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Lifelong Learning Policies in Norway

LLL2010 SP1 Country Report

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Lifelong Learning in Norway
A Deflating Policy Balloon or an Act of Piecemeal Implementation?

Fafo-report 2007:30

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Preface

This is the national report on the contribution of the Norwegian education system to lifelong learning. The purpose is to provide input to a multi-country comparison of how education systems in 13 countries live up to the aim of lifelong learning. The report has been produced for the LLL2010 project, more precisely for its sub-project 1 entitled "Literature and policy review. Comparative policy analysis"[1]. LLL2010 is running for five years and forms part of the EU 6th framework programme. It is co-ordinated by Ellu Saar at the Institute for International and Social Studies, which is part of Tallinn University.

The national report on Norway is based on a detailed questionnaire on a number of policy documents and initiatives in the field of lifelong learning (LLL), tracked until the end of February 2006 and only partly updated since then. With some exceptions the structure of the report follows a template issued by the project co-ordinator. We have aimed to include most of the observations noted down in the questionnaire.

The report starts with an introduction to the education and training system, both in terms of educational institutions and of the historical background to LLL policies. The first section delineates theoretical perspectives influencing Norwegian scholars and considers the perspectives that are shared by research groups addressing LLL. This is followed by a section on national and international drivers within LLL policy and practice. We comment on how LLL is understood, defined and operationalised. This topic is expanded on in a section on the significance of four LLL concepts heralded by the European Union. Section 5 is devoted to the main patterns of provision of and participation in LLL, on a statistical basis. We then present further evidence of how policies are achieved by looking at changes in school curriculum and at available services for educational and vocational guidance. After the concluding section, we suggest some policy recommendations emanating from our national report.

The following commentators have provided invaluable input to earlier drafts of this report:

Sturla Bjerkaker (Norwegian Association for Adult Learning)

Helge Halvorsen (Norwegian Confederation of Enterprise)

[1] http://lll2010.tlu.ee/

Jonathan Payne (SKOPE[2] at the Cardiff School of Social Sciences)

Astrid K. M. Sund and her colleagues (Union of Education Norway)

Berit K. Teige (University College of Ålesund)

Throughout the process, my colleagues at Fafo have assisted in filling in lacunae. Although the comments and input were indispensable, the author bears full responsibility for any weakness in the report.

The title of the report alludes to a recent policy reform, known as the Competence Reform, aimed at putting Norway on an LLL track. As the present national report to LLL2010 coincides with the wrapping-up of this reform after a six-year implementation period, we ask whether the reform – and LLL in general – is deflating or whether it forms part of a gradual introduction of building blocks during the construction of an LLL framework.

[2] Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance

Summary

Partly inspired from the European Commission, OECD and other international organisations, the concept of lifelong learning is gaining ground in Norwegian political reforms and policy discussions. Its impact is stronger on decision-makers than in the Norwegian research community, which largely approaches lifelong learning via older notions such as further and continuing training. This discrepancy reflects a cautiousness towards new and possibly rhetoric concepts. The high ambitions behind LLL (to everybody) gives it a political flavour but the concept also pinpoints a need to address simultaneously many learning contexts (school, home, workplace, community etc.). No dominant research perspective on LLL prevails in Norway, nor has any academic discipline been preponderant in such analyses.

As a concept, LLL in Norway seems nowadays to have three main connotations:

- the provision of education and training during the whole life span
  (This is close to 'further and continuing training' but with an emphasis on a smooth transition between initial and continuing education)
- education and training from cradle to grave
  (This means that the entire education and training system should have multiple interfaces between levels and institutions)
- life wide learning
  (This implies appreciation of learning in different settings and life situations and points to systematic valorisation of non-formal and informal competencies)

As something more tangible for the average learner, LLL seems to embody three main-aspects:

- improved access to education and training
  (education at primary or upper secondary level guaranteed by statutory rights)
- adapted education for every learner offered during initial education and more tailor-made training for employees at work
- better appreciation of experiences gained in a wide array of learning contexts (i.e. validation of informal and informal competencies acquired in the labour market and civil society)

The present state of LLL is severely marked by the Competence Reform. The reform started in 1999 with sound political support and in the wake of lengthy discussions between the social partners on how to finance training leave for employees in further education. While on track, few objections were raised to the main direction of the reform because the democratic project at the heart of LLL (universal availability) coincides with a historical line of development in Norwegian education and training: the idea of a unitary school system. In spite of recent tendencies to question basic assumptions behind this idea, its underlying values are still shared by most stakeholders in LLL. The reform provided Norway with an advanced framework of individual rights, thus putting LLL in Norway on a judicial path guaranteed by the State. Moreover, the reform continued ongoing attempts to install practices that fall under a LLL paradigm. Equalisation of general and vocational education as well as smooth transition between education levels are examples of practices that were further cultivated.

At the point at which the wide-ranging 1999 reform is being wound up, the average learner is not yet offered substantial tools for translating learning experiences gained in the labour market and civil society. Comparisons of such experiences to the education system are not widespread either but experimentation on validation of prior learning goes on. Moreover, extensive devolution of responsibilities to local and regional level might slow down the implementation of LLL. There are historical reasons for a strong local control of education, community control and parents' influence on school. Future achievements in LLL will therefore depend on more than political determination and voluntarism at a central level.

LLL in Norway is basically a mixture of labour market and education and training policies. Provisions regulating work-based learning were added to basic agreements between the social partners in the mid-1990s. There are, however, few signs that these are widely applied. Following initial enthusiasm, lower echelons of the social partners showed no profound interest in developing the Competence Reform. Within the trade unions, which sparked off the mid-1990 LLL discussion, demands for educational benefits were not given high priority when compared with other claims subject to collective bargaining. The Competence Reform has hardly led to new permanent collaborative structures and practices between the social partners. Further and continuing training (and in a wider sense lifelong learning) is therefore less socially regulated than, for instance, initial vocational education. This creates high expectations on the State and, presently, trade unions rally behind projects financed by the State and supported by employers for raising the basic skills of employees with little formal education. If stakeholders in the labour market continue relying on the State as the main vehicle in pursuing further and continuing training, the social partner co-operation for lifelong learning might lose strength. Under such a scenario, it would be hard to count social partner arrangements for collective action in training among the pillars in what is often called a Nordic model of co-operation.

The need for broader mobilisation to achieve a better underpinning of LLL applies not only to the social partners but to all stakeholders in the field, such as study associations and other representatives of the civil society. A drop in participation rates both in work-based training and in learning organised by study associations is a further sign of a deflated LLL reform. Meanwhile, the State pursues ongoing work with an emphasis on equalising the offer of LLL and tries to alleviate side effects of the devolved education system. This piecemeal work characterises the present phase of LLL implementation in Norway. The recommendation for stimulating training in small and medium-sized enterprises included in this report further adds to the list of piecemeal LLL measures and arrangements.

Introduction: Main Features of the Education System and Historical Background to Lifelong Learning in Norway

This introductory section provides a general outline of the education and training system in Norway and of how lifelong learning (LLL) is understood. We then present the historical background to political, cultural and economic factors that have influenced developments in education and training. This background depicts the landscape in which LLL emerged as a policy concept.

Main types of educational institutions

The formal education and training system in Norway is divided into three levels:

1. 10 years of primary and lower secondary education to the age of 16
2. 3 years at upper secondary level in general education or 4 years in vocational training (i.e. two years vocational education at school and two years apprenticeship training in enterprises)
3. higher education, increasingly adapted to a Bachelor-Master-PhD (3+2+3) model

There is a tertiary level between the upper secondary level and higher education comprising studies of at least 6 months, at most 2 years. In 2000, private and public providers offered 46 courses of study of this type. By September 2006, 277 studies had been approved under a recent law on tertiary education[3].

The general financial rule is that municipalities receive a framework grant from the State for the provision of primary and lower secondary education. Counties receive a framework grant from the State for providing upper secondary education. The State is responsible for grants to higher education institutions, regulated in the annual budget procedure.

[3] cf. the 2003 Law on tertiary education: "Lov om fagskoleutdanning" http://www.lovdata.no/all/nl-20030620-056.html

Higher education is divided into different types of institutions[4]:

- 6 universities
- 25 university colleges
- 5 specialised university institutions
- 2 university colleges of the arts

There are no separate institutions for "older" students, tentatively defined as those aged 25+. Neither are there separate institutions for vocational students, but for historical reasons university colleges have been more geared towards vocational studies than universities. Today, most higher education institutions offer a mix of vocational and "academic" study programmes.

Adult education takes place in a variety of learning settings, partly in the public education system but mostly outside it; offered by employers and other providers, such as 14 distance education institutions. In addition, training offered by study associations is an important contributor. Throughout the report we will account for these associations while covering the citizenship dimension of LLL.

What is understood by lifelong learning?

The notion of lifelong learning as used in the LLL2010 project follows the standard definition originating in the European Commission Memorandum on LLL in which LLL is said to encompass "all purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies" (EC, 2000). A similar broad definition was proposed in the White Paper leading up to the Norwegian LLL reform. Here the concept covers all organised and unorganised learning throughout life, including formal and informal learning during work and other activities (St. meld. 42 1997–98:9). The concept is used primarily in policy papers and on the whole has not been assimilated in everyday language in the field of education and training. Although understandable to the average learner, the notion of LLL seems to cohabit with the older notions 'further and continuing education' or 'further and continuing training'.

In this report the concept of LLL will also be used interchangeably with 'education and training'. This has to do with the fact that when ministries are asked to report on national performance in LLL, they tend to refer to the entire field of education and

[4] http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dep/Underliggende-etater/Statlige-universiteter-og-hoyskoler.html?id=434505

training. This makes sense when it can be proved that the national education and training system is put on a LLL track. If that cannot be proved, we are often faced with LLL as a political slogan. Although 'lifelong learning' and 'education and training' are used interchangeably in parts of this report, we will comment on any rhetorical exploitation of the notion LLL.

Political, cultural and economic factors shaping education and training in Norway

Given that these factors are highly intertwined, it is more fruitful to study them as factors reflected in the interests defended by stakeholders in the field of education and training, such as social groups, political parties, the social partners and NGOs. We will illuminate factors and stakeholders in education and training over a period of 200 years. Finally, we present the main traits of lifelong learning as the notion is understood and implemented in Norway.

A unitary and egalitarian school system

The modernisation of the essentially agrarian Norwegian society was dominated by a process of cultural and democratic nation building. This 'project of nation building', which initially led to the Constitution of 1814, was underpinned by egalitarian values. Norway has never had a traditional land-owning nobility and cultural aristocracy. The core social groups that formed the emerging middle class during industrialisation consisted of small owners and entrepreneurs in industry, trade and commerce (cf. R. Sakslind et al. 2006). The smaller industrialists in particular had to strike compromises with a labour movement that was growing increasingly stronger. The outcome of these social and economic transformations has been called 'democratic capitalism' (F. Sejersted 1993).

The attitude towards knowledge under this regime was anti-intellectual and very much geared towards the *use* and *utility* of knowledge (R. Sakslind et al. 2006). In academic secondary education classical languages became alternatives to classics as early as 1869. Classical languages were considered antithetical to Norwegian culture (J. Lauglo 2002:312). In secondary education they primarily survived in Norway's major cities in institutions originally established for training priests in the dioceses[5]. A further illustration of the practical attitude to knowledge is provided by the fact that the first universities (1813 in Oslo, the Norwegian Institute of Technology in Trondheim in

[5] 'katedralskoler'

1910) generally taught practical subjects and to a lesser extent theoretical knowledge. Sakslind et al. refer in this regard to a "social contract" between academia and the State under which the universities exercised the freedom to train students into socially useful civil servants or into a practical profession.

The egalitarian and democratic values referred to above were partly shared by Norwegian elites and it has been pointed out that the strategic social actors (cf. De nasjonale strateger: R. Slagstad 1998) that appeared in the 19th century were civil servants and politicians with a practical approach to nation building. During this era, the State (embodied by key civil servants) directed or enacted a modern industrial economy (R. Slagstad 1998:60)[6].

Of further importance for the values underpinning the education system was the nature of the political mobilisation around the 'project of nation building'. Political nationalism was forged by radical, democratic and 'leftist' elements (cf. Sørensen 1994). In the same vein, other scholars have underlined that Norwegian nationalism had a distinctly rural and 'democratic' orientation. J. Lauglo (2002:308) refers to a confluence of 'folk nationalism', sometimes with a populist flavour, amalgamated with rural interests and the advancement of democratic political rights. The culture of freehold farmers was seen as the mediator of an ancient Norwegian tradition of freedom, egalitarianism and democracy. The creation of a proper national language ('Neo-Norwegian'), distinct from the Danish administrative tongue, placed schoolteachers in the intellectual vanguard of the 'national project' (R. Sakslind 2002:7).

