


# Competence for Development

Competence Development Strategy in Basic Education 2005 – 2008



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH



This competence development strategy document is the result of a collaborative effort in which the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, the Union of Education Norway, the Norwegian Association of Graduate Teachers, the Norwegian Union of School Employees, the Norwegian Association of School Leaders and the central administration have all participated. It provides a common foundation for the competence boost to be implemented in basic education in the years 2005 – 2008.



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# Introduction

White Paper No. 30 (2003-2004) Culture for Learning and Recommendation to Parliament No. 268 (2003-2004)

In connection with the debate on White Paper No. 30 (2003-2004) Culture for Learning, cf. Recommendation No. 268 (2003-2004), Parliament gave its assent to a number of proposals which in sum will contribute to enabling basic education to meet the challenges of the knowledge society better. A foundation will be laid for more adequate adapted learning for the individual pupil and apprentice, partly by means of new subject curricula with clearly defined competence goals, more emphasis on basic skills, and local discretion within a nationally determined framework of subjects and periods. The reform involves a renewal of lower and upper secondary education, a better tie-in between compulsory and upper secondary education, and greater cooperation between basic education and local commerce and industry. This demands comprehensive action on competence development, especially among the administrative staff of schools, teachers, and instructors in companies with apprenticeship schemes.

Parliament gave its assent to the Government's proposal to "invest in a considerable boost in competence to achieve the central goals stated in the White Paper". The Parliamentary Committee for Education, Research and Church Affairs "has noted that the Ministry proposes a number of measures involving targeted action on the development of competence among teachers and school administrative staff" and "agrees that ... the groundwork for much of the necessary competence development should be done before the structural and content-related changes are implemented" (Recommendation No. 268 (2003-2004)).

The Committee for Education, Research and Church Affairs underlines "the need to develop schools and companies responsible for apprenticeships as learning organizations, and that this can only happen through school owners and schools themselves accepting responsibility". In this work, it is "the school owners who must devise local plans for the development of competence in local and regional authority areas. These local plans form the basis for the development of national measures. The Committee therefore maintains that the responsibility for determining priorities and approving measures for the development of competence lies with school owners".

The Committee maintains that it "is necessary to strengthen adapted learning, to ensure that all facets of the learning environment are responsive to variations in pupils' backgrounds and needs". The Committee further maintains that more attention should be paid to that fact that pupils mature and learn differently. Schools shall give pupils equal opportunities for learning through adapted, and not identical, learning procedures.

The reform will demand extensive action within further education, in a number of areas. The Committee majority emphasizes that "further education must be given priority", and that "professional renewal of teachers is important". The majority states that "the professional renewal of teachers in the course of their teaching careers is important for keeping them in schools. It is therefore vital to recognize the individual teacher's need for renewal, and not unilaterally emphasize the needs of school owners".



# The Aim

The staff in basic education shall possess the competence needed to ensure that pupils and apprentices receive adapted education, including the opportunity to develop skills and talents in accordance with the requirements of the General Curriculum, the Quality Framework and the subject curricula. Through a boost in competence, school leaders, teachers and instructors in apprenticeship companies will be enabled and stimulated to meet the challenges related to the changes in content and structure which the reform involves.

Equivalent, inclusive and adapted education are central principles of basic education. Education shall be adapted to pupils' abilities and needs, and everybody shall be given good opportunities to learn. Education must therefore be varied and differentiated.

The majority of pupils and apprentices benefit from their teaching. International and national surveys show, however, that Norwegian pupils achieve unacceptably weak results in a number of central areas. Disturbingly many have not developed basic reading ability in the course of compulsory schooling. That pupils get very different benefit from teaching, and that there are systematic differences among pupils in relation to gender and social and ethnic background, also presents a challenge.

The quality of schooling and apprenticeship training is central to children's and young people's future. Of all the resources in school, the competence of teachers is the factor that has most influence on pupils' achievements. Education for knowledge, diversity and equality can only be realized through a comprehensive competence boost for administrative staff, teachers and apprentice instructors.

The implementation of the reform of basic education demands focused action at every level of the education system over a period of several years. It is crucial that the human and financial resources to be found in schools, in companies responsible for apprenticeships, in local and regional authorities and in tertiary institutions, as well as the specific financial resources earmarked for competence development by central authorities, all go towards boosting competence in basic education. Relevant and adequate competence is a precondition for the success of the reform, and a coordinated effort from all the parties who share responsibility for the development of competence in basic education is needed. For this reason, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities representing the school owners, the organizations of teachers and school leaders, and the sector administration at the central level stand together behind this strategy for developing competence. The National Council for Teacher Education has also contributed to the strategy document.

