



SIRIUS

Peer Review Norway

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# SIRIUS PEER REVIEW NORWAY 14-15 NOVEMBER 2013

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## INTRODUCTION

This report contains the findings and recommendations of a Peer Review that was conducted from 14-15 November 2013 in Norway by members of Sirius, the European Policy Network on the Education of Children and Young People with a Migrant Background. The review focused on the National Center for Multicultural Education (NAFO) which is in charge of executing policies of the Directorate of the Ministry of Education. Visits were made to a teacher training college and two secondary schools with the purpose of reviewing how NAFO supports these schools in providing education for migrant students and how this can be improved and expanded to the rest of the country.

### *About Sirius*

Sirius was created in 2012 to promote and enhance the knowledge transfer among stakeholders in order to improve the education of children and youngsters from migrant background. It is funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. The Network consists of universities, government agencies and NGOs. The general coordination is based at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.<sup>1</sup>

Sirius' mission is based on three actions:

- Knowledge transfer
- Influencing policy development and implementation
- Bringing together partners from EU countries and key stakeholders, including policy makers, researchers, practitioners, representatives of migrant communities, NGOs and international organizations.

Sirius focuses on three strategic thematic areas (also known as 'work packages'):

- Implementing policies and networking
- Improving interactions in the classroom
- Involving the community in education: educational support projects

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<sup>1</sup> See the [Sirius website](#) for more details about the members of the Network.

The current Peer Review is part of the second thematic area: improving interactions in the classroom ('work package 2').

### *Objectives of the Peer Review*

As part of Sirius' mission to facilitate knowledge transfer within the Network, Peer Reviews are organized during which professionals from different countries visit other countries and learn about policies and practices. At the same time, the professionals, who are all experts in their field, may provide their host with recommendations to improve their policy making, adopt best practices or comply with established standards and principles. So far, Sirius has organized two peer reviews: one in Zagreb (Croatia) and one in Antwerp (Belgium).

During the Peer Review in Norway, peers were invited by the National Centre for Multicultural Education (NAFO) to visit a teacher training college in Oslo and two secondary schools in a small coastal community (Larvik).

The central question of this Peer Review is:

What is the role of NAFO in providing support to teacher training institutes and schools across Norway related to migrant education? And how can this role be enhanced?

### *Methodology*

A Peer Review can be defined as a systematic examination and assessment of the performance or practices of a specific unit of governance by a group of other units of the same level and range (Peer Review Zagreb 2012). The ultimate goal is to help the reviewed unit to improve its policy making, to adopt best practices and to comply with established standards and principles. The examination is conducted on a non-adversarial basis and relies heavily on mutual trust among the peers involved in the review, as well as on their shared confidence in the process. The Peer Review exercise

results in a report that assesses accomplishments, spells out shortfalls and makes recommendations.

Every peer review has a common procedure, which consists of three main phases:

### **1. The preparatory phase**

The first phase of the review often consists of background analysis and of some form of self-evaluation by the country/project under review. This phase includes work on documentation and data as well as a questionnaire. The questionnaire, which can be a sophisticated instrument, is sent to the country for responses by the competent authorities or as an agenda for a dialogue in the next phase. During the preparation, peers are recruited and trained.

### **2. The consultation phase**

In this phase the Peer Review Visit takes place. Peers visit the city and carry out their consultation. This part contains a tour of the premises (on-site visits), observations and interviews with different groups of stakeholders (such as civil servants, policy makers, teachers, principal, mentors, parents, students, researchers etc).

The Peer Reviewers choose from their midst a Moderator (leading the interview), a Secretary (writing down the notes) and a Report Writer (who writes the Peer Review Report afterwards). The rest of the Peer Review team does the interviews, observes, discusses and also make notes to be given to the Report Writer.

### **3. The assessment phase**

In this phase the Reporter prepares a draft of the final report, which follows a model comprising an analytical section, where the project performance is examined in detail and individual concerns are expressed, and an evaluation or summary section setting forth the conclusions and recommendations. The draft report is shared and discussed with the Peer Review Team and with the reviewed country and may make adjustments it considers justified before the draft is submitted to the members of SIRIUS and the European Commission.

Generally, approval of the final report is by consensus, unless the procedures of the particular peer review specify otherwise. In some cases, the procedures may call for the final report to state the differences among the participants.

The final report is often followed by a press release, which summarizes the main issues for the media, and press events or dissemination seminars are organized to publish the findings of the review. The results and recommendations from the Peer Review are transferred into concrete actions for improvement, which are planned and implemented.

### *Peer Review Norway*

The visit to Norway took place on 14 and 15 November. The first day was spent in Oslo. After an introduction at the NAFO and a presentation by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training on education policies for migrant children in Norway, we visited the teacher training college which is part of the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA). Here, we conducted interviews with headmasters, teachers and students.



**Photo: the peer review team with representatives of NAFO, the schools and policy makers at the Thor Heyerdahl school.**

The next day the team travelled by road to Larvik, a coastal community about 100 km southwest from Oslo, where two schools were visited: a secondary school (Mesterfjellet) and an upper-secondary school (Thor Heyerdahl). Teachers, headmasters and students were interviewed, and this time parents were also included. During lunch, the team had the opportunity to meet with the mayor of Larvik, as well as other people involved in the education of migrants. In the annex, the programme of the peer review visit is included. The peers came from the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria and Croatia. Unfortunately, a peer reviewer from Portugal was unable to join the team at the last moment.

Participants	Function	Country
Sabine Severiens	Sirius Work Package 2 leader	Netherlands
Ellen-Rose Kambel	Peer review report writer	Netherlands
Sofia Marques da Silva	Researcher and lecturer	Portugal
Martina Huber-Kriegler	Teacher trainer	Austria
Barbara Herzog-Punzenberger	Researcher	Austria
Lana Jurko	NGO director	Croatia
Téa Vidovic	NGO member	Croatia

The team was divided into groups of two, with one person doing the interviews and the other taking notes. At the end of each day, the peers compared notes and discussed the findings. At the end of the second day, the preliminary findings and results were shared in Larvik with representatives of NAFO, as well as staff and teachers of both secondary schools that were reviewed.

