

Country Report NORWAY

Martti Majuri & Kristiina Volmari

HAMK University of Applied Sciences, Finland

1. Background and country context

In Norway the national assembly (Stortinget) decides major political principles and goals, as well as budgets and legal frameworks for activities under each ministry. Education and training are considered a public responsibility. Equality in access to and quality of education regardless of social or geographical factors is a fundamental political principle. There are no school fees at any level, including higher education, in the public education system. Only a small fraction of pupils and students attend private schools.

Norway has three administrative levels: it is divided into 19 counties and 431 municipalities. Local autonomy is a strong principle. The Ministry of Education and Research (Kunnskapsdepartementet) has overall responsibility for national policy development and administration of mainstream education and vocational training at all levels. Operational responsibilities for the development of curricula, delivery of training, examinations and quality control are mandated to other public bodies.

The 431 municipalities (Kommuner) own and run the public primary and lower secondary schools, while the 19 counties (Fylker) are responsible for all aspects of public upper secondary general education and VET, including apprenticeship training and some post-secondary pre-tertiary VET. Municipalities and counties receive financial support from the central government.

Adults have a statutory right to receive public primary and secondary education, and the responsibility for provision is similar to that for young people. Adults may also study at tertiary institutions on similar terms as those for young people. Many different education and training courses for adults are offered by adult education associations (Studieforbund), distant training organisations and public and private training centres, consultancy companies and sector organisations. Modes of delivery cover most approaches from traditional classes to open and distant learning and e-learning.

Labour market training for unemployed people and language and vocational training for immigrants also constitute important parts of the Norwegian education and training system.

The educational level of the Norwegian population aged 25-64 is above the European average. Only 12 per cent of the population have left the education system completing only compulsory education. Despite population sparsity with people having to travel a long way to attend education and training, 88 per cent of the population attended upper secondary and tertiary education. Recent statistics show that around 95 per cent of those who complete compulsory school enter upper secondary education (Statistics Norway, <http://www.ssb.no/>). Major reasons for high participation in non-compulsory education are found in objectives and measures under national education policies and because employment opportunities are few for those with low education.

Initial vocational education and training

VET is available at upper secondary level. The path to a specific vocational qualification might contain several levels, each of them being a complete, terminated, qualifying unit

with a formal certificate. Initial vocational education and training (IVET) covers the first/lowest level of a specialising education and training path. IVET has two main access points:

- 1st year of upper secondary school (11th to 13th grade) which includes both general and vocational studies (most upper secondary schools provide both); and
- 1st year of post-secondary education, including tertiary education, i.e. following the finalisation of 13 years of general education.

All young people leaving compulsory school have a statutory right to receive 3 years of upper secondary education or VET. Each county has a follow-up service (Oppfølgingstjeneste), which is responsible for contacting pupils who do not enter, or drop out of, upper secondary education and training, and make an effort to get them “back on track”.

Since the 1980s, there has been an increasing awareness of the general importance of having a highly educated population and updating training in order to meet changing labour market needs. CVET provisions have been developed accordingly. More than 70 per cent of the population aged 16-74 participates in some form of learning activity. 54 per cent of the economically active population aged 22–66 participates in some form of education and training each year. Organised non-formal learning at the workplace and learning through daily work are considered the most important types of CVET by respondents.

Continuing vocational education and training

There is a tendency that those with higher education levels seek and attend more continuing vocational education and training (CVET), resulting in an increasing educational gap. Thus, the government and social partners have given high priority to the improvement of framework conditions – educational leave, financing – and access to adapted training opportunities for adults with weaker educational backgrounds. All adults have been given a statutory right to primary (from 2002) and secondary (from 2000) education and VET similar to the one provided to regular pupils and students. Municipalities and counties, respectively, are obliged to organise appropriate schooling, free of charge.

All sorts of CVET and personally oriented courses are available through flexible modes of delivery, e.g. part-time and evening courses, and distance education including e-learning. Training is frequently used by the various public authorities in national employment, regional development and gender equality policies. This also applies to the work with integration of migrants and other minority groups.

Since 1995, public universities and colleges are responsible for organising CVET for external clients in their own subject areas. The provision comprises both regular study programmes and tailor-made courses for individual clients.

Training is embedded in several of public measures targeted at unemployed people and other vulnerable groups in the labour market. The measures vary according to fluctuations in the labour market and the number of people with specific needs of support. Vocational training and work practice are organised for people with various vocational disabilities by 100 labour market enterprises (Arbeidsmarkedsbedrifter). Ordinary labour market measures with training elements comprise rehabilitation training (Rehabilitering) and labour market training (Arbeidsmarkedsopplæring – AMO).

CVET is also offered by adult education associations, distance education institutions and folk high schools. In addition informal training taking place at work. Almost half of all new trade and journeyman's certificates are awarded to adult practice candidates (Praksiskandidater), who sit for examinations on the basis of skills developed through work participation.

In general, CVET opportunities are available to all groups at all levels in all parts of the country. Existing CVET provisions are continuously assessed by the relevant public authorities, social partners and providers themselves. Training is frequently adjusted to identified needs and changes.