In upper secondary education, industry and commerce are important actors in the area of practical and professional training. Companies are responsible for ensuring that apprenticeship instructors acquire the competence they need to advise apprentices. The regional authorities and the training committees, on which the partners in industry and commerce are represented, will continue to support companies in this work. A new structure and renewed content in upper secondary education will make demands on competence which will be largely similar for company instructors and school teachers of

practical subjects. It is thus important that the competence development measures should create meeting places for these groups.

The competence development strategy clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the different actors and establishes the premises for cooperative structures which optimally exploit the actors' resources and competence. It will give school owners, tertiary institutions and other professional centres the necessary common ground for planning, organizing and cooperating on measures. It is a precondition of the strategy that the actors themselves work out plans and implement measures, based on the roles and responsibilities they have in developing quality in basic education.

The strategy covers the national budget period 2005-2008. The reform of basic education will be implemented in 2006-2008. To ensure that the reform is introduced in an acceptable manner, it is vital that competence development gets started in 2005 and that the planning has both an annual and a four-year perspective.

### **Target groups**

The strategy is primarily a document for those who have responsibility for planning, coordinating and implementing competence development measures. Those bodies comprise local and regional authorities, owners of independent schools, tertiary institutions and other relevant expert groups. The strategy is also a principal planning document for sector administration at the national level.

Early in 2005 a special information drive directed towards local and regional authorities will take place, to ensure that responsibility for implementing the reform is clearly placed. Competence development measures, initiated in response to the strategy, are primarily addressed to

- administrative staff in schools
- teachers in primary and secondary schools
- professional leaders and instructors engaged in training at the workplace.

In addition, staff in the pedagogical-psychological service and the follow-up service, members of trade testing committees, school assistants and other school staff, and companies responsible for apprenticeships are relevant target groups for competence development measures.

### **Conditions for success**

For schools and training companies to be able to give pupils and apprentices a good education in a society which is steadily

more diverse and more demanding in terms of knowledge, White Paper No. 30 (2003-2004) Culture for Learning points to three conditions which must be met:

- In the first place, school owners, school administrative staff, teachers and instructors must possess the necessary competence to be able to meet the knowledge society and a more diverse group of pupils and parents. The reform will be implemented in the individual school and work-place. A condition for the development of relevant competence is that the school owner works out a plan for competence development based on the individual body's special challenges and development needs.
- In the second place, schools and companies responsible for apprenticeships must know the strengths and weaknesses in their own organizations and the measures that can lead to improvement. In addition they need access to a good source of support and advice. The school owners' responsibility for the development of competence means that they are also responsible for developing locally appropriate methods and routines for the evaluation of the school's quality and results, for school-based evaluation and for following up the information about learning profit, the learning environment and resources which emerge from the national quality assessment system.
- In the third place, the individual school and apprenticeship company must, in part on this basis, develop its own culture for continual learning where everyone takes responsibility for and feels committed to the realization of common goals. Learning organizations are recognizable partly by flexibility in working methods and organization, and they are characterized by the growth of competence and the spread of knowledge. Collaboration with other competence environments and the spread of learning from experience among colleagues and schools is of vital importance. The ability to reflect constantly over the goals that have been set, the paths that have been chosen, and whether they are right for the organization – this ability is a basic feature of learning organizations. Competence development measures should therefore very largely be linked to the teachers' and instructors' day-to-day practice, and the workplace should be utilized as an arena for competence development.

## Central concepts

**Competence** can be defined as the ability to meet complex demands, situations and challenges. When knowledge resources are used to solve tasks in concrete situations, it is important that this use also stimulates the urge to further learning and competence development. Learning and competence are linked to action and teamwork in different collaborative contexts, simultaneously both individual and collective. The degree of learning depends not only on what knowledge, skills and views the individual has, but also on how supportive the circumstances are, in terms of human, financial and physical resources. Learning is also dependent on open communication and the inner and outer learning pressure exerted by the collaborative context and the surroundings.

**Further education** is education/training which confers formal qualifications.

**In-service education** includes courses, seminars, participation in local development work and professional guidance linked to one's own practice, which has training as its primary aim.

**Informal learning** occurs through practice and the professional discussion and evaluation of one's own work, with colleagues or others with whom one is working. Participation in development work and projects, sitting in on others' classes, colleague-based guidance, study visits, exchanges, and networking are examples of informal learning.