The following persons were interviewed:

Function	Organization
Vice Dean	Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA)
Leader of the MA Programme Multicultural and International Education	HiOA
Students of the Bilingual Education bachelor	HiOA

programme and the MA Programme Multicultural and International Education	
Principal	Mesterfjellet secondary school
Team leader of programme “Norwegian as a 2 <sup>nd</sup> language”	Mesterfjellet
Teacher	Mesterfjellet
Students and parents with migrant backgrounds (from US, Somalia and Spain/Poland)	Mesterfjellet
Principal and school leaders	Thor Heyerdahl upper secondary school
Teachers	Thor Heyerdahl upper secondary school
Students from migrant backgrounds: short stay and longer stay	Thor Heyerdahl

## **CHAPTER 1. POLICIES ON MIGRANT EDUCATION IN NORWAY AND THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION (NAFO)**

Unless indicated otherwise, this chapter is based on the self-report written by NAFO.

### *1.1 Education in Norway*

Education for all is a basic precept of Norwegian educational policy. Children and young people have an equal right to education and all public education is free of charge.

Kindergartens are voluntary and charge parental fees, but children older than one year have a right to a place in a kindergarten.

There are ten years of compulsive schooling in Norway, with children starting school at age 6. Primary school is provided free of charge from grades 1-7 (age 6-13), followed by lower secondary school (grades 8-10, age 13-16). Upper secondary school takes three years (age 16-19) and should lead to a qualification for higher education programmes or a vocational qualification.

The majority of Norwegian schools are public schools. The Department for Education and Training of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research formulates policy for primary and secondary education, while the Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for implementing the policy. The Directorate gathers data (based on surveys among teachers, parents and pupils) and provides input to the Ministry. The Directorate is also responsible for conducting inspections of the schools.

Administratively, Norway is divided into 19 counties, which are subdivided into 430 municipalities. The primary and lower secondary schools are owned by the municipalities, while the counties are responsible for the upper secondary schools.

According to the representative of the Directorate, the Ministry is concerned that there is too much variation in performance of schools throughout the country. With regard to students needing special education, including migrant students with their specific linguistic or educational needs, there are a lot of challenges which the Directorate seeks

to address at the same time from different angles: at the top (school management) and at the bottom (teachers).

As will be discussed further below, NAFO falls under the Directorate for Education and Training, but seeks to emphasize cooperation between all institutions involved in the education of minorities in all counties.

Some facts and figures:

- Total population Norway: 5 million
- Number of children attending kindergartens: 235,000.
- Number of pupils attending public primary and lower secondary schools (2006): 607,500
- Number of pupils attending public upper secondary schools (2006): 180,000.
- Number of students attending university and university college (public and private): 195,000.
- Approx. 32 per cent of the population over 16 does not have education above the lower secondary level, 44 per cent do not have education above upper secondary level, and 25 per cent have an education at university and/or university college level.

Source: [Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research](#).

## *1.2 Immigration*

Between 1995 and 2011, the number of first- and second-generation immigrants in Norway nearly tripled, rising from 215,000 to 600,000, a considerable increase for a population of 5 million (Eriksen 2013: 4). Unlike most other OECD countries, Norway was unaffected by the financial crisis. Unemployment is low (3% in 2012) and in spite of the cold, Norway's stability, safety, wealth and welfare system attract migrants from all backgrounds (Eriksen 2013: 2). Since labour migration from non-European citizens was banned in 1975, the only reasons for entering Norway legally nowadays are with a refugee status and for family reasons.

At present there are 593,300 immigrants and 117, 100 second generation immigrants in Norway, constituting 14.1 per cent of the total population. Poles make up the largest immigrant group. The second largest immigrant group consists of Swedes, followed by people from Pakistan, Somalia, Iraq and Germany (see figure 1 below). Pakistanis who arrived during the 1970s are currently the largest non-European immigrant group but it is expected that they will be surpassed by Somalis and Iraqis who have a higher number of births, higher net immigration and a younger age structure (Statistics Norway 2013: 13). While there are immigrants residing in all the Norwegian municipalities, the majority is based in the capital Oslo, where they make up 30.4 per cent of the capital’s total population (NAFO self report).