2. How is the work and training of trainers organised?

In upper secondary IVET in Norway the term 'trainer' primarily denotes staff involved in training of apprentices and trainees. In Norway, continuing formal vocational education and training are mostly supplied by VET teachers in schools and colleges as a supplementary service or through part-time work for adult or distance education associations. Non-formal and informal workplace training do not involve trained teachers or trainers.

There has been no regulations regarding formal qualifications for individuals functioning as trainers or learning facilitators outside the regular training institutions. They may on a voluntary basis attend educational courses - either as pre-service or as in-service training. No specific benefits accrue from such training - but might be helpful for promotion.

However, each company has to make a plan for the training. The local training boards recognise this plan. Also the apprenticeship contract is approved by local authorities. Every company has to make a plan how the students will achieve the goals of their studies in the company. There are also national tests, which are assessed together with representatives from working life.

In the future the trainers have to get further education for training. This is included in the new legislation (April 2007). Instructors/trainers are mentioned in the new law: it should be ensured that the trainers should be trained for training to be better able to arrange apprenticeships. Before now there has not been any systematically arranged education for the trainers after the end of 1990s.

Local counties will begin training trainers. The Ministry will give local authorities 3 750 000 000 Norwegian crowns to arrange the education of trainers and teachers. Local authorities have to make a plan to be granted the money. Local authorities can use different education offices in arranging the training of trainers. Many companies are members of those offices (Eurotrainer expert interview).

Almost all persons becoming trainers and learning facilitators in the apprenticeship system are qualified and experienced skilled people or professionals. Rarely will they have any pre-service training in instruction and tutoring. Most IVET trainers and learning facilitators are offered and participate in relevant courses after they have become trainers or tutors.

VET trainers and facilitators involved in apprenticeship training comprise four groups:

- 1) VET personnel working in training establishments (apprenticeship enterprises);
- 2) Members of examination and appeals boards;

3) VET managers and officers (county VET office, apprenticeship training office, branch organisations, etc.);

4) Members of syllabus (competence platforms) committees.

There is no formal system of guidance for pre-service training of IVET trainers and learning facilitators. Competent educational authorities initiate relevant training programmes and disseminate information to targeted groups. Some programmes are accessible on the Internet.

The number of VET instructors (trainers) is a rough estimate based on the number of apprentices and the fact that there are about 11,000 apprenticeship establishments. Thus the estimate is around 15,400. Skilled persons giving advice and support to 'candidates of practice' are not included. The 'turn-over' is much higher among instructors than among VET teachers for various reasons such as change in work tasks and assignments, reorganisation of staff etc.

There are no special training programmes for CVET teachers and trainers. CVET teachers and trainers are not identified as a separate category. Basic features of work, qualifications and training of VET personnel are depicted in the following table.

National education authorities initiated and financed an extensive training programme of VET personnel as a measure for implementation and quality assurance of Reform 94. Almost 16,000 instructors and training supervisors participated in the extensive upgrading course programme offered in the second half of the 1990s. The training programmes were free of charge and extra expenses for travel and accommodation were covered by public funds. The training establishments had to give leave of absence and cover the salary of their participant employees. The trainers were not entitled to any salary increase after such training.

The course offered to IVET trainers was organised in two modules:

- 1) Training curricula/syllabus, instruction and organisation of apprenticeship learning;
- 2) Legal and administrative aspects of the apprenticeship training system.

Key topics in the programme included:

- (a) Legal requirements and provisions for apprenticeship training;
- (b) Development of apprenticeship companies as a learning arena;
- (c) Planning and facilitation of learning;
- (d) Instruction, guidance and communication;
- (e) Quality assurance;
- (f) Adapted training for special groups;
- (g) Assessment - of the apprenticeship training and the apprentice.

The Ministry of Education together with social partners prepared Guidelines (rammeplan) for vocational training.

Training establishments in manufacturing industry, chemical process industries and public health institutions have been evaluated (Olsen 1999). Great diversity was found in the quality of training. Primarily large enterprises had long term strategies for recruitment and competence development in which apprenticeship training played a well-defined role. In the smaller enterprises the recruitment of apprentices was first of all seen as necessary

training and recruitment of future skilled employees for the enterprise itself - not for other companies.

After the intensive national upgrading training programme was completed at the turn of the century the County Education Authorities have continued to offer these courses depending on the needs identified.

3. How is the work and training of trainers financed?

The companies receive a grant of 88,000 NOK for two years for the last two years of apprenticeship training. Each company has to make a plan for the training and the local training boards recognise this plan. (Eurotrainer interview). The local education providers get funds for arranging the training of trainers (Totally 3 750 00 000 NOK). To be able to get the funding they have to draw up a plan for/ on how to arrange the training of trainers.

4. How are trainers selected and how are human resources allocated?

Reportedly, trainer assignments often entail a heavier workload because tutoring will be on top of ordinary work. Basically, to become a VET trainer is not considered as a career - but as an extra job a person is assigned to.

5. How are trainers qualified?

Cf above point 2)

6. How is the reputation of trainers and how are they integrated in enterprises/society?

According to the expert interview many professional want to do the trainer's work: many trades foresee that if they want to continue their trade, they must take students and the responsibility for apprenticeships

7. How innovative is the work and training of trainers?

The trainers have to make plans for the apprenticeships. The targets have to follow the national guidelines so that the students are able to pass the national tests. Otherwise the trainers are quite free to choose the methods they use. Of course it depends also on the sector and the company.