This form of 'national project' privileged the democratisation of primary education and the construction of the 'unified school'. The year 1920 marks the definite instalment of the unitary school system. That year the National Assembly voted against continued public support to traditional private schools for the elites. Public money was instead concentrated on a seven year publicly financed school, free of any charges, accessible for all social strata and classes, without any general streaming of the learners (Sakslind 2002:8).

During the 18th and 19th centuries, European ideas on enlightenment gained ground in Norway. 'Local intellectuals' like priests and teachers were particularly active in rural areas (S. Tøsse 1995). This phenomenon can partly be explained by the localist (and also rural) tradition in education (J. Lauglo 2002:319), which affected formal and informal education. On the former, a strong localist tradition shaped the 1889 Education Act.

As to informal education, common Nordic traditions had a strong influence. As in Norway's neighbouring countries, *study circles* gradually became an alternative method of education (and even ideology). Above all, they recruited from the labour movement, the temperance movement and from nonconformist churches striving for independ-

[6] "en statlig iscenesatt kapitalisme"

ence from the State religion. Thus, this tradition had its origin in parts of civil society and it organised education and training independently from the State, the dominant culture and circles of power (Larsson 2001). Alongside study associations that often functioned as umbrellas over study circles, the institutionalisation of *popular enlightenment* took the form of 'folk high schools', which started to emerge during the 19th century. The very high appreciation of informal learning in the home, at the workplace and in the community goes back to this epoch (cf. J. Lauglo 2002:316).

At the end of the 19th century, when the Liberal (Leftist) Party gained strength and came to power as a social coalition between progressive farmers, urban intellectuals and radicals from the elite, the pragmatism of the elites from the industrial modernisation period was replaced by a new pragmatism; from now on anchored in a democratic 'education and decorum project'[7] based around egalitarian values originating in the old agrarian society (R. Sakslind et al. 2006).

The transition to a social democratic regime fifty years later did not immediately modify education and training policy. The fact that the Labour Party at the beginning of its reign (1935) formed a coalition with the Agrarian Party maintained common egalitarian values with a rural origin. J. Lauglo (2002) claims that compared with other social democratic parties in Western Europe, the Norwegian Labour Party has been a more determined advocate of the unitary school, more sceptical towards purely 'academic' secondary education and more attuned to rural interests (op. cit. 309).

Whether these egalitarian values came from the old agrarian society or from the labour movement in the emerging industrial society, and independently of their transmission via the 'civil servant modernisation wing of the Conservative Party'[8], from the Liberal (leftist) Party or from the Agrarian Party, similar egalitarian ideas on education prevailed.

During the "nation building project", the unitary school and general education were given priority, while vocational training remained a rather unstructured field. One consequence was a continuing deadlock in a series of plans to set up a training system for the crafts and modern industry. It is a historical paradox that this went on under the dominant concept of knowledge perceived as something useful for the nation and for a thriving industry and commerce (cf. R. Sakslind 2002:9; 2006). A clear sign of the deadlock was that from the 1850s onwards, farmers' representatives in the National Assembly voted against various vocational training schemes. Rural interests argued that that these schemes would increase public expenditure at the expense of the farmers.

This situation changed for the first time when in 1910 the National Assembly finally approved the founding of a Norwegian Institute of Technology. Another harbinger of change was the presentation in 1940 of the "Act on vocational training", which in

[7] "Danningsprosjekt"

[8] "Embetsmannshøyre"

educational terms represented a major step forward in the industrial modernisation of Norway. The pre-war draft version of the Act had been planned together with industrial interests. It sketched a framework for a panoply of vocational evening courses and trainee arrangements, in those days decoupled from the public school system (cf. A. O. Telhaug, O. A. Mediås: 2003:122). In the early post-war years, this Act was enacted and followed up by the "Act on Apprenticeship" (1950), regulating vocational training at secondary level. Before that, there had been no public, statutory regulations for apprenticeships in industry. Norway was a latecomer in this regard, at least compared with other industrialised nations (cf. R. Sakslind 2002:14).

The social democratic 'modernisation project' was i.a. marked by the advancement of vocational education in a coalition with forward-looking representatives from industry, trade and commerce. This project flourished in the early post-war years in particular, but the development and appreciation of vocational education in Norway was still retarded. One example is vocational qualifications above the level of apprentice certificates. In enterprises these qualifications are e.g. held by technicians and foremen. This level was not addressed by the 1950 Act and even after the establishment of technical-theoretical trade schools ("teknisk fagskole") in 1963, it remained unshaped as a no man's land between secondary and tertiary level (Bjørndal 2005:111). A separate Act from year 2000 regulating these trade schools considered them *de facto* as part of the system of upper secondary school. This limbo lasted until 2003 when the Act on tertiary vocational education was approved. Then a separate "intermediary level of technical competencies' started to be recognised as an independent vocational path.

The localist tradition in education referred to above was gradually attenuated by a central government more inclined to keep a close eye on the cohesion of the education system, i.a. by asserting more regulatory power over the curriculum (cf. J. Lauglo 2002:318). This regulation started in the 1920s and coincided with the strengthening of the Labour Party. The gradual centralisation of educational policies was instrumental in the construction of a modern Welfare State and a more egalitarian society, partly achieved by means of the unitary school system that ensured equal access to education for everybody in the same schools (cf. Aasen 2003:113). One milestone was the instalment of a 9 year comprehensive school (1969), followed by a principal decision by the National Assembly in 1971 to offer 3 years of voluntary upper secondary education to everybody (cf. I. Bjørndal 2005).

From the late 1960s and particularly in the 1970s, the centralised approach applied for obtaining structural change was played down (J. Lauglo 2002). This took place against the backdrop of growing concern that schools did not live up to many expectations behind the post-war reforms: Despite the fact that children went through seven-year comprehensive education and that a large majority received secondary education, differences in respect to class and gender, centre and periphery, manual and mental work were largely reproduced in schools and society (cf. P. Aasen 2003). The

strong belief in state planning was gradually attenuated by a strategy of governance that allowed more responsibility to local authorities (P. Aasen 2003:118). A similar analysis concludes that in the early 1980s *national and social unity* faded away as a policy goal to the benefit of *technical and instrumental goals* (A.O. Telhaug et al. 2006). The authors explain this shift as a result of globalisation, deregulation towards free markets and fierce economic competition between nation states, hitting Norway as well as other Nordic countries.

The first half of the 1990s saw a period of reform of upper secondary and higher education with consequences for practices that ten years later were referred to as lifelong learning.

A confident Labour Party started to transform its modernisation project. Different from the post-war "catching-up" after decades of limbo, knowledge was now increasingly considered as a strategic tool in dealing with new challenges after the reconstruction and post-1968 consolidation period.

The first sweeping reform was explained in a 1991 White Paper on higher education announcing systematic use of research results in all sectors of society, increased international co-operation and recruitment of more students to studies at higher education level (cf. St. meld. 40 1990–91). The localism in higher education had resulted in 98 regional university colleges serving a population of just 4.2 million inhabitants. To counteract this dispersion, the number of local institutions was reduced to 26.

The White Paper also introduced more collaboration and a better division of labour between universities and university colleges. Network Norway was the label and later the name of a public agency supporting the process in higher education.

Simultaneously, a major reform of secondary education ("Reform 94") led in 1994 to the formal incorporation of the apprenticeship system into vocational education and allowed the social partners to have a say in the new vocational education system (I. Bjørndal 2005). In addition, the reform introduced a statutory right for adolescents to three years of upper secondary education, as well as a new 2+2 model of vocational education and training. This model consists of two years vocational education at school and two years apprenticeship training in enterprises. At the same time, more job-related theory was included in vocational education and the study programmes became broader and less specialised. General and vocational education at upper secondary level formed an equal platform, leading either to studies at the level of higher education or to a job in the labour market. Moreover, vocational students had access to higher education, provided that they had a certain combination of theoretical subjects (cf. St. meld. 33 1991–92). Seen together, these reforms were an attempt by the incumbent Labour Party to adjust general education and training policy while maintaining the unitary school as a key goal. Throughout the 1990s, a management-by-objectives duality gained ground: both national and local control, both control and freedom, etc. (P. Aasen 2003:132). This decade also gave rise to the 'evaluative state': follow-up research

and evaluation should provide input to policy corrections or adjustments, also in the field of education and training (ibid.).

> More recently, "The Knowledge Promotion Reform" has been the subject of less political strife than education reforms in the early 1990s. Originally instigated by the Labour Party by means of the work of a commission bearing the irreproachable name of "The Quality Commission", its work was later redefined and implemented by a new centre-right government. Launched in 2005, the reform addresses primary, lower and upper secondary education. Potential implications for LLL strategies can be traced in ongoing efforts to develop and introduce new curricula, particularly in terms of bridging vocational and general education[9] as well as linking curricula at different education levels. We will enlarge on this in section 6 of the report.

A second major strand is the panoply of initiatives to raise the competencies of teachers and head teachers. This complies with the reforming of education and training in the 1990s when emphasis was put on teachers' training for collaboration between teachers with different qualifications and in order to increase their social competencies (P. Aasen 2003:132).

Although education policy after the Second World War was the subject of debate, the position of the *unitary school system* was never severely contested and received wide political support (A. O. Telhaug 1994:93). The social democratic 'modernisation project' encountered more resistance in other domains, such as economic regulations. The main direction and objective of the educational agenda has not been particularly contested. During the long post-war rule of the Labour Party, the strife among political parties centred on how to organise the educational paths (B. Furre 1991:319).

Nowadays, after ten years of shifting governments, the political debate shows that the *unitary school system* is increasingly contested. Some of the most recent reforms, introduced by non-socialist governments, do not by default regard the school as primarily a fabric of equality. However, egalitarian values still have a strong hold among many social groups, political parties, social partners and NGOs active in the field. This interpretation is supported by P. Aasen (2003:134) when he looks back on the 1990s:

> "Even though there were tendencies to view education more as an individual civil right, education was still defined as a collective enlightenment project for the public good".

The reforms continued the policy of improving access to education and introduced measures to reduce achievement pressure, whereas learning was defined as an active, productive and democratic process. Aasen (2003) concludes his retrospective review

[9] cf. 'Programfag til valg' at primary level and 'Prosjekt til fordypning' at upper secondary level.

by pointing out that the comprehensive school was defended at the same time as local and community-oriented curricula were promoted (ibid.)

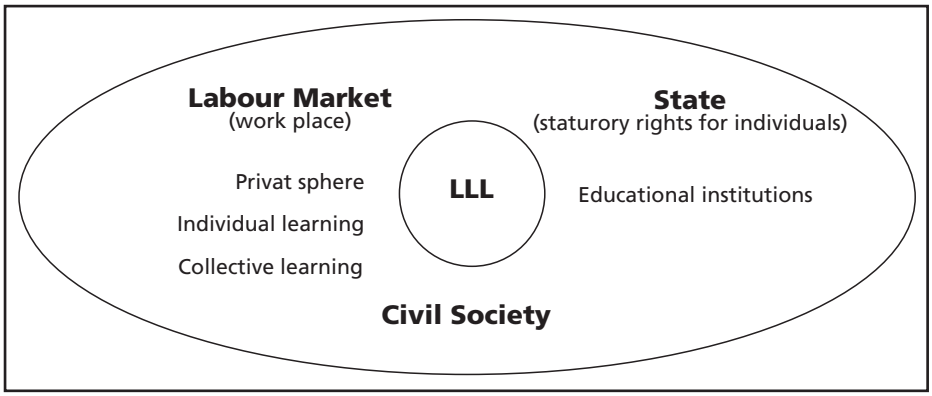
In a flashback on informal education, which at the beginning of this section we traced back to the 18th and 19th century ideas on enlightenment, it is worth mentioning that during the entire post-war period, an ancient but still ongoing discussion has marked adult education: To what extent should courses prepare participants for the labour market or for participation in civil society? Throughout the 1970s, even the most alternative (anti-establishment) adult education courses increasingly became dependent on public funding. In general, the flourishing of adult education set up for personal development and civic values have depended on the State's ability and willingness to subsidise study circles around such themes instead of, e.g., investing in labour market training for the unemployed (O.B. Ure 2006a).