**The 15 largest groups of immigrants and descendants. Absolute figures. Norway 1.1. 2012**

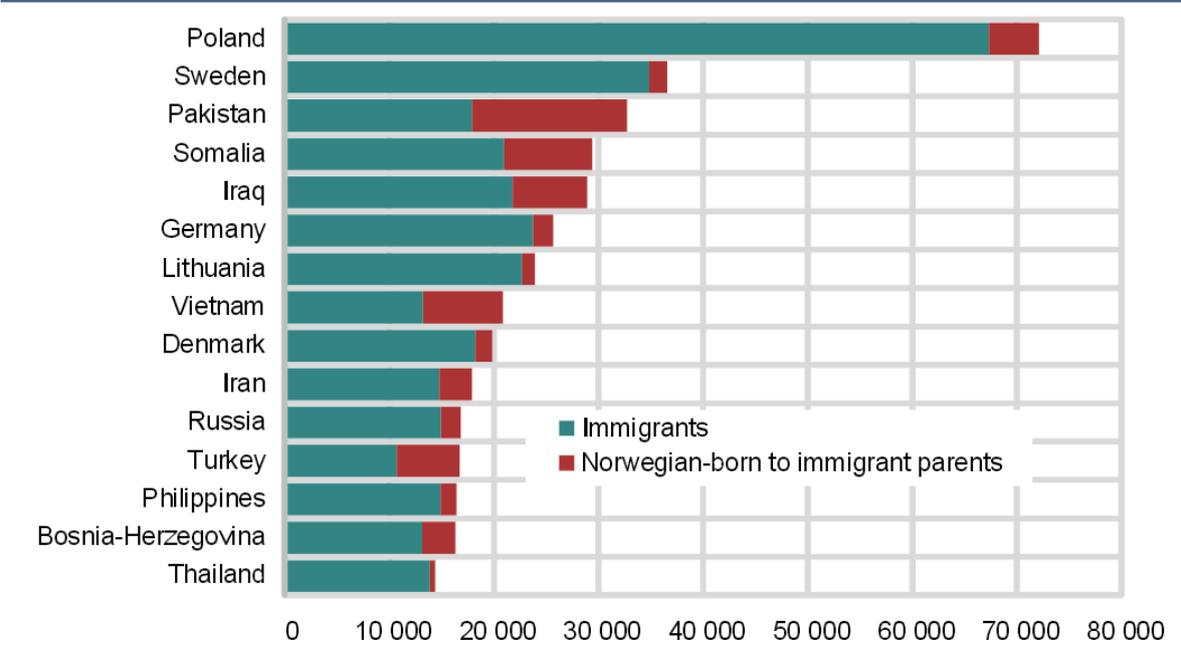


Figure 1: source [Statistics Norway 2013](#).

The aim of the Norwegian integration policies has been to provide those who are allowed to stay, with decent living conditions. As living conditions are dependent upon labour market participation, measures have tended to focus on accommodating missing skills in labour and language proficiency (Norwegian Statistics 2013: 16). However, it is pointed out that attitudes towards multiculturalism have been more favourable on the policy level than among broad groups of the population (Idem). In a recent study

commissioned by the Migration Policy Institute on Immigration and National Identity in Norway, Thomas Hylland Eriksen states that:

Alongside the rapid growth of the nation's ethnic minority population, debates about integration, immigration policy, multiculturalism, and national identity have flourished in Norway in recent years. The atrocities of July 22, 2011, revealed an active, militantly anti-immigrant (and particularly anti-Muslim) fringe that sees the government's acceptance of cultural pluralism as treacherous. (Eriksen 2013, pg 1).

### *1.3 Education Policies for Migrants*

The OECD Policy Review of Migrant Education (2010) lists the following challenges to migrant education in Norway:

- Around 8-10% of students speak a language other than Norwegian and more than 120 languages are spoken in Oslo schools.
- In primary education, immigrant students read less well than native students. Norway has one of the largest gaps in OECD countries.
- By age 15, first-generation immigrants have fallen behind their native peers in reading by the equivalent of around two years of schooling.
- Fewer first-generation immigrants choose to go to upper secondary education than their native peers. Less than half of these students succeed in upper secondary vocational programmes, compared with two-thirds of native peers.
- Socio-economic background and speaking a different language at home largely explain the achievement gap between immigrants and native students.

On the other hand, the OECD review complemented Norway for its inclusive education standards and for undertaking a wide range of measures to improve the situation of immigrant students (OECD 2010).

### **An Equal Right to Education**

The objective of the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is to ensure that all children and young people have an equal right to education, regardless of where they live, gender, social and cultural background or any special needs. Education is guaranteed and obligatory for all children between the age of 6 and 16. The right to primary and lower secondary education applies when it is probable that the child will reside in Norway for a period of more than three months. The obligation to attend school starts as soon as residence has lasted three months.

### **Right to Basic Norwegian and to Mother Tongue Education**

According to the Norwegian Education Act, all pupils in the 10 year compulsory and upper secondary schools have the right to adapted education. With regard to children who have a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami (the language spoken by the indigenous peoples of Norway), the Education Act provides that 'they have the right to Basic Norwegian for language minorities until they are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow the normal instruction of the school. If necessary, such pupils are also entitled to Mother tongue education, bilingual technical training, or both' (sections 2-6 and 3-12).

The municipality or county authorities decide on the pupils' proficiency in Norwegian before any decisions are made about Basic Norwegian for language minorities. They also assess whether the pupils have sufficient proficiency in Norwegian to follow the normal instruction in the school. This decision may be appealed by the pupil's parents, or the pupil him/herself (depending on the age).

The same language rights apply to upper secondary school for an additional two years when this is needed to achieve the pupil's educational goals.

Mother tongue instruction may be provided at a school other than that normally attended by the pupil. When mother tongue education and bilingual technical training cannot be provided by suitable teaching staff, the municipality or county authority shall as far as possible provide for other instruction adapted to the pupils' abilities and requirements. The school owner or the school have the freedom to decide whether they

will provide language instruction according to the curriculum for Basic Norwegian or in an adapted form within the regular Norwegian curriculum.

According to NAFO representatives, there are difficulties with implementing the laws and regulations as there is insufficient knowledge among parents, as well as schools, about the rights and duties laid down in the law. Among others there is considerable room for confusion because the law stipulates that pupils are entitled to mother tongue education 'if necessary'. The concern is that if parents don't know that their children may have a right to mother tongue education and the school does not take any actions, the child will not receive the assistance guaranteed by the law.

### **Curriculum for Basic Norwegian for language minorities**

This curriculum is a transitional plan for minority language pupils who start school in Norway. The pupils follow the plan until their language skills allow them to continue learning within the regular Norwegian curriculum. The curriculum should help the school evaluate when a pupil is sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow the school's regular instruction.

### **Curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities**

The curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities is also a transitional plan, one that shall be used only until pupils are able to follow the teaching in accordance with the regular curriculum in Norwegian. The curriculum is level-oriented and not related to age. It applies to pupils of different ages and with different experience and backgrounds.