# Priorities

Greater freedom of action gives school owners new opportunities and greater responsibility. A condition for success in the reform of basic education is that school owners possess the clear resolve and degree of competence needed to be a driving force in the implementation of the reform. The Ministry will work with the Association of Local and Regional Authorities in the production of an information package aimed at school owners, to ensure the underpinning of responsibility for the implementation of the reform (including necessary financing) and an understanding of the content and aims of the reform, as well as to uphold the need to develop a culture for learning at all levels of the education system.

Putting the contents of the reform into practice requires the development of competence in a number of areas. Competence development measures must as far as possible be directed towards meeting the needs defined by the individual school or company. The priority areas listed below are stated in White Paper No. 30 (2003-2004) Culture for learning, cf. Recommendation No. 268 (2003-2004), and are central to the implementation of the reform. It is therefore a precondition that school owners assess in particular the competence needs of schools and companies responsible for apprenticeships in these areas, as a basis for determining priorities in their competence development plans.

To improve the quality of the competence development measures, the Ministry will take the initiative in financing a programme of applied research and development work in teacher education, with emphasis on adapted learning. The R&D activities must be carried out in conjunction with the school owners.

## **Competence development for the administration of the individual school and apprenticeship company**

Better adapted learning and the development of schools as learning organizations makes special demands on the clarity and resoluteness of an administration which is able to initiate and lead joint development work. For the reform to succeed, professional collaboration between school owners and administrations and a development-oriented and competent administration in each school are essential. Good administration creates conditions where teachers' competence is utilized, leading to the achievement of aims in the subject curricula and

the assurance of quality in the educational process. The competence development of administrative staff is therefore crucial to the successful implementation of the reform. School owners must therefore give high priority to measures directed towards administrative staff in 2005.

A network of tertiary institutions has developed further education and in-service education courses for school administrative staff. Some institutions also offer master-level courses. The Ministry will initiate a dialogue with the Association of Local and Regional Authorities, employees organizations and tertiary institutions with a view to building on these courses, so that they cover both the competence needed to lead knowledge organizations in a process of change and development, and the more reform-specific needs.

## **Reform-related competence development of the teaching staff in basic education, and developing a learning culture in the individual school and apprenticeship company**

### **The school as a learning organization – better adapted learning**

The main challenge for the school as a learning organization is to develop a learning environment and organize it in such a way that it promotes optimal learning for pupils and for staff in a professional community. Changes in the Education Act give schools greater freedom to organize the teaching and adapt it better to local conditions and needs. Both the evaluation of Reform 97 and the nation-wide Differentiation project 2001-2003 have uncovered a considerable potential for better adapted basic education. The evaluation of the national Campaign for Quality Development 2000-2003 showed that schools with a cooperative work ethos and systematic assessment of their own practice managed to a greater extent than others to give pupils teaching adapted to their needs.

Against this background, it is necessary to give priority to competence development measures designed to develop the ability of schools and companies responsible for apprenticeships to organize education and shape contents and methods so as to give individual pupils and apprentices an education adapted to their needs. The quality of special education also needs to be improved, at the same time ensuring that the need for special education is prevented and reduced by providing





better adapted teaching. Work on preventing and reducing behavioural problems in schools is also given high priority. Taken together, all this makes considerable demands on the competence of the teaching and administrative staff.

The national system of quality assessment will contribute to quality development by providing a basis for informed decision-making at all levels of the school system. To develop the school as a learning organization, it is vital to strengthen the administrative and teaching staff's ability to assess the results of their practice. Constructive use of the national system of quality development depends on the ability to analyse and utilize the information on resources, teaching environment and learning outcome provided by the web site skoleporten.no. In cooperation with the partners in industry and commerce, skoleporten.no will in addition be expanded to cover professional and apprenticeship training. Competence is also needed to make use of the guidance resources and so improve the quality of education.

### **New subject curricula**

The new subject curricula place importance on the pupils' ability to develop basic skills in all subjects throughout the 13 years of schooling. The basic skills, being able to express oneself orally and in writing, being able to read and do arithmetic, and being able to use information and communication technology, are integrated into the subject curricula as appropriate for the individual subjects.

The new subject curricula in general education specify the competence aims in each subject which pupils and apprentices will be able to attain after a naturally limited course of learning. The new subject curricula will together represent a considerable simplification in comparison with the existing curriculum.