Looking back, it appears that the idea of LLL has gradually been introduced over the last 30 years. Although not yet completely assimilated in the terminology of education and training, the notion of lifelong learning is gaining ground in Norwegian political reforms and policy discussions. There is an ambition to streamline the education and training system according to an LLL perspective. This was also pointed out by S. Michelsen and H. Høst (2002):

"Initial VET (vocational and educational training) has been reconstructed and supplied with a considerable curriculum of general subjects, and adult education has been broadened from its original humanistic conception to include the economic arena. High priority has been given to the development of a consistent educational system adequate for the task of lifelong learning".

The main points in our historical introduction can be summarised in the illustration below.

Illustration 1 Main traits of lifelong learning in Norway



The State had a steering hand during the 'nation building project' and later became a guarantor of statutory right to education for all citizens. The evolution from an agricultural to an industrial (and later post-industrial economy) placed the labour market in a central position for the design of an education system. For the individual, the labour market – mediated at the workplace – can be a learning space. The learner has a private sphere, which might serve as a space for individual learning. Beside collective learning experiences gained at the workplace, the individual as a citizen is offered collective forms of learning e.g. transmitted by study associations close to civil society. Under the paradigm of lifelong learning, educational institutions are becoming instruments for assuring training in accordance with the statutory rights for citizens. These institutions are also in charge of providing collective, individual and even "adapted" learning to the citizens.

Our historical retrospective has featured education and training practices akin to an LLL perspective. In section 3–6 of this report we will track measures for implementing LLL policies. Before that, we will address theoretical perspectives on LLL and drivers on LLL policy and practice.

1 Theoretical Perspectives

This section starts with an outline of some major strains of thought influencing Norwegian analyses in the field of LLL. We then go on to discuss the LLL perspectives shared by groups of researchers in Norwegian research institutions.

Literature influencing academic/scientific analysis on LLL

Two main strands of such literature can be identified: one according to the disciplinary origin of the academic writers, another centred on the distinct research perspectives they propose.

To some extent, academic studies of post-compulsory education and LLL follow academic disciplines. We accordingly see that economists, sociologists, political scientists, pedagogues and technologists analyse LLL with an accent on their disciplinary origin. One example is the *pedagogical approach* to the understanding of adult learning, which can be said to rely on pedagogy specifically adapted for adults.

Similarly, lifelong vocational training can call upon pedagogy specially developed for vocational purposes. Pedagogy as a discipline contains numerous sub-fields of relevance for analyses of LLL practices. One sub-field is 'adult pedagogy' (cf. Norges forskningsråd 2004) and specialised institutions for research into 'adult pedagogy' have been set up but later discontinued. The continuation is now ensured by Vox, the National Centre for Learning in Working Life.

The emergence of special branches of pedagogy has led to fierce criticism from some intellectuals. A not very benign notion has been proposed, 'hyphen-pedagogy', defined as a compensation for the absence of a scientific nucleus in the 'science of pedagogy' (R. Slagstad 1998:444).

The all-encompassing dimension of LLL seems however to force scholars into multidisciplinary thinking. As the concept of LLL has probably had a stronger impact on decision-makers than in the Norwegian research community, there is no flourishing academic literature specifically addressing LLL. More academic works have covered further and continuing training (FCT). Concerning the wider notion LLL, several evaluations of LLL measures launched within the framework of the Competence Re-

form have been commissioned by policy-makers (cf. Helland, Opheim 2004, Døving et al. 2001-6, Agenda 2003).

Moving on to the research perspectives, there are numerous Norwegian studies of the work place as a learning organisation and the conditions for learning and change in organisations. Such studies call upon theoretical work on Human Capital, Human Resource Management, Industrial Relations and a combined micro-/macro approach to education and training. We will briefly account for each of these perspectives that can be related to lifelong learning.

Human capital theory going back to Gary S. Backer's works from the mid-1960s (cf. his revised book from 1993) has inspired Norwegian scholars, but without giving birth to any major research milieu, e.g. studies of the effects of education levels on the individual's income.

Neither have academic circles in Norway been profoundly affected by the debate on '*the political economy of skills*'[10] (cf. Kathleen Thelen (2004); Lloyd, C. and Payne, J. (2004) and '*the political economy of workplace learning*' (cf. D. Ashton 2003). Similar perspectives as those proposed by Thelen in her seminal 2004-study of Germany, Britain, the US and Japan, is however present in the anthology edited by T. Halvorsen and O.J. Olsen,1992 and R. Sakslind, 2002 (see below). Thelen's central thesis is that national trajectories for skill formation and plant-based training depend on differences in the "coalitional alignments" among employers in skill-intensive industries, traditional artisans and early trade unions. Her analysis of institutional arrangements governing skill formation therefore delves into the past, – in the German case back to the 1870s. A similar zest for the historical determination of present education and training policies is shared by most scholars when explaining the survival of the Norwegian unitary school system (cf. the introduction to this report).

Scholars writing on these themes often defend critical views on the utilisation of skills in today's society and they tend to refute slogans proclaiming the 'knowledge society' and the omnipresence of high-skill jobs (cf. Lloyd, C. and Payne, J. (2004).

Human resources management in an embryonic form goes back to the influential Norwegian researcher, Einar Thorsrud, who together with fellow researchers at the Tavistock Institute in London analysed relations between employees and management in Norwegian and British companies (cf. E. Thorsrud & F. E. Emery 1969). Notwithstanding the legendary title *Industrial Democracy*, this research tradition scarcely tables the influence of employees' on the work organisation (E. Falkum 2007: chapter 3), including the issue of co-determination in the formulation of FCT strategies in enterprises. This strain of thought can be considered a forerunner of the anti-Taylorist Human Resource Management tradition (ibid.), and its application in the field of training, namely Human Resources Development (cf. D. O'Donnell et al. 2006).

[10] cf. Kathleen Thelen (2004); Lloyd, C. and Payne, J. (2004).

A common point for many research institutes working on LLL or FCT is how they reflect a national system of *Industrial Relations* (IR) marked by widespread collaboration between various layers of employees and management. Such a 'culture of enterprise co-operation' is certainly shared with other Nordic countries and for example with Germany. What is important in our description of theoretical perspectives on LLL in Norway is that such a system of Industrial Relations structures the way in which the theme of LLL itself is covered. The right of employees at least to be informed about organisational and technological changes at the workplace, and even to influence such changes, is a constituting element in the Norwegian IR-system that i.a. contains collective agreements specifying access for employees to continuing vocational training (cf. Basic Agreements between employers' and employees' organisations).

These features have caught the attention of scholars assessing Norwegian LLL; one at the University of Warwick (J. Payne, 2005), the other at the Queens College, City University of New York (J. R. Bowman, 2005). Both authors focus a great deal of attention to how Norwegian education and training is embedded in relations between the social partners and the State.

A final research perspective can be identified by looking at whether researchers herald *a micro or a macro perspective on LLL*. An influential contributor to a micro perspective on learning is the sociologist Martin Baethge at SOFI[11] in Göttingen. He has also been edited in Norway (cf. T. Halvorsen, O.J. Olsen 1992). His perspective on learning i.a. reflects the ways in which qualifications shape social identities and allows for studies of conditions for self-organised learning. Without neglecting the socio-economic factors affecting LLL, he analyses micro-conditions for how LLL interacts with labour market policies (Martin Baethge, Volker Baethge-Kinsky 2004). Hence, while analysing the employability dimension of LLL he insists on going inside the labour market and on looking at how the work is organised at the level of the firm.

Lifelong learning perspectives found in Norwegian research institutions

Competing or at least different perspectives are defended by individual researchers in any institution. Below, we will instead present approaches heralded by groups of researchers within various institutions studying aspects of LLL. Given that Norway has numerous research institutes conducting evaluations in this field, these institutes will be presented together with university-led research on LLL.

[11] Soziologische Forschungsinstitut an der Georg-August-Universität Göttingen

Starting from the perspective of our own team, Fafo - Institute for Labour and Social Research, has carried out studies at the intersection between 'Arbeitspolitik' and 'Bildungspolitik'[12]. Studies issued by Fafo shed light on labour market and education/training aspects of LLL. In the field of industrial relations, 'learning at work' is central in understanding patterns of collaboration between employees and employers for developing work organisations. Consequently, training programmes at the workplace have been scrutinised by various research teams. Within the framework of a contract for the development and updating of a national Learning Condition Monitor, 'learning outcomes' of FCT (including work based training) is being surveyed.

To some extent, "the workplace as a learning arena" has been a paradigm for the institute's work on LLL. Along with studies on vocational training, traineeship and validation of non-formal and informal competencies, Fafo has followed the national LLL reform, i.a. by evaluating a programme for workplace learning (the Competence Development Programme 2000-2006). In the field of 'Bildungspolitik', Fafo is currently evaluating parts of the 'Knowledge promotion reform', which from 2006 onwards started to redesign education from primary to upper secondary level.

Workplace learning has also been at the centre of research carried out at the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Teacher Education, part of Akershus University College. The education of vocational teachers and the research carried out at this faculty refers to a framework for learning departing from 'vocational pedagogy'. Within the research programme PUAF[13], learning is understood as the creation of identity. The social learning process around education and work is also emphasised.

A broad approach to learning has also been applied by a group mainly comprising sociologists, political scientists and historians that for many years, jointly and separately, has been studying qualification structures. The group has primarily analysed the interplay between organisational structures, industrial relations and the education system in the formation of occupational and professional groups. The researchers have extensively covered vocational training (cf. S. Michelsen, H. Høst 2002), including in a comparative context (cf. R. Sakslind 1998), and have drawn on referential works at LEST[14] in Aix-en-Provence. More recently, they have delivered an evaluation of a reform in higher education (S. Michelsen 2006[15]) and are working on how knowledge shapes social and cultural identities of Norwegian professions and expert groups (R. Sakslind et al. 2006). The comparative dimension is also present in these more recent

[12] Applied together, these terms quite precisely capture the relationship between work and knowledge.

[13] Program for yrkespedagogisk utdannings- og arbeidslivsforskning, cf. http://www.hiak.no/forsk/puaf/index.shtml

[14] Laboratoire d'Économie et de Sociologie du Travail.

[15] http://www.rokkansenteret.uib.no/vr/Kvalitetsreform/Dok/Delrapport%201%20-%20Kvalitetsreformen.pdf

works (cf. R. Sakslind 2006). The researchers in question are based at the University of Bergen and in its affiliate, the Stein Rokkan Centre for Social Studies[16].

A research unit at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU ViLL[17], specialises in knowledge, learning and qualifications with an emphasis on adults in LLL. Among the themes this unit addresses are how adults learn at work and in their daily lives as well as how learning depends on a person's life history and life experiences. The focus of the unit's research has traditionally been the role of adult education associations and NGOs belonging to the 'movement of popular enlightenment'. More recently, they have conducted research on skills development among vulnerable groups, such as immigrants.

The SINTEF research institute has a Department of Knowledge and Strategy (KUNNE)[18]. This unit views knowledge as a phenomenon closely connected to practice. A multidisciplinary group of researchers builds on a humanistic tradition, understanding knowledge as an outcome of the interaction between people as well as between people and technology.

The Institute for Social Research (ISF) has mainly studied LLL from an economic perspective. A number of studies focusing on the labour market effects of training and the economic return of education and training have been conducted at the institute[19]. Some of these studies take human capital theory as a point of departure.

The contribution of LLL to value creation and business development has also been featured by other research institutes strong in economic analyses, but in that case concentrating on the level of the firm. E.g. a group of researchers at the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration and the affiliated Institute for Research in Economics and Business Administration, have studied Human Resource Management practices in Norwegian enterprises from the perspective of knowledge management and intellectual capital (cf. Odd Nordhaug 2003). In line with original attempts of linking FCT to industrial democracy, they argue that these practices are more collaborative than in many other countries, partly as a result of being embedded in an industrial relations system with strong labour unions (Gooderham, Nordhaug and Ringdal, 1999).

The NIFU STEP research institute studies innovation, research, and education. Its mission is to provide theoretical and practical insight from a social science perspective into the dynamics of these themes, while contributing to policy-making. The institute has generally covered issues such as the organisation, management and funding of

[16] http://www.rokkansenteret.uib.no/area/?/$present&id=8

[17] http://www.svt.ntnu.no/vill/english/

[18] http://www.kunne.no/

[19] For a summary, see for example: P. Schøne, H. Torp 2005.

higher education institutions, as well as studies on the transition from school to the labour market, and on the role of higher education institutions in lifelong learning (Brandt, 1999). To some extent, the emphasis placed on the formal education system distinguishes NIFU STEP from other research institutes in Norway.