### **Assessment of Language competence in basic Norwegian**

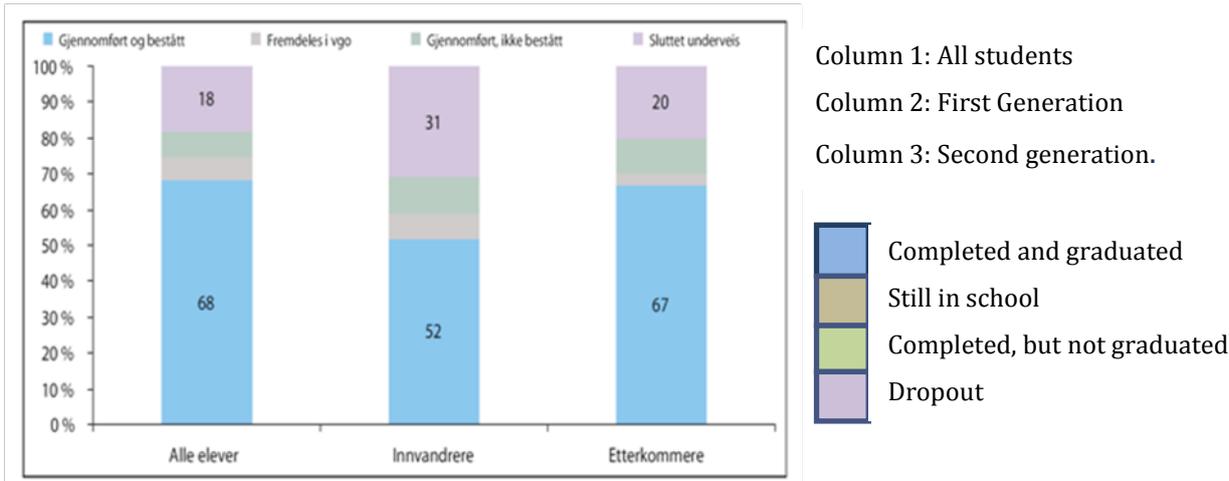
The assessment material consists of three parts. The first part is a language biography that contains a description of the pupil's overall language competence. Part two is an assessment tool that contains both level descriptions and forms to be used to document the pupil's Norwegian language skills in different areas. Part three is a portfolio, on the pupils' competence in basic Norwegian and his or her mother tongue. Special guidelines and assessment tools have also been prepared for these curricula.

In August 2013 a new curriculum was presented for minority language pupils in upper secondary school. This curriculum is temporarily approved as an optional curriculum in Norwegian language for pupils who have arrived in the past 6 years.

**The dropout problem**

In most OECD countries, completed upper secondary education is considered a minimum level of education which is required to make a successful entry into the labour market and an important factor for active participation in society.

Dropout among pupils in upper secondary education is one of the greatest challenges in Norwegian school policies. Among youth with migrant backgrounds the rates of early school leaving are even higher. As figure 2 shows, second generation immigrants perform better than first generation immigrants. Dropout rates are especially high among boys from immigrant backgrounds.



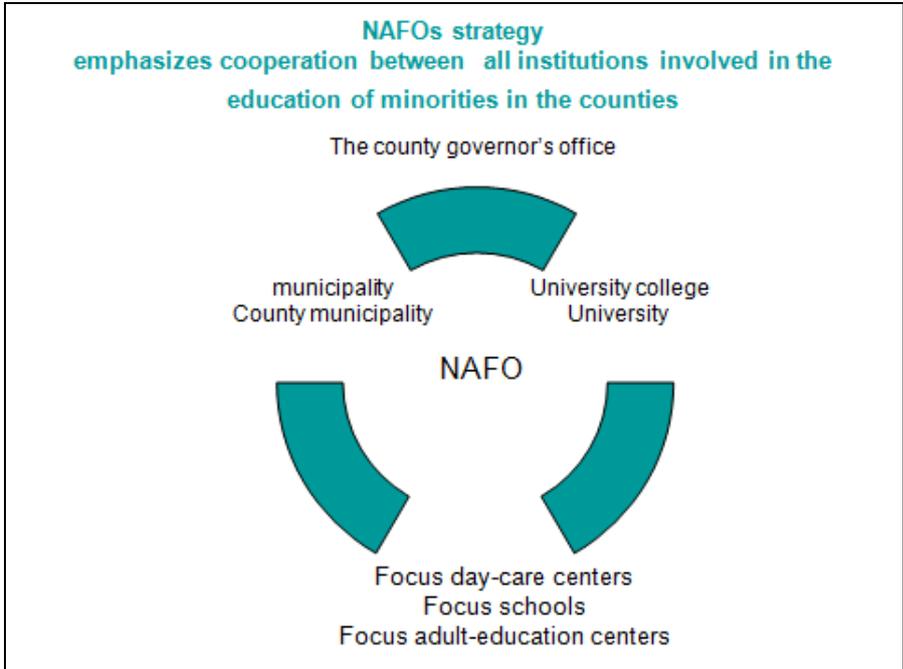
**Figure 1. This figure shows completion of upper secondary schools for pupils who started their education in 2002. (Source: NAFO Self Report).**

The high dropout rates can be partly explained by the fact that since 1994, everyone in Norway has a right to three years of upper secondary education. It is not required to pass an entrance exam, so entrance is guaranteed even if a student has failed all classes. In an effort to prevent dropout in upper secondary school for young immigrants, measures have been initiated at several levels. The two (upper) secondary schools that

are part of this Peer Review and which are supported by NAFO have taken the challenges seriously and have achieved good results (see chapter 3).

*1.4 The National Center for Multicultural Education (NAFO)*

NAFO is one of 10 national centers of education in Norway. The centers are organized as independent units in association with universities and University Colleges and operate under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Research.