Within the framework of clear, binding competence goals, the responsibility lies with the staff of the individual school and apprenticeship company to assess and decide on the content and methods to be used, and determine how the teaching should be organized to enable pupils and apprentices to work systematically in relation to the goals. The introduction of new subject curricula will therefore demand a strengthening of the individual school's and apprenticeship company's collective subject-related and pedagogical competence. Teachers' and instructors' competence to assess pupils' and apprentices' achievements in each subject will also need to be fostered

### **Second foreign language**

Making the second foreign language compulsory will mean a change in the subject's distinctive characteristics, since more

emphasis will be placed on a practical approach, with greater attention to different forms of communication skills at different levels. This requires an increase in subject and didactic competence among the teachers of the language.

### **Physical activity**

Physical activity is a precondition of good learning, and is a significant factor in promoting general health. The school should, in organizing the school day, make it possible for pupils at all levels of basic education to have physical activity on those days when they do not have physical education. Physical activity is a priority area, also in relation to competence development.

### **Educational and career advice**

Pupils are entitled to advice on education and career choice, and shall receive information about education, work and the labour market. Good educational and career advice can lead to more informed choices, fewer delays and greater opportunities for individual pupils and apprentices to develop their abilities and skills. Experience, nationally and internationally, shows a link between competence and the quality of the advisory service. This is therefore an area given national priority within competence development.

### **Further education for the teaching staff in basic education**

The second foreign language will become an obligatory subject in compulsory school. Schools shall give pupils the opportunity to take German, French, Spanish or Russian and, if possible, other languages too, including non-European languages. There is a lack of qualified teachers in these subjects, and it is a challenge to recruit a sufficient number of teachers with the necessary competence. The school owners' competence development plans must therefore give priority to teaching competence in this area. To meet this need many school owners will have to give priority to this as early as 2005.

Many teachers, particularly in compulsory school, are unqualified or have inadequate qualifications in the subjects they teach. This includes teachers of core subjects that are taught throughout the whole of general education. If there is little chance of recruiting new teachers with relevant qualifications, while at the same time pupil numbers increase and many teachers reach pensionable age, this will also underline the need for further education. Against this background, priority must be given to mathematics, science (physics and chemistry), English and Norwegian/Saami. The network of tertiary institutions has developed flexible and practical further education courses in these subjects.



# Responsibility and tasks

A common, concerted competence boost in general education requires that the responsibility and tasks of the different groups involved be clearly defined.

Paragraph 10-8 of the Education Act states that central, regional and local authorities shall play their part in ensuring that teaching staff, administrators and others employed in the education system receive in-service training, with a view to their renewing and developing their subject-related and pedagogical knowledge, and keeping informed about and abreast of developments in education. The Ministry will put forward proposals for changes in the Education Act to clarify school owners' responsibility for ensuring the necessary development of competence among staff in basic education. In certain situations, for instance in connection with the implementation of national reforms, it will be necessary for central authority, for a period, to contribute with special funding of competence development.

## **To fulfil their responsibility for competence development, it is the task of school owners**

- to ensure that each school and apprenticeship company assesses what competence development measures should be given priority, in order to implement the reform in the individual institution.
- to promote a constructive staff/personnel policy to ensure that members of staff and the organizations representing them are active in consultative and decision-making processes, cf. labour agreements in the communal sector.
- to develop, approve and implement competence development plans, in cooperation with the interested parties. These plans shall meet local competence requirements in national priority areas.
- to seek expert assistance in competence development and local development work from tertiary institutions and other relevant professional bodies, according to need. The competence school owners themselves have access to should also be utilized.
- to report to the regional governor on the implementation of planned competence development measures and resources used.

It will be necessary for many local authorities, partly because they are small and have limited competence, to cooperate with others in the district, both on identifying areas where work on

competence is needed, and on organizing and implementing concrete measures. The regional governor, as representative of central authority, has the task of assisting in the coordination of competence development measures, by stimulating cooperation among local authorities, regional authorities, the partners in industry and commerce, tertiary institutions and other professional bodies. In addition, the regional authority, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities in the region, the regional council and other collaborating bodies have a contribution to make. Interested parties who otherwise would be involved at school owner level must also be brought into intercommunal cooperative bodies.

## **It is task of the regional governor**

- to provide guidance to local authorities in connection with the registration of inadequate competence and in constructing competence development plans, according to need.
- to stimulate cooperation among school owners, and between school owners and tertiary institutions and other professional bodies on competence development and local development work.
- to supervise the school owners' performance of their responsibilities for competence development.
- to distribute resources to school owners according to objective criteria. The Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education will determine these criteria in coordination with the relevant bodies.

