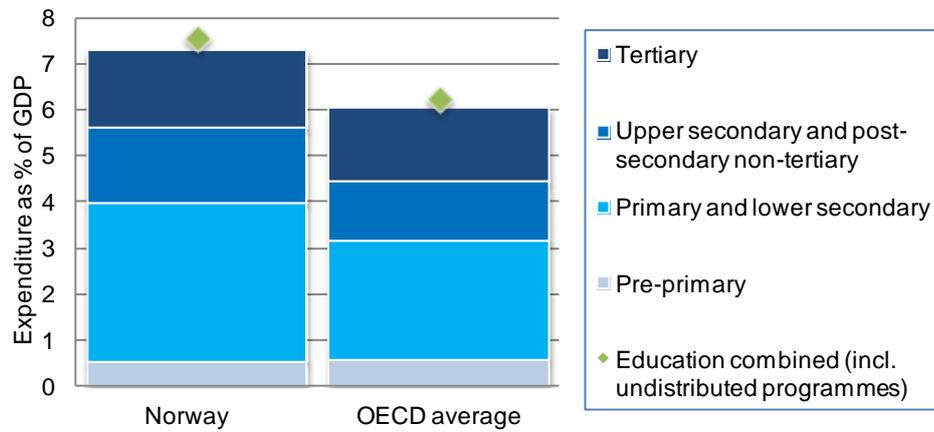
The challenge: Optimising resources in a context of decentralised decision-making.

Recent policies and practices

From 1 January 2011, **funding of early childhood care and education** was changed from funding earmarked specifically for kindergarten to funding included in the block grant to municipalities. As part of this process, the ministry has adjusted the rules concerning financing of non-municipal kindergartens, so these kindergartens will be treated equally with regard to public grants.



Figure 8. Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP, by level of education, 2010



Source: OECD (2013), *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en>.