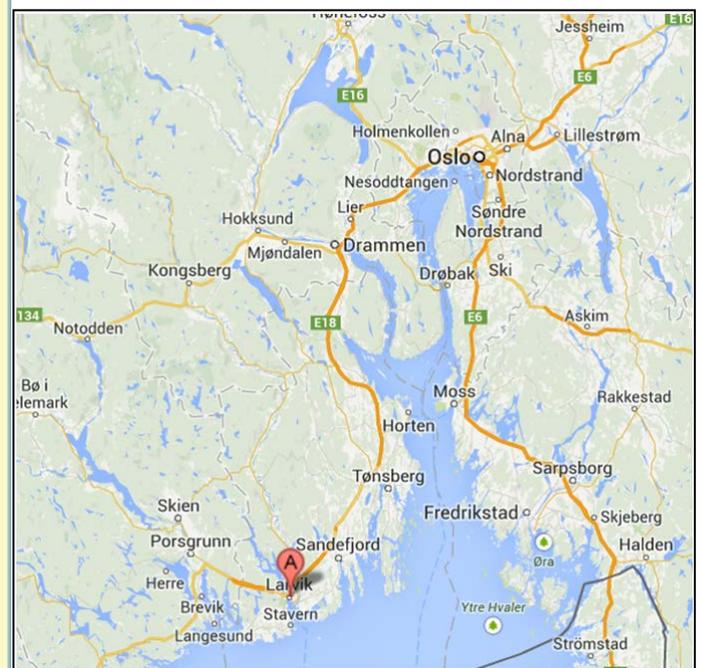
NAFO was established in 2004 as one of the steps undertaken by the Norwegian government to implement its strategic plan: 'Equal Education in Practice! Strategy for better learning and greater participation of linguistic minorities in kindergartens, schools and education'. A revised edition of this plan was published in February 2007.

NAFO runs competence-building programs for work within, and leadership of, institutions concerned with the education of linguistic minorities and for the development of inclusive multicultural learning communities in Norway. The Centre's target groups include kindergartens, schools, adult education institutions, universities

and university colleges. Among others, NAFO hosts a website called [Tema morsmål](#) ('Theme mother tongue'). The purpose of the website is to create a meeting place for mother tongue language teachers and bilingual teachers in schools and bilingual staff in kindergartens. It is meant to be a national and international information, meeting and resource space. The purpose of the website is to make it easier to locate information and learning resources for language training, bilingual education and multilingual work in the kindergartens. Various resources are provided and 43 languages are represented.

The schools that NAFO works with (called 'focus schools') and the projects that are carried out with the schools and institutions are assigned by the Directorate as part of its duty to execute policy from the Ministry. There is a dialogue between NAFO and the Directorate to determine the projects, but it is the Directorate who decides.

The Centre collaborates with the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, the County Governors Offices, resource centres in the municipalities and counties, and other relevant organizations including migrant organizations. NAFO also assists the Directorate with the development of curricula and teaching materials. Finally, NAFO provides scholarships for bilingual teachers to do a bachelor teaching programme (discussed below). NAFO does not work with NGOs as such, but efforts are made to cooperate with parents, through migrant organizations which are invited to activities and events. The large territory and diversity of Norway present considerable challenges for NAFO to provide the kind of support that they would like to offer to all schools.



Larvik

## CHAPTER 2. THE PEER REVIEWED TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE IN OSLO

### *2.1 The Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA)*

HiOA is the country's largest state university college and offers a range of vocational education programs at bachelor level in 57 different proficiency studies such as physiotherapy, engineering, arts, journalism, nursing and teaching.

The teacher education studies comprise 4 years, during which students can specialize in teaching grades 1– 7 (for primary school teachers) and grades 5 – 10 (qualifies to work at secondary level). The students have practical teacher training in all four years.



### *2.2 Diversity*

HiOA is a metropolitan institution, located in a region where the demographic structure is more diverse than that of other regions in Norway. HiOA states that it wants 'to stimulate equality and expect tolerance of the life philosophy, cultural background and gender of others' (NAFO self-report). This is also part of the policy of the Ministry of Education regarding multicultural education: teacher students are supposed to learn about cultural, linguistic and religious diversity (even though religious instruction disappeared from the curriculum).

According to the principal, the school makes an effort to integrate these themes into the curriculum. For example, 'Norwegian as a second language' is included in the classes on teaching Norwegian grammar. There are doubts within the school whether enough attention is paid to this subject, however. It is mainly due to economic reasons that no specialization is offered in second language education. The school does offer courses on intercultural education, such as a course called "diversity in the classroom".

With regard to diversity within the school itself: less than 10% of the future teachers have a minority background. The school is making an effort to increase the number of teachers from minority backgrounds in Norway. But teaching does not have a high status in Norway and there seems to be little interest from minority students. Parents even advise their children against pursuing a teaching career. Popular studies among minorities are bio engineering and pharmacy. There are no teachers with a minority background at the teacher training college.

### *2.3 The bachelor bilingual education programme*

The three year programme leading to a bachelor degree in bilingual education is, unlike the name suggests, not a programme to train students in bilingual education, but a programme for students with a bilingual (migrant) background. Many have a teaching background in their home countries, work as teaching assistants in Norway and wish to qualify as regular teachers to improve their salary. No school fees are charged and scholarships are available from NAFO.

While the idea is that these teachers will be able to provide bilingual teaching services in primary or secondary school, in practice it is a major challenge for graduates to get a job. Many schools do not see the need for bilingual support and graduates of the programme have a difficult time convincing schools that they have something to offer. Another big problem is dropout. The students themselves often have insufficient Norwegian language skills to be able to follow the bachelor programme successfully. The bachelor programme is separate from the 'regular' teaching programme and the bilingual students do not follow classes with the other students.

For the students who were interviewed, the main reason for why they enrolled in the programme, was to support children from migrant backgrounds. For one student this was directly related to her own experience when she arrived in Norway as a young child in a small town and the school could not afford a teacher for her language. Another student came to Norway as an adult with a bachelor degree from her country of origin. She currently works as a teaching assistant and notices the gaps in the classroom between children who have Norwegian as their mother tongue and those from a migrant background. She felt that these children needed more support to be able to succeed.

Asked about the school environment, the students said they felt at home at HiOA and that the students from the bilingual teacher programme support each other a lot. Teachers are supportive too, but the students felt that they don't have much time for them. They are very satisfied with the quality of the programme, but their main concern was whether they would be able to get the chance to work.