The Work Research Institute (AFI) is a social science institute performing multidisciplinary, action-oriented research. Its roots go back to the 1960s, under the leadership of Einar Thorsrud. Subsequent studies on the organisation of work have enabled researchers at AFI to identify practices of collective experiential learning (cf. O. Eikeland 1999). At the level of the firm, they have also analysed how knowledge i.a. depends on relations between staff categories and on management strategies. In short, the relational dimension of learning seems to be a recurrent theme emphasising how knowledge is created in relationships between the individual, enterprises and educational institutions. A tendency towards 'self-qualification', due to an increasing individualisation of responsibility and work conditions, modifies the way in which learning takes place (cf. T. Deichman-Sørensen 2005). These processes are mainly analysed in qualitative studies and have been nurtured by evaluations of public education and training programmes as well as studies on restructuration of enterprises.

Summary

As the concept of LLL has probably had a stronger impact on decision-makers than in the Norwegian research community, researchers have to a large extent approached LLL via older notions such as further and continuing training. This discrepancy reflects a cautiousness towards new and possibly rhetoric concepts. The high ambitions behind LLL (to everybody) sometimes give it a political flavour but the concept also pinpoints a need to address simultaneously many learning contexts (school, home, workplace, community etc.). In general, no dominant research perspective is about to prevail in Norway; nor has any academic discipline been preponderant.

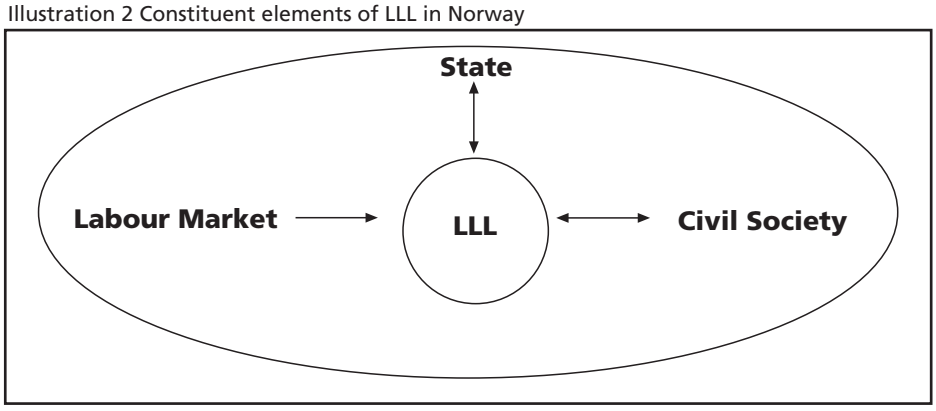
The emphasis in many LLL initiatives on workplace learning goes hand in hand with research on the role of the workplace in shaping personal and professional identities. Such research often draws on several academic disciplines and may be of a comparative nature, highlighting education as part of a social and cultural system. Similarly, the birth of LLL initiatives in the context of wage negotiations underlines the relevance of Industrial Relations perspectives. Moreover, several research groups active in the field of LLL and further and continuing training are inspired by a humanistic anti-Taylorist HRM tradition. Along a similar line of thought but clearly rooted in economics, human capital theory has been used to look for economic return of investments in education and training.

2 Drivers within LLL Policy and Practice

The major driving forces shaping LLL policy and practice in Norway are related to the political, cultural and economic factors discussed above. In this regard, one concern has been how to design the public school system and consequently the issue of how *the State* is involved in developing it, from the local level up to the central level. In addition, the relationship between the school system and the *labour market* undoubtedly shapes Norwegian education and training. Another issue is how the school system relates to *civil society,* beyond the labour market and the economic sphere. This is often called the citizenship dimension of education and training. We assume that the main constituent elements of the education and training system are the Labour Market, the Civil Society and the State. Given that the concept of LLL has a non-Norwegian origin and in view of the fact that international organisations are important for the policy learning in this field, we will briefly assess the role of EU, OECD and UNESCO.

The major driving forces in LLL, or constituent elements, can be illustrated as follows:

Illustration 2 Constituent elements of LLL in Norway



Constituent elements of the education and training system

The role of *the State* was covered in the historic introduction to this report. There should be no need to argue further for the impact of its steering hand during the project of nation building and until the most recent public measures in the field of LLL.

As to the *labour market*, one of the main instigators of national LLL reform, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), identified further and continuing training (FCT) for the entire workforce as one of its prime targets. This took place in the early 1990s against the backdrop of economic recession and rapid technological and social change. LO was concerned that rising unemployment and high labour costs would primarily hit low-skilled employees in manufacturing industries (Teige 2007).

Given this situation the labour union attempted to reach agreement with the employers on exchanging more training for employees against lower pay rise. LO and its counterpart on the employer side, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO), agreed to add a separate chapter in the 1994 Basic Agreement (ibid.). This chapter established FCT as a joint responsibility, and required employers to pay for FCT in response to in-company needs. Similar chapters were later included in Basic Agreements between other social partner organisations in Norway. After these regulations developed as part of the social dialogue on FCT, a political process followed by the elaboration of a governmental Green Paper on LLL (1997) and later a White Paper (1998), leading up to the Competence Reform of 1999 (Ure and Teige 2003).

The rapid implementation of the framework for this reform can be explained by the fact that it was well rooted among the social partners but without entailing permanent collaborative practices between them. One temporary institution (of structures and practices) was a "Joint Secretariat" between the Confederation of Norwegian Trade Unions and the Confederation of Norwegian Business, supported by a wider network embracing all social partner organisations (cf. Teige 2007). The secretariat was set up to support the implementation of the reform but, after two years, the employers' association (NHO) withdrew when its first period elapsed. An additional reason was that the operating procedures of the secretariat were deemed too bureaucratic to serve a longstanding purpose (cf. Døving et al. 2006). Another candidate to become an LLL institution, understood as a junction of structures and practices, was the "Forum for Competence and Working life". It was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research to give advice on the main direction of the Competence Reform. Although most stakeholders, and above the social partner organisations, were invited to the forum; it did not develop into any permanent corporative structure. In other words, the forum was not added to the long list of such structures often related to a 'Nordic model of social partner co-operation' with a scent of corporatism.

The result is that the reform did not end in any new co-operative arrangements between the social partners. As suggested by some of those involved, it may be that these arrangements were only apt for specific and preliminary tasks (cf. E. Døving et al. 2006). It is however worth noticing that the social partners did not redefine their purpose with a view to maintain some institutionalised collaboration that could complement numerous informal contacts. The state of affairs in FCT for the labour market is therefore that it is less socially regulated than other domains of education and training such as the apprenticeship system (cf. our historical introduction). The legislative regulation in terms of statuory rights is however thorough. Consequently, FCT policy becomes more vulnerable to whimsy public awareness and shifting coalitions. Another consequence of the lacking regulation of FCT by the social partners is that the steering hand of the Norwegian State becomes very visible. Hence, stakeholders in the field of FCT (and lifelong learning in general) tend to rely on the State as the main vehicle in the follow-up of the Competence Reform.

Another important driver is the *civil society dimension* of LLL, linked to personal development and active citizenship. This dimension is emphasised by some adult education associations and by the folk high school movement as a whole. Adult education associations (or study associations) play a central role in Nordic popular (or liberal) education (S. Larsson, 2001).

Around 600,000 registered course participants attended courses held by Norwegian adult education associations in 2005.

Folk high schools have approximately 6,000 places distributed between 80 schools located throughout Norway. Most of them are boarding schools that are owned and run by different groups and bodies, ranging from Christian organisations to local councils and independent foundations.

Study associations vividly illustrate the civil society dimension of LLL. They were born during the early years of the 20th century and recruited primarily from the labour movement, the temperance movement and from nonconformist churches striving for independence from the State religion. Thus, this tradition had its origin in parts of civil society that organised education and training independently from the State, the dominant culture and circles of power (cf. Larsson 2001). In the political and ideological climate of the 1970s, adult education was considered a key element with regard to equality in living conditions, in the sense that adult education permitted to reach out to socially underprivileged groups (Rubenson 2001:221).

From the end of the 1970s and onwards, the position of adult education and of popular education became weaker. Thus, just 4 years after a Norwegian law on adult learning was enacted in 1976, which injected more public subsidies into liberal adult education, the impetus faded away. Throughout the 1980s public budgets for education were increasingly directed towards labour market training, especially when the

unemployment rate started to rise at the beginning of the decade (Tøsse 1996:4). Participation in courses run by adult education associations (incl. study circles) reached a peak of 902,000 participants in 1980. The number gradually then dropped to 614,000 in 2001, followed by a slight recovery before a record low score of 594,000 in 2005 (See more complete statistics in section 5 of this report).

It is however hasty to conclude from this that the citizenship dimension of LLL is vanishing. At least we need to add two nuances to the picture of shrinking participation. Firstly, the fact that all pupils in upper secondary education undergo a broad general education, even when they specialise in vocational subjects, in principle supports their preparation as citizens living in other social contexts than the labour market.

Secondly, although the two driving forces identified above point in different directions, there are certainly crossing-points between LLL defined in a labour market context vs. in a civil society perspective. Labour market training in a strict sense is linked to the economic sphere but simultaneously calls upon vocational education understood as 'the practical culture of knowledge' valorising the self-identity of vocational practices (Heikkinen, A. & Laiho, K.).

This is close to the emancipatory aspects of education, transmitted in training courses set up to underpin civil society. Hence, while linking LLL to personal development there are interfaces both to the labour market and to the civil society. As we will describe in section 3, there are attempts to make LLL operational by 'translating' competencies acquired in different settings. The aim is to compare and validate learning in a labour market context, the civil society and the formal education system. Given that it has taken more time than expected to introduce translation mechanisms between these learning contexts, ongoing attempts to validate prior learning have not yet definitely contributed to linking the labour market and the civil society dimensions of LLL.

LLL policies and objectives of EU, OECD and UNESCO

International organisations like UNESCO were important in commissioning academic works and policy reports leading to the notion of LLL in the 1970s (cf. T. Schuller et al. 2002:2).

Following the ambitious Lisbon 2010 agenda of the EU, and with reference to the agreement on a European Economic Area, Norway is partly involved in the implementation of EU policies for education and training, including in the field of LLL. Along with the Member States, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has therefore reported on the correlation between Norwegian national policies and the EU policy agenda.

This reporting illustrates how the ministry regards Norway's performance with regard to EU policies. Unlike the Open Method of Policy Co-ordination applicable to the EU Member States, there is no written feedback from the European Commission to the Norwegian government.

The 2005 progress report to the European Commission states that the Norwegian Government "has a corresponding view" on the strategic goals on education and training set out in the Lisbon strategy. Moreover, these goals "indirectly (...) form part of Norway's educational and research policy".

Concerning ongoing efforts in the EU to establish common frameworks in higher education (ECTS) and in vocational education and training (ECVET), as well as to increase the transparency between qualifications acquired in school and at work, it is said that Norway is "in the process of developing a qualifications framework". A ministerial working group has been set up for this purpose and it is stated that:

> "In general, Norway supports the idea of establishing a framework system oriented towards learning outcomes, supported by arrangements for quality and transparency at different levels in a lifelong learning perspective" (ibid., p. 18).

One section of the ministerial report is devoted to areas most in need of action. These areas are defined in line with how Norway has scored in recent international surveys, above all the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Hence, attention is paid to the fact that many pupils lack skills in reading, arithmetic and general science[20]. None of the measures forming part of the Competence Reform are directly mentioned in the list of areas for urgent improvement, apart from a clause stating that Norwegian students in higher education use a relatively long time to complete their studies and that many of them break off their education.

In sum, the progress report from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research reflects a strong will to pursue the Lisbon agenda.

There is direct feedback from *OECD* on Norway's performance in LLL. A review of Norwegian policies for LLL was published in 2002 in the aftermath of a country study visit. In this review the high level of educational attainment and investments in education is praised. It is pointed out that "the most unsettled issue is leadership" and it is questioned whether there are enough available instruments in the Competence reform for "concerted action by multiple ministries as well as the social partners" (OECD 2002).