## **It is the task of tertiary institutions**

- to provide a relevant educational foundation that will motivate teachers for lifelong learning.
- to ensure that their own staff in each subject have the necessary subject competence and also insight into the reform and the challenges it presents to compulsory and upper secondary education.
- to devise relevant and practical competence development courses, in cooperation with local and regional authorities.
- to cooperate on and coordinate competence development in compulsory and upper secondary education, to ensure breadth of cover in the full programme of regional and national courses.

- to carry out research and development work in cooperation with school owners.
- to contribute to spreading and communicating the results of research and development work to relevant groups.

The stipulation of more rigorous admission requirements to general teacher education programmes may in the short term mean reduced enrolments in many of the institutions. In this case the extra capacity can, for a period of time, be exploited by providing further education for teachers in core subjects, consistent with the requirements of basic education.

### **It is the task of the Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education**

- to follow up the competence development strategy, on the basis of the national budget each year.

- to administer the national funds allocated to competence development.
- to cooperate with the tertiary sector, school owners and employees' organizations, to assist in ensuring the quality and relevance of the competence development courses.
- to take the initiative in evaluating the competence development strategy. The evaluation will gather the results of the competence development measures and their implementation by local and regional authorities, as a basis for possible adjustments during the strategy period.

### **The Ministry is responsible for**

- determining the goals and the national priorities for competence development.
  - providing special national resources for the implementation of the school owners' plans for competence development..



# The organization of cooperation on competence development

Competence development measures for basic education involve many interested parties: individual schools, and companies responsible for apprenticeships; school owners; the partners in industry and commerce; the tertiary sector; national special education competence centres; and other possible suppliers of relevant competence development measures, as well as the central and regional offices of national education service. Cooperation among the interested parties must be organized by taking as the starting point the parties' roles and responsibilities and a common understanding of the goals and structure of competence development.

If the cooperation on competence development is well organized, this can contribute to increasing the quality, quantity and variety of the competence development materials, play a part in long-term competence building, and be more cost effective for all involved. The cooperation can have different aims and must meet different requirements.

Local authorities, regional authorities and independent schools may have different needs for cooperation on the construction of plans, on the coordination of contacts with tertiary institutions and other suppliers of competence development

measures, and on the concrete implementation of measures for both administrative and teaching staff. The school owners' plans will be a good basis for dialogue with potential suppliers. The regional governor will, as the need arises, be able to assist cooperation both in the individual region and in a wider geographical area. Within professional and vocational training, there will be a special need to establish broad geographical cooperation with the partners in industry and commerce.

To ensure the production of relevant competence development measures of high quality which, taking as their starting point local needs, are also capable of meeting the demand in all parts of the country, the need for cooperation, coordination and possible work-sharing will have to be discussed with the tertiary sector.

The Ministry and the Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education will discuss the need to develop models of cooperation at regional level, supra-regionally and nationally, in cooperation with the Association of Local and Regional Authorities, employees' organizations, the tertiary sector and the regional governors.



# Stipulations governing national funding and the submission of reports

The national funding of competence development in basic education will be specified in the annual national budget.

It is a precondition for the transfer of national funds for competence development that school owners fulfil their responsibility for competence development through plans approved by the local council or regional assembly. In the case of independent schools, the plans shall be approved by the school board. Independent schools which so wish may present a common plan. The plans must include a strategy for competence development covering the period 2005-2008, and a plan for each budget year which specifies the concrete competence development measures proposed and states the school owners' share of the costs. The measures shall build on a survey and assessment of the competence development requirements in individual schools and in companies responsible for apprenticeships.

The school owner is required to report on the plan to the regional governor when it has been approved. The regional governor shall verify that the plan fulfils the school owner's responsibilities for competence development, cf. chap. 3. On

this basis, the regional governor transfers the greater part of the national funds to the school owners in accordance with stated, objective criteria. To support the necessary further education in a second foreign language, a small proportion of the national funding will be distributed to school owners on the basis of local needs, following special assessment. This arrangement will make it possible to take into account that local and regional authorities have different needs which must be determined in dialogue with the local and regional authorities and the national association which represents them. Responsibility for administering the funds will lie with the Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education, with the regional governor as regional link.

## **The submission of reports**

Conditions will be laid down for the submission of reports to the regional governor on competence development measures which have been carried out, and on the application of national funding and local resources.



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