The students also gave the peers some insights into the everyday discriminatory practices they were themselves subjected to in Oslo (including name calling on the street) and what they witnessed in the schools where they worked or which their own children attended. For example, in some schools in Oslo children are not allowed to speak their own language and speak to the bilingual teaching assistants only in a hushed tone, making sure that no one notices.

#### *2.4 The Master's programme in comparative and intercultural education*

The master's programme aims to provide increased knowledge and competence in education with a focus on both the Norwegian multicultural school and work related to education and development in an international context. Students choose an area of specialization, either the multicultural school or education and development in the global South. There are about 20 students in total.

The curriculum is organized in three modules: international education, human rights issues and theories of multiculturalism. The aim is that students reflect on choices made by schools and policies. It is a research based master, with no practical training offered.

The master's programme is attended by Norwegian students (many with a migrant background), EU-students and international students including from developing countries. Most have a background in education, they are teachers or principals. For the Norwegian students with migrant backgrounds and bilingual skills, the master's programme is supposed to improve their recognition in the schools, but as with the bachelor bilingual education programme, this remains a challenge.

The students engage in independent study on a variety of topics, including sociolinguistics, history of education, gender, AIDS and education, access to education, languages in education, girls access to education. They do field work to collect data in schools, they work with local education authorities, and the international students often go back for research to their home countries.

The master's student who was interviewed for the Peer Review, was very satisfied with the quality of the programme and especially with her fellow students. She said she probably learned more about multicultural issues from her classmates than from the programme itself. The reason why she enrolled in the programme is that there is a lack of expertise in her home country about multicultural issues in education and she wanted to gain more theoretical background.

### *2.5 The Role of NAFO*

Norwegian schools turn to both NAFO and the teacher training college at HiOA for advice on multicultural or linguistic issues. NAFO and HiOA have a good relationship and collaborate in developing programmes, they exchange information and are on the same page with regard to supporting children from migrant backgrounds. At the teacher training institute, NAFO organizes conferences and seminars for students, NAFO also maintains a website that students consult when they need resources for the class. And, as mentioned before, NAFO gives scholarships to migrant students. NAFO also provides ideas to master's students on topics for research. However, the work of NAFO is more focused on the schools and not on the teacher training programme itself.

## CHAPTER 3. THE PEER REVIEWED SCHOOLS IN LARVIK

### *3.1 Mesterfjellet secondary school*

Mesterfjellet is a secondary school (age 13-15) of about 175 students, 30% of which are from a migrant background. The school is based in Larvik, a coastal community of about 45,000 inhabitants. This school year, a merger is planned with Mesterfjellet plus two primary schools who will all be housed in a new building offering education from the first to the tenth grade.



At present there are 23 different languages spoken at Mesterfjellet. To support the students, the school provides dual-language teachers in Polish, Arabic, Somali, Albanian, Dari, Bulgarian and Kurdish. Further, students receive about 1-2 hours education in their own language per week (with History as a special focus). The purpose is to improve their Norwegian language skills; the students do not receive education in their

mother tongue. In addition, there are separate classes for students where they receive additional education in Norwegian. To establish the appropriate level of the pupil, the pupils are tested in Norwegian, Mathematics and English throughout the year. This mapping helps to provide the students with individually adapted education. When the pupils show sufficient development and understanding in Norwegian, they join the class curriculum.

Mesterfjellet has good results: only a few pupils dropout from secondary high school. The staff and teachers say that this success is due to the way the school organizes the separate classes for the students. The children are taught together until they have acquired sufficient Norwegian to move into the regular classes. The children also learn a lot from each other.

Furthermore, the school has regular team meetings and trainings ('we teach ourselves'). They have two extra teachers who spend a lot of time with the students. The bilingual students are not treated as special: *all* children are treated as being special. However, the staff stated that more bilingual teachers are needed but they do not have sufficient funds.

Another key to the success of this school, according to the teachers and confirmed by parents, is the warm and positive environment created for the students. 'We really try to make them feel welcome'. Students can call the teachers who have their mobile phones posted on the website, if they need help. The students know that the teachers care and they work hard. Fostering warm relations with students is something that the school looks for in the hiring process of new teachers and it is also what motivates teachers to work here. This was confirmed by the parents who felt that the school really supports each child individually. One parent mentioned for example, that his son was allowed to do an exam in English, instead of Norwegian, and that this gave his son enormous confidence. Another parent expressed surprise, that he had never heard any of his three children who all attended Mesterfjellet, say that they disliked a teacher. This was also confirmed by the students, although some of them said the school could perhaps do more to stimulate social contact with peers from Norwegian backgrounds.

The teachers said that Mjesterfjellet invests a lot of time in preparing students for upper secondary school. If they haven't submitted an application, the students are contacted and encouraged to apply. Similarly, there is a good relationship with parents. Parents confirmed that if there is anything wrong with their child, they immediately get a call from the school. In addition to the regular parent-teacher meetings, the school also organizes meetings where all parents are invited and issues of common concern of a class or the whole school are discussed.

With regard to the diversity of the staff, only two teachers have a migrant background (Bosnian), whereas most teaching assistants are from migrant backgrounds.

### *3.2 Thor Heyerdahl upper secondary school*

Thor Heyerdahl is a fairly new school, it was finished in 2009 and is housed in an impressive state-of-the-art building. It is named after the ethnographer, explorer and adventurer Thor Heyerdahl, who was from Larvik. Their "school-motto" or vision is to be "inquisitive, bold and outward-looking" – as he was. There are approximately 1650 pupils and 300 employees at the school. Approximately 11 % of the students are from minority language backgrounds. They speak 38 different languages, the languages most spoken are Arabic, Somali, Kurdish, Polish, Albanian and Bosnian.



What is remarkable about the school, is that, as the second largest school of their kind in Norway, Thor Heyerdahl had a drop-out last year of only 2.4 %. For minority-speaking students the figure was as low as 1.7 %.

The school offers a range of programmes, including vocational training (e.g. health services and social care, electronics, building and construction, restaurant and food processing), sports, music and dance, media and communication, design, arts and crafts. The programme Specialization in General Studies prepares students for further studies at university level.