This diagnosis was very generally phrased and did not distinguish itself from any general plea for policy co-ordination. An intervention by the OECD Director for Education, delivered in November 2004 at the Norwegian Forum for Competence

[20] Among those aged 15, one in five cannot or can only with great difficulties read a simple text.

and Working Life, has probably had stronger impact on domestic LLL policy than the 2002 country report. In his speech, Barry McGaw questioned the output side of Norwegian LLL and rhetorically asked "how much LLL is enough?" in an economy with high labour productivity but a moderate quality in school learning. Besides repeating the need for 'a whole-government approach to LLL', the OECD Director suggested the pursuit of work on validation of prior learning by approaching economic sectors with requirements for specific validation instruments.

A recent OECD thematic review of equality in Norwegian education discusses issues and recommendations for improvement. Below we will briefly present the OECD remarks most directly linked to LLL measures (OECD 2005a:47):

1. The lifelong perspective on learning in terms of the provision of different phases (from kindergarten to university) is praised as a 'comprehensive network of opportunities'.
2. The parity of esteem between general and vocational education should be preserved and further improved by better counselling services.
3. Basic education should only be reformed cautiously in order to ensure that smooth transitions from school to work are not damaged.
4. Opportunities for adults (including immigrants) to qualify for studies at tertiary level should be uniformly available throughout the whole country.
5. More emphasis should be given to the principle of adaptive learning.

Norwegian work within the framework of *UNESCO* is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research. An indication of the importance attached to UNESCO is that a former minister of education is currently a member of the Executive Council and that another minister with the same portfolio was director of the International Institute for Educational Planning until the end of 2005. In line with its priority on 'Education For All', a major impact of UNESCO in a Norwegian setting is probably the mobilisation of adult learners throughout an entire week devoted to this theme and organised as an annual event. Thus UNESCO seems to contribute to the embedding of the citizenship dimension of LLL.

In addition, UNESCO's global outlook adds a North-South perspective to education and therefore goes beyond the policy agenda normally defined by the EU and OECD. By this token, Norway's contribution to the international follow-up of 'Education For All' is coordinated by the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD).

In summing up the influence of international organisations on LLL in Norway, it is appropriate to subscribe to the general appreciation of super-national drivers suggested by A.O. Telhaug, O.A. Mediås:2003:360f): This influencing is on the increase because

other countries are considered both as *models and competitors*, whereas in former times they were *inspiration sources and models*.

Drivers and constituent elements

The drivers on LLL policy and practice that we identify are the constituent elements in the Norwegian education and training system. As the comparative report from sub-project 1 of LLL2010 shows, the same elements can be identified in other countries. In Norway these elements were given a unique national stamp during 'the nation building project', which above all placed the State in a central role in the framing of an education system. Lately, the winding-up of a trade union instigated LLL reform, which did not entail new structures of social partner regulation, has confirmed that the State is one prime driver in the Norwegian education and training system.

The weight of international organisations in cross-border policy learning is on the increase.

Through the work undertaken by OECD and UNESCO the comparative position of Norway in a more global LLL setting is constantly monitored. In addition, Norway attempts to liaise with the political co-operation in the European Union, although the only formal access point is the agreement on a European Economic Area. From the beginning, the Norwegian education and training landscape has been influenced by the neighbouring countries. This applies to the institutional framework of LLL in the civil society (study circles and folk high schools) and to learning from policy reforms.

3 Understandings and Operationalisations of LLL

This section starts with a brief critical commentary on how LLL has been understood, defined and operationalised in Norway, above all in relation to the national LLL reform, "the Competence Reform", launched in 1999. The basic idea of this reform and in its follow-up was to improve access to formal education linked to the introduction of a number of statutory rights for Norwegian citizens, including the statutory right to receive education adapted to individual needs. Another key topic is validation of non-formal and informal competencies in such a manner that learning experiences from the labour market, civil society and the education system are appreciated and compared. These topics are covered in our discussion of how LLL is operationalised in Norway.

From understanding of lifelong learning to specific measures

Since the LLL concept was introduced in the 1970s (cf. T. Schuller 2002), it has in Norway mainly been used in ministerial circles and among stakeholders invited by the Ministry of Education and Research to comment on policy papers from UNESCO, OECD, the European Commission and other international organisations. In the introduction to this report, we pointed out that the standard EU definition as well as the major Norwegian White Paper on LLL gave the concept quite broad contours.

In practice, the concept of LLL seems to be understood as a lifelong perspective on a multitude of measures in the field of further and continuing training (FCT). Even after the introduction of LLL as a concept for policy-making, the term FCT remains widely used in Norway and often replaces the term LLL.

The 1998 White Paper launching the Competence Reform (St. meld. 42 (1997–98) was inspired by the increasing use of the term lifelong learning in EU policy-making; sparked off by the European Year of LLL in 1996. The operationalisation of LLL therefore features the target areas and measures introduced in the Norwegian Competence Reform. These are:

- The individual right to leave of absence for attending FCT
- Financing of subsistence expenses during training leaves
- Tax relief for training financed by employers
- Subsidies for projects experimenting with work-based training, including flexible and tailor made training, through a specific programme (the "Competence Development Programme")
- Statutory right to free education at primary and secondary level
- Upgrading of tertiary education at ISCED level 4 (i.e. between the level of upper secondary and higher education)
- Changes in higher education (recognition of non-formal learning and provision of FCT to a wider array of learners)
- Documentation and recognition (=validation) of non-formal and informal competencies acquired in major societal sectors (the labour market, the civil society as well as the education and training system).

Subsequently, the implementation of LLL in Norway relates to the further operationalisation of these measures. However, one understanding of LLL has recently appeared more clearly: the *cradle to grave* perspective. This has partly to do with a reshuffle of the Ministry of Education and Research, entailing that from 2005 kindergartens came under the auspices of that ministry. A more ideological explanation is a growing concern that the school, as a 'fabric of equality', has to start functioning even at a preschool level. This concern is central in a recent White Paper on education and social inclusion (St. meld. 16 2006–2007).

Below, we will focus on three LLL measures: better access to education, individual adaptation of training and recognition of informal and non-formal competencies.

Measures to improve access to formal education

The Norwegian Competence Reform introduced a number of statutory rights for individuals.

These rights can reduce obstacles hindering marginalised adults from entering into education and training institutions.

Statutory rights for adults to primary education were introduced with effect from autumn 2002 and in upper secondary education as long ago as autumn 2000. There are indications that this right is not extensively utilised at the level of primary education. As of 1 October 2005 only 4363 people had participated in this particular training during that year (St. meld. 16 (2006–2007:54). Primary education is in the hands of

the individual municipality and there are substantial variations in their ability and willingness to put adult learners with skills deficits high on the local political agenda. It should be added that the statutory right to complete upper secondary education is administered at county level. For both education levels we see that the implementation of public LLL policy is dependent on a streamlined public administration from local to State levels.

There are specific measures for immigrants and refugees with less than five years of residence who are covered by "introductory programmes" that include training, above all in the Norwegian language. Those who have resided in Norway for more than five years are covered by the general welfare and labour market services, including education and vocational testing to assess prior learning (J. Horgen Friberg, A.B. Djuve 2004).

As we reported in the introductory section, a right to education does not entail that people enter the labour market with a job corresponding to the educational level they have achieved. Thus many obstacles to social inclusion are found outside the formal education system.

The implementation of adapted education

Pupils and students, including adults, are entitled to receive education adapted to their individual needs. This right was introduced when the system of special schools for pupils with any kind of physical, mental or learning disability was abandoned, and replaced by a policy for creating an "inclusive school".

In a chapter on Equity and Inclusion, the White Paper "A culture for learning" (St. meld. 30; 2003–2004) sought to:

- Increase funding for research, method development and dissemination of experiences connected with the statutory right to adapted education
- Strengthen the competencies of the Norwegian Support System for Special Education and the educational and psychological counselling services
- Start an evaluation of how adapted and customised education is dealt with in teacher training

In the context of LLL and social inclusion the right to adapted education is important, but it might take time to live up to this ambitious objective.

Validation of non-formal and informal competencies

Below we will look at efforts to establish a system for the recognition of informal and non-formal competencies on an equal footing with formal competencies.

The validation of competencies acquired outside the formal educational system has long been supported by stakeholders in the field of adult education, such as the trade unions and associations that provide liberal adult education (Tøsse 1996). The Adult Education Act, dating back to 1976, contained a right for adults to have their knowledge and skills documented at all levels within the formal education system, independently of how these competencies were acquired. In the following years, few procedures and institutional arrangements for validation of prior learning were introduced. This picture changed in the wake of the Competence Reform from 1999 with the introduction of an improved legal framework as well as practical procedures that could fulfil the intentions of the 1976 act. At the same time, the reform broadened the perspective on validation, by aiming to assess and recognise competencies acquired outside the formal education system with a view to strengthening the job prospects of learners with limited formal competencies. In other words, there was an attempt to increase the employability of learners by validating prior experiences, including social skills that people acquire as citizens (S. Skule, O.B. Ure ; 2004).

In concrete terms, the Competence Reform included a national project aiming at developing new methods for validating non-formal and informal competencies. The ambition was to develop a practical understanding of the concept of "equivalent competencies". The project covered three sectors of society:

- the labour market
- the education and training system
- the third sector, including voluntary organisations and NGOs

As there are substantial variations in validation practices within these sectors and because experiences in the application of validation tools vary from sector to sector, we will account for each sector on the following pages.

In the *labour market*, the Vocational Training Act of 1952 allowed individuals to take a crafts examination, provided they had sufficient practical work experiences[21]. On an annual basis between 1/3 and 1/2 of the crafts examinations each year are passed via this route. Perhaps because this scheme was so successful, there was no rush among the social partners to experiment with new tools for validating prior learning in the framework of the Competence Reform. One further reason for the modest interest in such experiments among employers is that validated experiences might be used by trade unions as an argument for wage increase (S. Skule, O.B. Ure 2004).

Following the Competence Reform 6,000 employees in 150 enterprises in a variety of different industries were nevertheless involved in nine projects testing various tools

[21] To take a crafts examination normally requires two years of theoretical training and two years of apprenticeship.

and methods for the assessment of prior learning[22]. Some of these tools described and accounted for non-formal and informal competences in a way that was useful for enterprises in their allocation and development of human resources. The tools and methods have also assisted employees when applying for new jobs or for admission to educational institutions. After the experimental period ending in 2002, there was however only a limited dissemination of validation tools throughout the labour market (ibid.).

At present, various validation tools and methods co-exist but no standards for the entire labour market have emerged (cf. OECD 2007). Recently, however, Vox (the National Centre for Learning in Working Life) has compiled a 'competence attestation' for competencies developed at the workplace[23]. This attestation should form part of a national system for documenting prior learning. It is supported by free software that can be downloaded by companies in order to build a database of staff competencies; be they formal, informal or non-formal[24].

In the *formal education system* a range of validation methods have been tried out, for instance

CVs and written portfolios based on an agreed template, personal interviews as well as self-assessment with or without electronic tools. A combination of methods has turned out to be quite successful, such as a practical demonstration combined with interviews with the learner. At the level of upper secondary education, adults with a right to complete their education can have their prior learning assessed. Consequently, their study period can be shortened.

In higher education, adults without formal competencies allowing them to be enrolled can have their prior learning assessed in order to gain admission. This procedure follows from an amendment in 2001 of the Higher Education Act. 2709 applications from adults in this situation were received in 2006. 70 % of these applications were formally approved and passed on to the competition for entrance to a specific course of study (cf. Norwegian Universities and Colleges Admission Service)[25]. Around 10 % of the total number of students are now being enrolled according to this new procedure (St. meld. 16 (2006–07). Compared with secondary education, fewer 'non-traditional' students in higher education succeed in having their study period shortened. Between 2001 and 2004 higher education institutions received 123 applications for shortened studies, of which 30 % were rejected (cf. Brandt 2005). Higher education institutions have been asked by the Ministry of Education and Research to develop procedures for

[22] http://www.ecotec.com/europeaninventory/publications/inventory/chapters/euro_inv_norway.pdf

[23] http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=1698

[24] http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=2172

[25] http://www.samordnaopptak.no/english/

exchanging prior learning with shortened studies. Only gradually have they started to work out such procedures (cf. H. Helland, V. Opheim 2004, E. Brandt 2005).