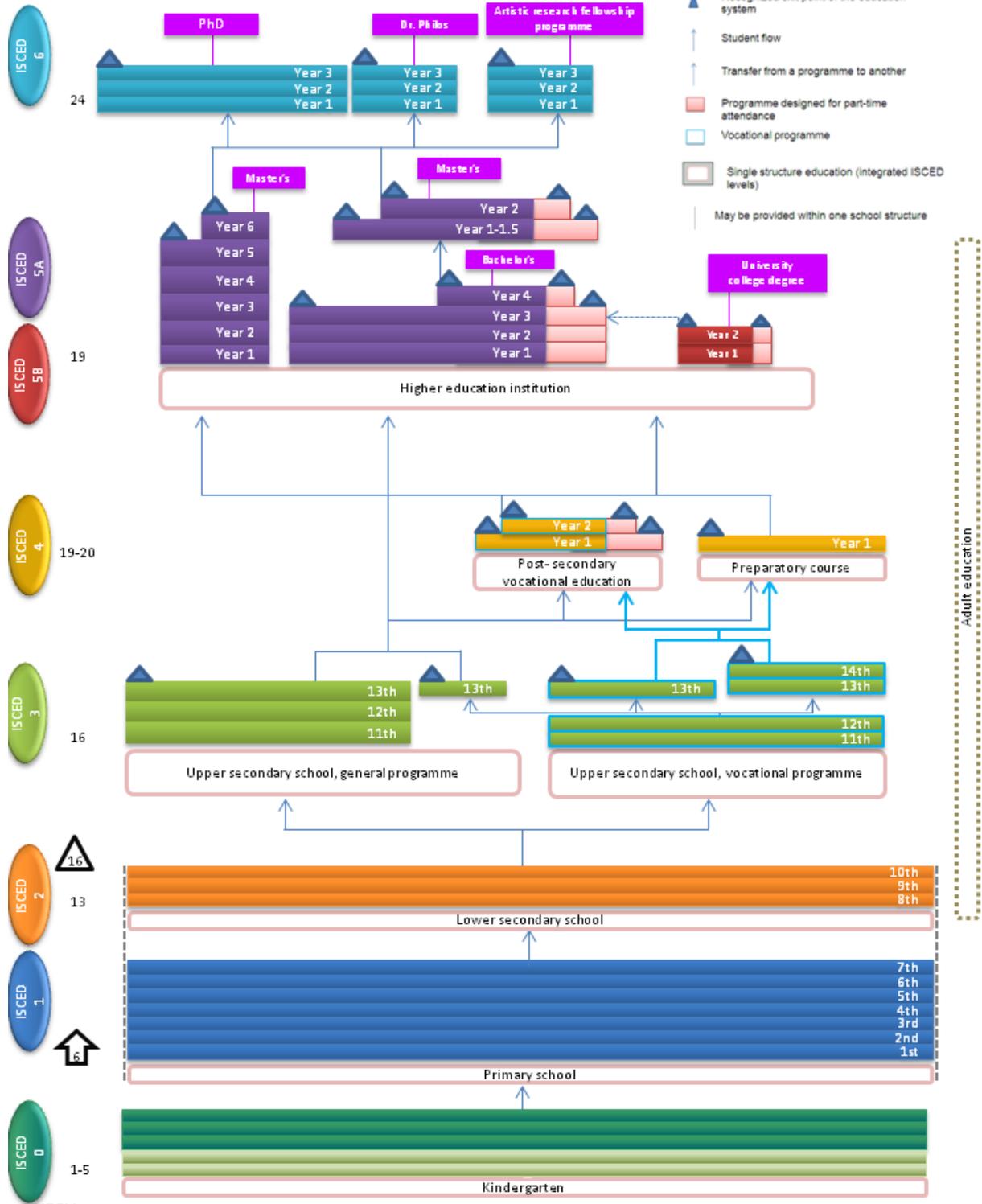


ANNEX A: STRUCTURE OF NORWAY'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Theoretical starting age

Norway

Key



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ANNEX B: STATISTICS

#	List of key indicators	Norway	Average or total	Min	Max
Background information					
<i>Political context</i>					
1	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, 2010 (EAG 2013)	8.8%	5.8%	3.8%	8.8%
<i>Economy</i>					
2	GDP per capita, 2010, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs (EAG 2013)	44 825		15 195	84 672
3	GDP growth 2011 (OECD National Accounts)	1.2%	1.8%	-7.1%	8.5%
<i>Society</i>					
4	Population density, inhab/km ² , 2010 (OECD Statistics)	15.9	138	2.9	492
5	Young people, aged less than 15, 2010 (OECD Statistics)	18.8%	17.3%	13%	28.1%
6	Foreign-born population, 2009 (OECD Statistics)	10.9%	14.1%	0.8%	36.9%
Education outcomes					
7	Mean reading performance (PISA 2009)	503	493	425	539
8	Change in mean reading performance, 2000-09 (PISA 2009)	-2	1	-31	40
9	Change in mean mathematics performance, 2003-09 (PISA 2009)	3	0	-24	33
10	Change in mean science performance, 2006-09 (PISA 2009)	13	3	-12	30
11	Enrolment rates in early childhood education and primary education, ages 3 and 4, 2011 (EAG 2013)	96.1%	74.4%	11.6%	98%
12	Population that has attained below upper secondary education, 25-64 year-olds, 2011 (EAG 2013)	18%	25%	7%	68%
13	Population that has attained at least upper secondary education, 25-34 year-olds, 2011 (EAG 2013)	84%	82%	43%	98%
14	Population that has attained tertiary education, 25-34 year-olds (EAG 2013)	47%	39%	19%	64%
15	Population whose highest level of education is vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary, 2011 (EAG 2013)	32.1%	33.5%	8.4%	73.9%
Unemployment rates, 25-64 year-olds, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
16	Below upper secondary	5%	12.6%	2.7%	39.3%
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	2.2%	7.3%	2.2%	19.2%
	Tertiary education	1.5%	4.8%	1.5%	12.8%
Students: Raising outcomes					
<i>Policy lever 1: Equity and quality</i>					
17	First age of selection in the education system (PISA 2009)	16	14	10	16
Proficiency levels on the reading scale (PISA 2009)					
18	Students below Level 2	15%	18.8%	5.8%	40.1%
	Students at Level 5 or above	8.4%	7.6%	0.4%	15.7%
Between- and within-school variance in reading performance (PISA 2009)					
19	Between schools	874	3 616	665	6 695
	Within schools	7 598	5 591	2 795	8 290
20	Students reporting that they have repeated at least a grade in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary schools (PISA 2009)	0%	13%	0%	36.9%