The school has a department for student services, with health personnel and advisors catering for learning disabilities, social pedagogic needs, career guidance, etc. This service includes a coordinator for students with Norwegian as a second or third language. She gives information to students and teachers about what the school can offer this group of students. For example: extra lessons, bilingual teachers, Norwegian as a second language exams, training in basic skills.

The school only offers bilingual teaching in Arabic and Somali at the moment. They do not offer lessons in their different mother tongues, but the students may take exams at two different levels in their mother tongue instead of, or in addition to the most common third languages being offered (French, German and Spanish). English as a second language is mandatory for all students. If they have not lived in Norway for more than six years students may also take an exam in Norwegian as a Second Language, which is of equal value to the standard Norwegian exam.

All students are tested in Norwegian, Mathematics and English during the first two or three weeks of school. Shortly after this, there are meetings about each class with all teachers present. Plans are developed for all students on their needs and what actions to be taken so they can perform at their best.

### **The Combination Class**

A very important factor explaining the success of Thor Heyerdahl, is the close cooperation between policy makers and the middle-schools. This is unique for Norway,

according to NAFO, where, as pointed out above, there is a division of responsibilities for the primary and secondary schools on one hand (which are run by the municipality), and for the upper secondary schools on the other hand (which are run by the county). In Larvik, the county and municipality are working together with the secondary and the upper secondary schools. They did this among others by creating the Combination Class, which is strictly speaking functioning outside the legal framework. An exception was made and although the Combination Class is very successful, at the moment there is some uncertainty whether they will be able to continue the programme.

The Combination Class is a special class offered to 16-20 year olds who recently arrived in Norway. It is essentially a middle-school class preparing the students for upper secondary school. But because the class is located within the Thor Heyerdahl-School, it is easier for the students to integrate and learn together with their age group. They are also allowed to combine learning the basic skills in Norwegian with one or two subjects at upper secondary school-level.

At the Combination Class, students follow a course called 'Flex-Id' – learning how to live with a 'flexible identity', or being the 'cross cultural kid'. This helps students who come from all over the world, to come to terms with living in different cultures, at home, at school, in Norway, and managing the different expectations and hopes within these different environments.

The peers interviewed different groups of students (those who have been in Norway for several years and recent arrivals). All the students were very positive about the Combination Class. They all liked it and found it very useful as they are managing to learn Norwegian. Even those who arrived recently said that after several months they can already understand Norwegian quite well and they could get around and use Norwegian for everyday needs. They realized that they needed to learn the academic language and that this would take more time. They liked the flexibility of the Combination Class and the fact that they could take classes in mainstream programs if they excelled at the subject. Two girls took math in mainstream classrooms and will try to pass the end of school exam in math at the end of this year. The students said that

they like their teachers and had a good relationship with them. They found their teachers helpful and understanding.

The students also liked the Flex-id course. They said it helps them psychologically to come to terms with their situation. They felt that during that class they can honestly talk about how they feel, what bothers and frustrates them and they can ask and learn about the Norwegian culture and about each other's cultures and share personal stories. They thought it might be good if Norwegian kids would also get the Flex-id training to learn about themselves, their stories, their needs and about their own and other cultures. Interestingly, the students were not aware that the fact they are bilingual or sometimes even trilingual, could work to their advantage and that this is a long term asset.

Almost all students who were interviewed, found it difficult to connect with Norwegian students. They have friends from the Combination Class but no Norwegian friends either in school or outside school. They all believed that once they completed the Combination Class and join the mainstream it will be easier to have Norwegian friends. This was confirmed in the group of long term students who made friends now that they are in mainstream. When asked what the school could do to help them integrate better socially, they suggested organizing joint activities with the Norwegian students or have Norwegian students acting as social guides, something which is now done by the teachers.

The latter was confirmed by the teachers who were interviewed and who clarified that most of the migrant students don't have money to participate in after-school activities, like the Norwegian children. There could be a role for the school to stimulate interaction between the bilingual and Norwegian students. The teachers were very positive about the school and most even said they were proud to work at Thor Heyerdahl. They would like to have more communication among teachers, however. They felt that it would be more effective if they had more opportunities to talk to each other about the programmes and the students. At present, the issues often go directly to the leadership of the school.

### *3.3 The role of NAFO*

The support of NAFO for both schools consists of organizing gatherings where schools can share what they are doing to support language minority children. The schools can also ask advice and NAFO comes in and gives trainings. The NAFO website is used frequently by teachers, who find the resources very useful, but would like to have more. An advantage of being a focus school for NAFO is that some of the support is free. Other schools may have to pay for NAFO's services.

Both schools were positive about the support they were receiving from NAFO, but said it was not enough and that they would like more. For Mesterfjellet, which is facing a merger with two other schools, they would like NAFO to come in and educate all the teachers of the new schools. They also want teachers to focus on language in every subject (not just during the language classes) and felt that NAFO could help with that.



**Photo: the mayor of Larvik spoke a few words of appreciation during a lunch at the restaurant run by Thor Heyerdahl students.**

## **CHAPTER 4. PEER REVIEW ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this section, we discuss the central question of the peer review, namely what is the role of NAFO in providing support to teacher training institutes and schools across Norway related to migrant education? And how can this role be enhanced?

NAFO is the center for multicultural education in Norway and is set up as a division of the Ministry of Education, functioning under the direction of the Directorate for Education and Training . The law provides the basis for programmes that are aimed at improving the Norwegian language skills of migrant children. These programmes include provision of bilingual teachers and additional Norwegian language classes. As dropout among 15-19 year olds in general is high in Norway, but especially among migrant students, an important measure of the success of NAFOs work is reduction of the dropout rates.

NAFO provides direct support to schools that are specifically assigned to NAFO ('focus schools') and who need support with the education of children who have no or limited Norwegian language skills. The support is provided in the form of training for schools and teachers, organizing gatherings for schools and provision of resources for teachers through its website. NAFO also tries to bring together all the relevant institutions to collaborate and design programmes that are suited to the needs of migrant children.