Associations rooted in *the third sector*, such as the 'movement of popular enlightenment' and NGOs in general, have been subject to systematic attempts to validate competencies gained in multiple non-formal and informal contexts. It is precisely this multitude that has, according to an evaluation report (Agenda 2003), delayed a coherent approach to validation of competencies and experiences from voluntary work and liberal education. The validation projects launched in this sector between 1999 and 2002 as part of the Competence Reform were few and thematically scattered. Moreover, far from all associations involved were very enthusiastic about the projects and some members feared the unnecessary paperwork involved in a systematic documentation and validation of competencies. This attitude has partly to do with the non-institutional origin of (some of) these organisations, and is also linked to the fact that certain activities of adult education associations may not by their very nature fit into a competence passport (O.B. Ure 2006a). The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning has however further developed the experimental projects launched in the framework of the Competence Reform and now proposes a 'Personal Competence Document', in which experiences from paid and unpaid work, formal education as well as from leisure activities are put into one single document[26]. This framework document is revised continuously with a view to disseminating and exploiting it throughout the entire third sector (civil society).

In sum, a labour market perspective on LLL has been important in validating informal and non-formal competencies, so that knowledge acquired at the workplace can be linked to job opportunities. Within the same perspective, it is worth noting that successful experiences from *validation of non-formal competencies* enshrined in the 1952 Vocational Training Act most probably contributed to the widespread acceptance of validation in the three sectors concerned. The national validation framework could therefore build on the legitimacy of validation in the labour market and in the formal education system. As to *validation of informal competencies*, the high appreciation of learning in informal settings is rooted in the 'localist tradition' in Norwegian education, which has been a cornerstone in the work of many study associations.

In light of experiences gained during the Competence Reform, the ambition to develop a unitary validation system at national level has been scaled down. The outcome of the ongoing work, devolved from the Ministry of Education and Research to the National Centre for Learning in Working Life (Vox), may be that 'competence passports' are developed for validation in the labour market and in civil society and that more crossing-points to validation in the formal education system are set up. In addition, there is a need for some translation mechanisms between validation schemes

[26] http://193.212.214.18/pkd/

and methods; and between the three sectors. The idea of a simple and practical tool to be used in all learning contexts has been played down in view of the complexity encountered (cf. S. Skule, O.B. Ure 2004).

An underlying idea has been that 'competence passports' should be compatible with Europass and the annexes that gradually are being enclosed to it. The discussion about a European Qualification Framework[27], developed in the context of the EU Lisbon process, points towards a new framework for Norwegian competence passports.

The main menu for the lifelong learner

We have assumed that LLL for the average learner so far boils down to improved access to education, more tailor-made or 'adapted education' as well as better appreciation of experiences gained in a wide array of learning contexts.

The Competence Reform offered improved access to formal education for those in need of a 'second chance' in order to complete education that they had abandoned or hardly started. In addition, the reform enshrined a right to training leave for employees and an equal treatment of adolescent and adult learners before the State Educational Loan Fund.

A third statutory right regulates how individuals receive education adapted to their individual needs. This right is universal and the aim is to achieve an "inclusive school". This is undoubtedly a very ambitious goal and resides on the implementation at local level. All these rights and guarantees have provided Norway with an advanced framework for LLL.

Following local and sectoral experiments launched in the late 1990s, the validation of non-formal and informal competencies aims to appreciate and compare learning experiences from the labour market, the civil society and the education system. In light of experiences gained so far, the ambition to develop a unitary validation system at national level has been scaled down to the benefit of one framework document for the labour market and another for the civil society. The average learner is not yet offered substantial tools for the translation of learning experiences gained in these two settings. Nor are comparisons of such experiences with the education system widespread.

[27] http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html

4 Significance of Key Concepts in LLL Policy

In the EU project LLL2010 four concepts in LLL policy and practice, which contribute to the framing of this report, have been identified as particularly important. These are:

- *Learning citizens*
- *Knowledge society*
- *Learning cities/regions*
- *Learning organisations*

In this section we will explain and briefly account for how these concepts are present in the Norwegian LLL discourse.

Learning citizens

The citizenship dimension of LLL (cf. the foregoing chapter) has traditionally been linked to 'the movement of popular enlightenment'. This Nordic phenomenon, close to 'popular education' in an international context, consists of study circles organised by adult education associations as well as 'folk high schools', partly transmitting other values than those of the formal education system. Gradually this movement became dependent on the public purse and even training arrangements set up as an alternative to public education became reliant on financial support from the State (O. B. Ure 2006a).

At present, this LLL dimension is materialised in various public measures aimed at low skilled learners, of which many are immigrants. One example is a recent programme launched by the Ministry of Education and Research in order to stimulate basic competencies for low skilled employees and people with learning difficulties[28]. There is also an annual campaign for e-citizenship proposing concrete training opportunities for the citizens. Furthermore, the statutory right to adapted education described above is targeting the learning needs of individuals.

[28] http://odin.dep.no/kd/norsk/tema/p30008804/070031-990004/dok-bn.html

Knowledge society

This broad policy goal is subject to streamlining in the sense that several government agencies try to contribute to reaching it. Attempts to formulate a co-ordinated knowledge policy can be found in a report from a working group set up by the Ministry of Education and Research. This work was materialised in a Blue Paper in which LLL is linked to innovation policy ("Mønsterbryterne" 2005). In the introductory paragraph of that Blue Paper, the human capital of Norway is estimated to 77 % of the national wealth. One challenge identified is to 'translate knowledge into valuable innovation'.

It is also worth mentioning two specific programmes, launched by the Norwegian Research Council, both aiming to increase the understanding of how knowledge shapes our contemporary society. These programmes are *Competence, Learning Processes and Value Creation in Work Life* (1996–2002) and *Knowledge, Education and Learning* (2003–2007)[29].

Researchers from a variety of academic disciplines have elucidated the field of education and knowledge. A rough assessment of the outcomes of these programmes provides us with little evidence that the meaning of 'knowledge society' is linked to the academic debate on a Norwegian or a "Nordic model". Such 'models' often encompass features like the welfare system as well as systematic agreements and consultations between the social partners and the State. The knowledge dimension is scarcely present in attempts to sketch Norwegian peculiarities in a single model. This has probably to do with vague definitions of what a knowledge society is. The notion primarily appears as a political slogan, rather than an academic concept.

Learning cities/regions

This policy goal is addressed in the guidelines set out in the Blue Paper on the future LLL policy cited above. The ministries involved, above all the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, try to live up to this policy goal. There is however a decentralised implementation at county level. Key points in public initiatives and pilot projects targeted at the local or regional level are:

- mapping of competencies and brokerage between supply and demand of training
- collaboration between public agencies dealing with training at county level
- one-stop-shop validation of non-formal and informal competencies
- actions at a sector level aiming to upskill employees, e.g. in the field of transport services

[29] http://www.forskningsradet.no/servlet/Satellite?cid=1088802022075&pagename=utdanning%2FPage%2FHovedSide&site=utdanning

All these measure are launched by Vox (the National Centre for Learning in Working Life) on behalf of the Government.

Moreover, the Research Council of Norway has introduced several innovation programmes at regional level aiming to spur collaboration between university colleges and enterprises as well as between research institutes and enterprises[30].

Learning organisations

This term is primarily used to describe a policy goal or any development inside organisations. One basic assumption is that learning organisations instigate employees to learn more, thus in the long run spurring the 'knowledge society'.

In an academic context, both in political science and management studies, a learning organisation is normally understood as an organisation able to learn by adapting and changing itself according to input from the environment and from the people inside (Cf. March, J.G. & J.P. Olsen 1976). In the context of LLL policy, the term often refers to how learning processes in an organisation are designed in order to stimulate learning among employees, transfer of knowledge and the codification of tacit knowledge (cf. Barry Nyhan 1999).

The term 'learning organisations' is widely used in a White Paper calling for a reform in primary and secondary education with implications for LLL strategies (St. meld. nr. 30 (2003-2004). This policy document expresses a strategy to transform all educational institutions into 'learning organisations' by i.a. emphasising that each institution produces 'learning outcomes'.

The abovementioned Blue Paper ("Mønsterbryterne" 2005) from the Ministry of Education and Research tables the public role in developing learning enterprises, be they public or private, primarily in terms of improving framework conditions for enterprises, not the least by means of coordinating policy areas.

As part of the social dialogue on FCT, annual stocktaking of competencies and staff training plans are instruments available in Basic Agreements concluded between the social partners in labour market segments covering private and public sectors as well as industry and services. Chapter 16 on 'Development of competencies', which forms part of the Basic Agreement between the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO), states that:

> "Each enterprise must present its objectives for future development as a basis for charting the qualifications needed..(...)..Charting must normally be updated once a year. Whenever there is a gap between existing competence in the enterprise and

[30] http://www.forskningsradet.no/servlet/Satellite?pagename=nhs/Page/HovedSide&c=Page&cid=1088006043493

its future needs, this should be covered by appropriate training measures or other means".

No recent assessment of the significance of this chapter in the Basic Agreement is available. There are however indications that few training arrangements at the level of the firm are directly inspired by this specific chapter (cf. Bowman 2005). Hence, the evolution of learning organisations in Norwegian work life should be explained by additional factors, such as non-institutional practices for organising training for employees (cf. Døving et al. 2006:82).

Looking at the four concepts, their importance seems to be unequal. *Knowledge society* and *learning organisation* are widely used as policy goals or even slogans. The two other concepts, *learning citizen* and *learning region*, are less present in the Norwegian LLL (or FCT) vocabulary. All four concepts are very broad, thus calling on policy measures outside the realm of education and training policy. The likelihood of adding flesh and blood to the concepts therefore depends on the co-ordination between policy areas with a view to implement LLL. This point is further discussed in section 6 of this report.

5 Main Patterns of Provision & Participation

In this section we will look at participation in and provision of LLL from the perspective of social inclusion. We start out by recalling the total national spending on education and training, before we present main trends in participation. Then we continue with patterns of participation in terms of access to higher education, occupational situation, sectors, gender, age, ethnicity, ICT skills and literacy.

Introduction

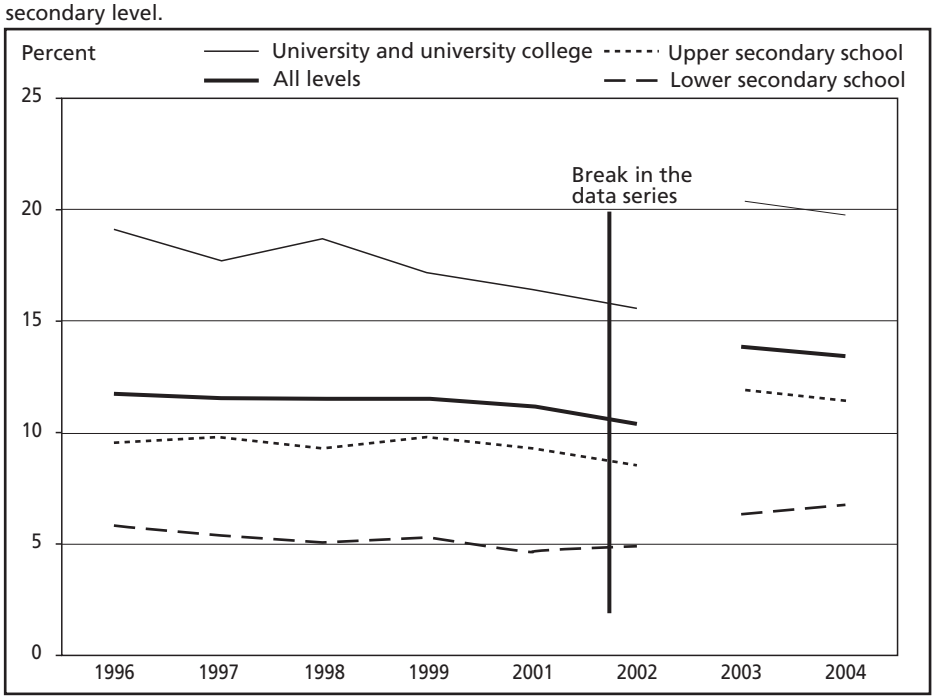
Norway spends 7,6 % of the Gross Domestic Product on education and training, compared with the OECD average of 5,5%. However, Norway scores modestly in international tests on acquired skills, cf. OECD's PISA study and the Adults' Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL). This apparent paradox has sparked off discussions on input vs. output: what happens *inside* the education system? Increasing disciplinary problems among pupils and shifting pedagogical regimes have been proposed as two explanatory factors. The output of private companies' investments in training is also debated. Dropping participation rates in further and continuing training lead to questions on the individual motivation for LLL in an affluent oil driven economy.

Main trends over a longer time span

During the past decade adults' participation in education and training has slightly dropped, as illustrated in Figure 1 (next page).