#	List of key indicators	Norway	average or total	Min	Max
21	Variance in student performance explained by student socio-economic status (PISA 2009)	9%	14%	6%	26%
22	Difference in reading performance between native students and students with an immigrant background, after accounting for socio-economic status (PISA 2009)	33.0	27	-17.0	85.0
23	Gender differences in student performance on the reading scale (PISA 2009)	-47	-39	-55	-22
<i>Policy lever 2: Preparing students for the future</i>					
Upper secondary graduation rates, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
24	General programmes	61%	50%	18%	82%
	Pre-vocational/ vocational programmes	35%	47%	4%	99%
25	Change in upper secondary graduation rates (average annual growth rate 1995-2011), (EAG 2013)	0.9%	0.6%	-1%	3.6%
Graduation rates, first-time graduates, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
26	Tertiary-type 5A	43%	40%	21%	60%
	Tertiary-type 5B	0%	11%	0%	29%
	Tertiary-type 5A (average annual growth rate 1995-2011)	3%	4%	-1%	11%
	Tertiary-type 5B (average annual growth rate 1995-2011)	-20.4%	0%	-20%	14%
27	Youth population not in education, employment or training 15-29 year olds, 2011 (EAG 2013)	8.5%	15.8%	6.9%	34.6%
Institutions: Improving schools					
<i>Policy lever 3: School improvement</i>					
28	Index of teacher-student relations based on students' reports (PISA 2009)	-0.17	0	-0.42	0.44
29	Index of disciplinary climate based on students' reports (PISA 2009)	-0.24	0	-0.40	0.75
Teachers younger than 40 years old, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
30	Primary education	41.8%	41%	15%	60%
	Lower secondary education	41.8%	39%	11%	56%
	Upper secondary education	25.6%	34%	7%	47%
Number of teaching hours per year in public institutions, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
31	Primary education	741	790	589	1 120
	Lower secondary education	663	709	415	1 120
	Upper secondary education	523	664	369	1 120
Ratio of teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education, 2011 (EAG 2013)					
32	Primary education	0.70	0.82	0.44	1.34
	Lower secondary education	0.70	0.85	0.44	1.34
	Upper secondary education	0.75	0.89	0.44	1.40
33	Change in teachers' salaries between 2000 and 2011 in lower secondary education (2000 = 100), (EAG 2013)	3.01%	16%	-9%	103%
34	Impact of teacher appraisal and feedback upon teaching, 2007-08 (TALIS 2008)	23%	33.9%	10.9%	69.1%
35	Teachers who wanted to participate in more development than they did in the previous 18 months, 2007-08 (TALIS 2008)	70.3%	55%	31%	85%
36	School principals' views of their involvement in school matters, mean index, (PISA 2009)	-0.48	-0.02	-1.29	1.03



#	List of key indicators	Norway	average or total	Min	Max
<i>Policy lever 4: Evaluation and assessment to improve student outcomes</i>					
Assessment purposes (PISA 2009)					
37	To make decisions about students' retention or promotion	1.1%	78%	1%	100%
	To monitor the school's progress from year to year	82%	77%	35%	98%
	To make judgements about teachers' effectiveness	24.4%	47%	8%	85%
	To identify aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved	69.8%	77%	47%	98%
Frequency and source of teacher appraisal and feedback, 2007-08 (TALIS 2008)					
38	Once every two years or less	44.4%	35.8%	13.8%	65.6%
	At least once per year	48.7%	52.2%	27.6%	68.6%
	Monthly or more than once per month	6.9%	12%	3.3%	29.8%
Systems: Organising the system					
<i>Policy lever 5: Governance</i>					
Decisions taken at each level of government in public lower secondary education, 2011 (EAG 2012)					
39	Central or state government	21%	36%	0%	87%
	Regional or sub-regional government	0%	6%	0%	36%
	Local government	65%	17%	4%	100%
	School government	15%	41%	5%	86%
<i>Policy lever 6: Funding</i>					
Annual expenditure per student by educational institutions, for all services, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP, 2010 (EAG 2013)					
40	Pre-primary education	6 610	6 762	2 280	20 958
	Primary education	12 255	7 974	1 860	21 240
	Secondary education	13 852	9 014	2 470	17 633
	Tertiary education	18 512	13 528	6 501	25 576
Relative proportions of public and private expenditure on educational institutions, 2010 (EAG 2013)					
41	Public sources	m	83.6%	57.9%	97.6%
	All private sources	m	16.4%	2.4%	42.1%
	Public sources, index of change in expenditure on educational institutions (2000-10)	142	136	101	195
	All private sources, index of change in expenditure on educational institutions (2000-10)	m	211	104	790
<p><i>Note: The average, minimums and maximums refer to OECD countries except in TALIS where they refer to participating countries. "m" refers to data not available.</i></p> <p><i>PISA values that are statistically significant are indicated in bold.</i></p>					



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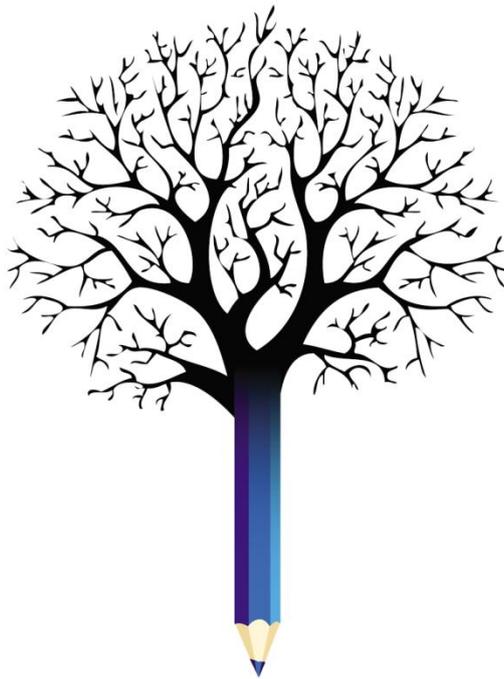
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