In Larvik, the peers visited two of NAFOs focus schools and here, the result of NAFOs effort to bring together all policy makers and schools are clearly visible: dropout at these school is significantly lower than the national average. Our quick scan revealed that an important element of the success in Larvik is the dedication of the schools who foster a genuinely positive and warm approach of their students. With the help of NAFO, effective programmes have been designed that make sure that children acquire the necessary academic Norwegian language skills, but which are flexible enough to allow the students to move to the mainstream classes as soon as they are ready (the Combination Class). The peers were impressed by this, as well as the course provided to give migrant students a space for reflection about their identities as 'cross cultural kids' within Norwegian society (Flex-id). This clearly successful approach, should serve as a

best practice model and should be replicated across Norway and extended to all schools, not only the NAFO focus schools.

What would make the programmes even stronger however, is when the other side of the coin would also be addressed, namely the heritage language and culture of the children. The students who were interviewed for instance, had never considered it an advantage to be bilingual or trilingual. The website run by NAFO called Tema morsmal ('Theme mother tongue'), is a good example and provides resources that the schools can use.

Another way of addressing different sides of the same coin, is to extend the Flex-id programme to Norwegian students, who also need to learn how to make sense of their various identities: as Norwegians and as global citizens. Further, by involving Norwegian students in the special programme for the linguistic minority students, as suggested by the latter, the mutual integration may be enhanced. For example, Norwegian students may serve as 'social guides' for newcomers.

Schools who need support with linguistic minority students can seek help from both NAFO and from the teacher training college at HiOA, which they - with the noted exception of schools in Oslo - frequently do. NAFO and HiOA work closely together on this. There are several ways in which NAFO could further strengthen its role however, both at the national level, and in working together with the teacher training college.

NAFO works closely with schools, which means that they have first-hand knowledge of what is going on inside the schools. A collaboration with NAFO could therefore help HiOA to strengthen its programmes and ensure that the curriculum is streamlined with what is needed in the schools. NAFO could play a role in particular with strengthening the Norwegian language skills of the bilingual bachelor students. For example by creating a programme similar to the flexible Combination Class offered in Larvik. Offering a course like Flex-id to all teacher students at HiOA, may also be an effective way to enhance students' self-reflection within a culturally diverse environment which Oslo is rapidly becoming. Academic writing programmes, if these are not yet available, may also be an effective form of support for the migrant teacher students.

With regard to the students at HiOA, NAFO should increase its visibility at the teacher training college: provide more information about what NAFO does, opportunities for research (especially for the master's students) and about the scholarships NAFO provides to bilingual students. Another (strong) recommendation from the bilingual students is helping them with job placement, particularly with the bilingual students who have received scholarships from NAFO. Despite system level limitations (decided by the Directorate), NAFO could, for example, facilitate job placement by offering web space to schools who want to hire bilingual teachers and to graduates who are looking for a job. The same is true for assisting HiOA in creating a more culturally diverse teaching staff. NAFO's expertise may also be used to collaborate with HiOA to strengthen the Norwegian language skills of the bilingual students. An academic writing course may be effective for students who can speak Norwegian, but who lack the specific academic vocabulary required in higher education.

Finally, the peers think that NAFO could strengthen its profile by doing research themselves. This could greatly enhance NAFO's ability to set the agenda, a position they are exceptionally well prepared for, as their successful approach in Larvik has shown.

### **Recommendations:**

With regard to NAFO's role vis à vis the secondary schools:

- Replicate the strategy and approach used in Larvik to the rest of Norway; in particular the collaboration of policy makers and schools, and the creation of flexible programmes that allow migrant students to work on their Norwegian language skills and taking classes in the mainstream when they are ready;
- Expand the Combination Class and the Flex-id course to also foster the students' heritage language and culture as a way of further empowerment of the students;
- Extend the Flex-id course to Norwegian students;
- Increase the participation of Norwegian students in programmes for minority students to encourage social interaction between Norwegian and migrant students and/or create common courses in which both migrant and Norwegian students take part together.

With regard to NAFOs role vis à vis the teacher training college at HiOA:

- Support HiOA in strengthening its curriculum so that it aligns with what is needed in the schools; in particular with regard to the Norwegian language skills of the bilingual bachelor students in a similar flexible way as the programmes developed in Larvik and/or through academic writing programmes
- Increase NAFOs visibility within HiOA; provide more information to students about the role of NAFO and the scholarship programme;
- assist graduates from migrant backgrounds with finding employment and schools who are looking for bilingual teachers, for example by offering webspace for job advertisements ;
- assist HiOA in improving the diversity of the teaching staff.

In general:

- strengthen NAFOs profile nationally by directly engaging in research.
- given the unique strengths of the NAFO and HiOA, the peers suggest to explore possibilities for collaboration in a triangle with schools. The combination of expertise on dealing with diversity and school practice from NAFO and expertise on training teachers from HiOA could result in a powerful synergy and help schools further develop their policy in supporting all of their students to develop their talents.

\* \* \*

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## **ANNEX: PROGRAMME PEER REVIEW VISIT**

### **14 November 2013**

09.00-11.30	Presentation of and information about NAFO. Presentation about the educational system in Norway
11.30-12.30	Lunch
13.00-15.00	Presentation and tour of the teacher training college Interviews with staff, teachers and students of the bachelor in bilingual education and the master programme in comparative and intercultural education
15.15-15.45	Tea-break
15.45-16.30	Preliminary analyses of the results

### **15 November**

08.30-10.30	Travel to Larvik
10.30-11.00	Presentation and tour of two schools: Thor Heyerdahl and Mesterfjellet
11.00-11.45	Interviews with teachers and headmasters
11.45-12.45	Lunch
12.45-13.30	Interviews with parents and pupils
13.30-14.30	Analysis and complementary questions followed with tea- break
14.30-17.30	Travel back to Oslo