A change in the phrasing of the questionnaire from 2003 and onwards complicates any exact statement on long-term trends. There are however few indications that participation in training is increasing. The Learning Condition Monitor, which captures similar data from 2003 and onwards, indicates however that the gentle downward trend has continued, at least from 2004-06 (cf. M. Bråthen et al.: 2007:16). The most

Figure 1 The share of employees taking part in courses and paid training during last 4 weeks (1996-2002). The share of employees participated during last 4 weeks at courses, seminars, conferences etc. aimed at job-related training, independently of being paid for attendance (2003-2004). There is one graph for each education level, descending from university to lower secondary level.



Source: T. Nyen, S. Skule 2005:150

reliable conclusion to be drawn is therefore that the introduction of provisions on further and continuing training in Basic Agreements between the social partners in the mid-1990s and the launch of the national LLL reform in 1999, have not given any impetus to participation levels.

Another means of measuring participation in LLL is to look at the number of participants in courses arranged by national study associations often associated with the citizenship dimension of LLL. After a peak of 902,000 participants in 1980, the number gradually dropped to 614,000 low in 2001, followed by a slight recovery before a record low score of 594,000 in 2005. Although substantial fluctuations from year to year impede any clear-cut conclusion, compared with the peak in 1980, the period 2001–2005 shows a considerably lower participation rate.

From an LLL perspective it is interesting to look at the distribution of such study activities on educational levels.

Table 1 Number of registered participants*

1976-77	567 000
1980-81	902 000
1984-85	747 000
1988-89	745 000
1993	744 000
1997	712 000
2001	614 356
2002	667 727
2003	735 162
2004	632 993
2005	594 459

* if one person attends >1 course, h/she is counted >1 time.
Source: Tøsse 2003, Statistics Norway 2006.

Table 2 Number of hours delivered according to educational level. 2005.

Upper secondary level (ISCED 3)	1 698 447
University level (ISCED 5 or 6)	1 224 856
Unspecified	224 718
Total	3 148 021

Source: SSB voksenopplæringsstatistikk 2006

The high educational attainment in the Norwegian population is reflected in the activities arranged by study associations. A recent tendency is that municipalities and counties purchase courses held by study associations with a view to train adults up to a minimum level corresponding to primary or upper secondary education. In future, the number of hours delivered by study associations may therefore increasingly lean towards lower education levels.

LLL and social exclusion

In the following we will present statistics on factors liaised with social exclusion from LLL.

Access to higher education

As to what proportion of school leavers enter higher education, this depends on the time of measurement. In 2003, 30 % of those passing exams in upper secondary education that gave them entrance to higher education, started studying at university level during the same year. 43% of students admitted to HE studies in 1993 had ten years later completed a lower degree (2-4 years, i.e. close to Norwegian Bachelor degree nowadays). If one considers the population between 25 and 64, 28 % have a degree at Master level or higher. In 2003, 55% of students enrolled in higher education were over 25[31]. There are no separate institutions for older students.

Unemployment

In a *labour vs. non-labour* perspective, it is worth noticing that during the year of 2003 57% of employees aged 22–66 took part in courses, seminars or other training activities. For registered unemployed this applies for 29%, while only 17% of those outside the labour market attended any training (T. Nyen 2004).

Sectoral differences

In terms of *sectoral differences*, employees in the public sector (at municipal, county or state level) receive more formal continuing training than those in the private sector (10% vs. 5% during the last year). Public employees also participate more frequently in courses or other training activities (61,5% vs. 44% as measured during the last year). These patterns have been stable over the period 2003-05 (T. Nyen 2005:21).

Gender

As to *gender equality*, the share of women enrolled in formal continuing education was 8% in 2005; compared with 5% for men. Female participation in courses and other training activities was also higher than for men (52% vs. 49%). On the other hand, more men than women report having learning-intensive jobs, thus indicating that men might have the opportunity to learn more during their daily work. Patterns for gender participation have been stable from 2003 to 2005.

Age

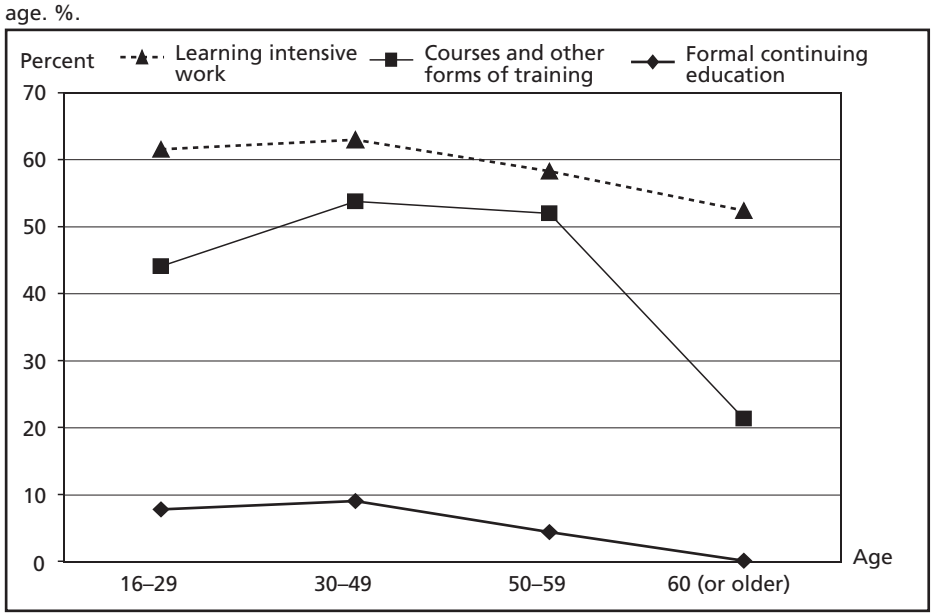
Differences between *age groups* seem to be on the increase. According to the Learning Conditions Monitor in 2003 those aged 55+ had almost equal access to training

[31] cf. Statistics Norway, DBH (http://dbh.nsd.uib.no/dbhvev/).

compared with younger workers, although their training was of shorter duration (cf. T. Nyen 2004:59). The relative stable participation rate for the 55+ workers was related to the phenomenon that lower-educated employees, who traditionally receive less training, retire much earlier than higher-educated workers.

The latest data from 2006 suggest however that there is a steeper drop in the participation level for those approaching the age of 60 and above. The falling curve applies both for elderly employees in formal continuing training and for those attending training courses and other forms of upskilling.

Figure 2 Share of employees in continuing training, courses and other training; according to age. %.



Source: M. Bråthen et al: 2007:19.

The Centre for Senior Policy[32] assumes that more workers would have stayed in work until the official retirement age if they were more confident in handling information and communication technologies (ICT). Public attention to demography in a LLL context has therefore mainly been attached to the need to increase ICT skills among elderly workers. The Centre for Senior Policy is active in promoting e-literacy among workers approaching and surpassing the age of retirement.

[32] http://www.seniorpolitikk.no/index.php?cat=74236

Demography and immigration

Traditionally the State has made considerable efforts in planning the capacity of educational institutions in order to respond to changing age cohorts. The more recent challenge, due to the fact that Norway is developing a greying workforce, was not an important background factor for the LLL reform. Demographic considerations were therefore of minor importance in the White Paper – i.e. St. meld. nr. 42 (1997–98) – paving the way for the LLL reform which started in 1999.

Balancing birth and death rates, the population increased in 2003 by 0.24%. If immigration was included into the picture, the real increase in population amounted to 0.62%. Two years later, 2005 was a record year in terms of net immigration, mainly due to the enlargement of the EU, putting East Europeans at the top of the population groups contributing to this record[33].

Many immigrants and refugees have education and/or work experience from their home countries that they want to make use of in Norway. However, many of them lack documentation that is recognised by Norwegian employers and educational institutions (J. Horgen Friberg, A.B. Djuve 2004). The scarcity of relevant qualifications and problems in validating and making use of their prior learning are the main obstacles to immigrants' participation in education leading to employment. Discrimination is largely related to employers' uncertainty about immigrants' skills. Many have higher education from abroad or from Norwegian higher education institutions but face problems when applying for jobs. The main employment problem immigrants are facing therefore seems to be access to the labour market and not access to education.

Immigrants in education

Statistics on immigrants' participation in LLL are scarce. There is however statistical evidence that the transition from upper secondary to higher education has become smoother for ethnic minorities. Although these data refer only to participation in initial education, they are of value in assessing the ability of the formal education system to integrate these minorities. More "non-Western students" than "Western students" tend to pass directly from upper secondary to higher education without any break for work or for personal reflection. Moreover, socio-economic factors are less important for the propensity of these students to enrol in universities than for Western students (L. A. Støren 2005). This can be interpreted as sign of strong motivation for higher education in families of non-Western origin; but in this regard there are considerable variations between nationalities.

In the coming years the public education system will have to cope with fewer "non-Western adults" who have dropped out of school. This has to do with a rise

[33] http://www.ssb.no/befolkning/

in the number of students in upper secondary education completing their studies within the requested time frame (3 years in general education; 4 years in vocational education). The completion rate has improved during the past 10 years but is still low among non-Western vocational students (E. Markussen et al. 2006). Controlling for the socio-economic background of all students following vocational or general study programmes in upper secondary schools, there is a slightly higher completion rate among Scandinavian students than for "non-Western" first generation students. This difference is next to zero between Scandinavian and other "Western" students (L. A. Støren 2005:87). However, the fact that there is a difference between first-generation non-Western students and students whose parents have resided in Norway over a longer period, can be interpreted as a sign of gradual integration. The latter group tends to follow normal study progression more frequently than first-generation students.

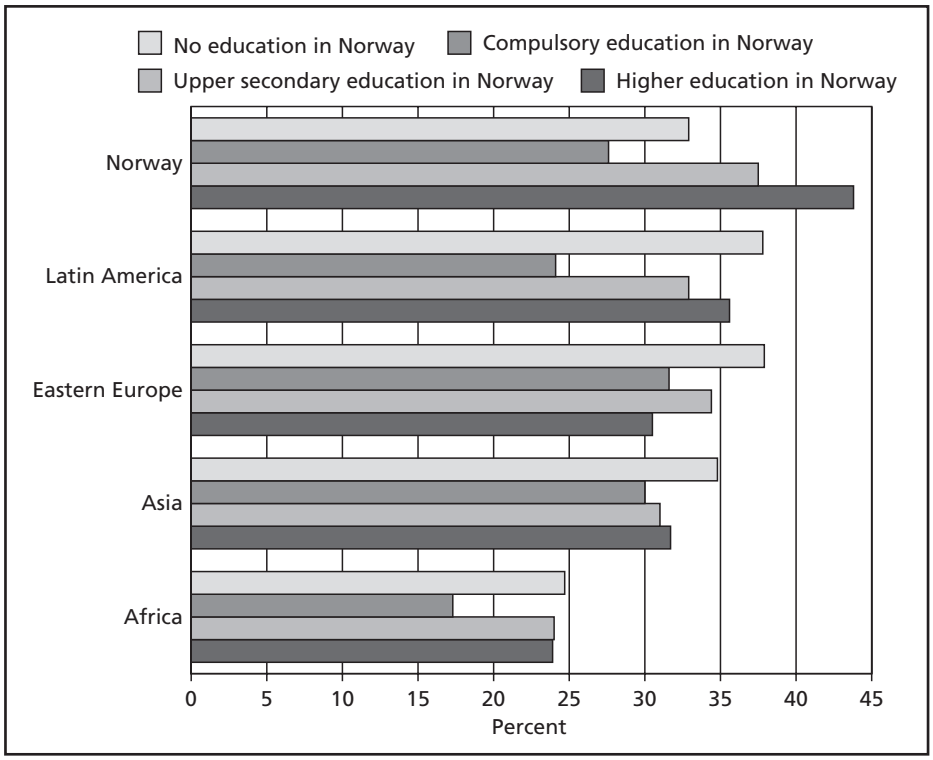
Moving from the education system to the labour market the picture becomes gloomier. The problems reported in the introductory section on prior learning, incl. diplomas from foreign universities, validated in Norway, point towards labour market obstacles more than to bottlenecks in the formal education system. An adjacent challenge is to integrate the parents of first-generation non-Western students in particular in the labour market. This is expected to have a positive effect on the participation and completion rate of their children at all levels in the formal education system (cf. L.A. Støren 2005).

A recent survey tracking registered unemployed persons during a two years period, revealed that the employment prospects for non-Western immigrants having tertiary education from Norway, is not higher than for the same immigrant groups whose diplomas were acquired abroad (see figure 3, next page).

Data from Statistics Norway on unemployment among 'ethnic Norwegians' and 'non-Western immigrants' who have graduated in Norway reveal that higher education for both groups increases their access to the labour market when compared with non-graduated. Tracked over a four-year period, it appears however that the relative difference in employment between 'ethnic Norwegians' and 'non-Western immigrants' augmented. Hence, more 'ethnic Norwegians' with graduation were able to get a job during the four year period 1999–2002 than among 'non-Western immigrants' (J. B. Grøgaard, L. A. Støren 2006:153).

There is accordingly ample evidence that the main challenge for the integration of immigrants is to stimulate the recruitment of job applicants in the labour market.

Figure 3 Share of unemployed or persons in temporary employment* per February 2003 who had an ordinary job in June 2005, tracked according to education from Norway and country of origin. %.



Source: T. Kvinge, A. B. Djuve; 2006:10.
* "ordinære arbeidsmarkedstiltak"

Indigenous minorities

The major ethnic minority is indigenous. The 45,000 Sámi population live mainly in Northern Norway and in Oslo. The individual right to *adapted education* for all pupils entails that this minority can *if necessary* receive education in bilingual subject instruction or as mother tongue tuition. The OECD evaluation team drafting the report on Equity in Education (OECD 2005a) writes that the formal education system, in general, has "endeavoured to be reasonably fair to and supportive of the Sámi People and to immigrants". However, the evaluators tabled some practical suggestions for additional educational support to these minorities.

Notwithstanding the size of the indigenous ethnic minority, i.e. the Sámi population, challenges with regard to its integration in the Norwegian education and train-

ing system have, over the last 30 years, elicited less public concern than is the case for immigrant ethnic minorities.

ICT skills

The Ministry of Education and Research has pulled together various measures to spur the use of ICT for educational purposes in a 5 year *Programme for digital competencies* (2004-08)[34]. The programme addresses quality issues, motivation for learning, learning frameworks and the output from learning. The aim is to improve ICT skills among a broad range of target groups. According to the Adults' Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL), Norway scores high on the number of ICT users and on familiarity with new technology (OECD 2005b:185).

Literacy

The Adults' Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL) reveals that 1/3 of Norwegian adults are endowed with insufficient reading skills. 40 % lack sufficient skills in numeracy. As a response to international surveys of this nature and in line with central ideas in the Competence Reform, a specific programme aimed at raising the level of basic underlying skills among employees was launched by the government in 2006[35].

Provision, participation and adaptation to individual needs

A snapshot of key figures on participation in education is as follows:

In the age group 25–64, 28 % have a university degree at Master level or higher. Women are more frequent participants in formal continuing education than men. Workers aged 55 or more have almost equal access to training as their younger colleagues.

On the positive side it should also be noted that the transition from upper secondary to higher education has become smoother for ethnic minorities. Fewer, but still too many, non-Western students drop out of upper secondary education. Hence the obstacle to higher participation for these groups is situated at the junction between education and the labour market. The lack of relevant qualifications and problems

[34] http://odin.dep.no/filarkiv/201402/program_for_digital_kompetanse.pdf

[35] http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=1674

in validating and making use of their prior learning are main hurdles in immigrants' participation in education leading to employment.

The importance to the learner of a link to the labour market is further supported by statistics on the participation of registered unemployed in training activities. Their propensity to enrol in training is much greater than for those deprived of any unemployment benefits.

On the negative side, 1/3 of Norwegian adults have insufficient reading skills and 40% lack sufficient skills in numeracy. There is now a political will, shared by the social partners, to direct public LLL budgets towards low-skilled individuals and to put particular emphasis on reaching out to people having difficulties in reading, writing, calculating and using PCs. This might underline a shift from concerns about provision of training to concrete measures to spur participation by means of individual adaptation of education.

However, in the midst of this picture of political will to adjust the LLL policy towards those most in need of further training, it remains a paradox that there for years have been no general increase in participation in training. The introduction of provisions on further and continuing training in Basic Agreements between the social partners in the mid-90s and the launch of the national LLL reform in 1999, did not give any impetus to the participation level.

6 Evidence of Achievement of National LLL Policy

In this section we will first assess whether the objectives behind the national LLL policy have been followed up in the form of concrete measures. We will do so by looking for evidence of the ability of the education system at primary, secondary and higher level to prepare students for lifelong learning. We will also look for any improvements in counselling services directed towards learners, adults included.

A second point will be to discuss whether there is sufficient co-ordination between the agencies in charge of implementing LLL policies; and if potential tensions exist between the various areas and aims of this policy.

School curriculum and practice addressing preparation for lifelong learning

Two measures that prepare pupils for LLL are an equalisation of general and vocational education i.a. by bridging curricula and, secondly, by means of better linking of curricula at different levels. Both measures have been introduced in educational reforms.

Starting in 1994, upper secondary education was reformed with the aim of putting general and vocational education on a more equal footing and building more bridges between them. There is now a statutory right to upper secondary education. Three years in general education is a preparation for university studies. Two years at school and two years in apprenticeship training leads to a craft certificate. Provided that a vocational student is trained in a certain number of theoretical subjects, he or she is entitled to obtain *general study competence* giving entrance to university studies without *numerus clausus*.

As part of the ongoing "Knowledge Promotion Reform" targeting the school system below the level of higher education, curricula are currently being revised. The White Paper introducing this reform clearly states that continuity in LLL should be assured by coherence between curricula at different educational levels (cf. the White Paper "Culture for learning"). The intention is to achieve this while at the same time granting the individual school more freedom to define teaching methods and, partly,

also educational content. The possibility of achieving coherence within a national system regulating educational levels when local practices are allowed to flourish, is an issue of controversy[36].

Higher education curriculum and practice preparing for lifelong learning

The Quality Reform that made Norway an early adopter of a 3+2+3 model in higher education, was inspired by the Bologna/Sorbonne process. Hence, Norwegian higher education has undergone a shift to a Bachelor-Master-PhD model, which for many subjects entails a shorter and more streamlined study period. In parallel with this development, career advice is gaining importance in most faculties. Moreover, more attention is being paid to the transition of candidates into the labour market and to co-operation mechanisms between industry and academia. One example is a series of exploratory projects within the framework of an "Apprentice Scheme in Higher Education" aimed at developing practice-based study schemes for universities and university colleges[37].

As to changes in strategy and practice at institutional level, universities and colleges are obliged to assess the competencies of adults who apply on the basis of documented non-formal learning. This follows from a 2001 amendment of the Higher Education Act. However, far from all candidates with an 'untraditional background' having been enrolled in higher education after validation of their non-formal and informal competencies obtain any shortened study period, although each higher education institution has the liberty to decide on that (cf. section 3 of this report).

Thus in spite of political will at a State level, we see that a decentralised implementation of LLL measures might delay the dissemination of practices that are important for 'non-traditional learners'. There are however a few examples of university colleges allowing engineering students with vocational certificates from upper secondary education to shorten parts of their studies (St. meld. 16 2006-2007:87).

[36] Cf. the discussion at the 2006 congress of the Union of Education Norway. http://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/UdfTemplates/Page____45560.aspx

[37] http://pilot-utdanning.nho.no/category/English/category.php?categoryID=46&CorepublishSession=58f3c4b14f7dd1556149f896a132d6a7

Better counselling services?

There is a division of responsibility between employment services and educational services, aimed at unemployed and employed learners, respectively. The employment services also apply measures towards groups and individuals who are *exposed* to unemployment. Historically, there has been no tradition of close collaboration between public education and employment services. This has to do with the classical split between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, both supported by directorates and services at lower administrative levels.

OECD has pinpointed a need for better co-ordination of counselling services for learners (OECD 2002). Pupils are entitled to receive vocational guidance throughout their compulsory schooling, in general until the age of 16. At the higher education level, the institutions now put more emphasis on career advice.

Several models for the future organisation of vocational guidance were discussed in a 2004 report produced for the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Since then, experiments with a regional model for counselling services involving educational institutions, counties, municipalities, employment offices and the social partners have been carried out. Based on the 'partnership model' developed through these experiments and with a view to ensuring equal access to counselling services, a recent White Paper on education and social equality came up with a proposal to establish a national body in charge of the co-ordination of educational and vocational guidance. One challenge outlined in the White Paper is to endow the counsellors with sufficient skills for carrying out proper guidance services (St. meld. 16 2006–2007:94). In this regard the ministries concerned will suggest a set of skill requirements. This goes in line with the OECD and EU thinking on raising the skills level by better training of educational and vocational counsellors (advisers)[38].

Another challenge evoked in the recent White Paper from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research is to investigate whether each person should work out an 'individual development plan' containing arguments for educational and vocational choices, thus improving the possibility of offering well targeted advice to the individual" (St. meld. 16 2006–2007:83).

Co-ordination of LLL in the public administration

When the Competence Reform was launched in 1999, it attracted a great deal of attention because it was placed at the intersection between many policy fields: education

[38] cf. the resolution from the European Council in May 2004 on lifelong guidance services.

and training, public financial policy (including wage bargaining) and industrial relations. In the following we will briefly account for how the LLL policy is co-ordinated between various government agencies.

In spite of progress in linking State agencies with a view to designing a more coordinated LLL policy at national level, there is still room for improvement at a central level and certainly also between the State, counties and municipalities. This has also been pointed out by OECD, which has i.a. called for improved general co-ordination (cf. section 2 of this report).

The Blue Paper on co-ordination of policy areas linked to competence development referred to above, is currently being followed up. Although chaired by the Ministry of Education and Research, it was based on input from all the ministries concerned. One sign of a possible change towards a more integrated LLL policy is a collaboration between public employment and educational services on tasks which in many countries have been neglected, such as assessment of prior work experiences in view of enrolment in formal education. As this Blue Paper only dates back to August 2005, and taking into account that the follow-up now is in the hands of a new government, no sound appraisal and far from any evaluation has been made of it.

In general, the pace of the implementation of the LLL reform has not depended on the co-ordination between ministries and governmental agencies at central level. A greater challenge has been to co-ordinate lower administrative levels (counties and municipalities). These need in particular to be mobilised during the implementation of statutory rights to education for every citizen (cf. section 3 of this report).

Independently of the LLL reform, a new reform is now underway aimed at merging public services for employment, pensions and social affairs. The ensuing "New Administration for Work and Welfare" could provide a framework for better integration of education and training policy with social policy. The new agency was inaugurated in July 2006 and should be up and running one year later.

Tensions between different areas/purposes of policy

Given that the national LLL reform, the Competence Reform, was planned as an answer to challenges in the labour market, it was stamped with an employability perspective that has not really been challenged. What might be termed the 'movement for popular education', defending a citizenship perspective on LLL, has not profoundly challenged the employability perspective and few frictions between competing perspectives have been observed (Ure 2006a). The fact that measures were taken from the outset to include validation of competencies achieved in the civil society, further contributed to shaping a comprehensive reform that has not been a contested terrain.

Although different and sometimes competing policy areas (primarily policies for education, labour, social affairs and innovation) are touched by the reform, it has not sparked off substantial friction between public policy in these areas. If there have been such frictions under the surface, they have rather delayed the most ambitious plans for co-ordination between policy areas; but without bringing the reform into any stalemate.

Among the social partners the most contested issue has been how to finance educational leave for employees attending training, including how to draw a line between training in accordance with the needs at the workplace and training for personal upskilling. However, in 2005 few applications were received when there was a specific call for proposals for projects experimenting with different approaches to financing educational leave, i.e. models for sharing the training bill between the employer, the employee and the State. Experiences from these 16 experimental projects based on a shared financial model (employer, employee, the State) have recently been summarised as part of the evaluation of the Competence Development Programme (cf. Døving et al. 2006). No decision has been taken on whether any scheme to pursue such projects will be introduced.

Employers have feared that the introduction of schemes for validating non-formal and informal competencies could entail claims for higher wages (S. Skule, O.B. Ure ; 2004). In addition, employers' organisations have refused any attempts by trade unions to intervene in decisions on which members of the workforce should be selected for training courses (cf. "the employers' right of control"). However, these tensions have generated few objections to the main direction of the LLL reform.

Achievements, co-ordination and tensions in LLL

One implication of LLL is the mobilisation of learners to undertake smooth learning trajectories built on 'alternance' between training and work. Such a perspective can be contrasted with very compartmentalised education and training, decoupled from two constituting elements in LLL: civil society and the labour market. Assessed along these lines Norway is on the right track by virtue of virtually equal treatment of general and vocational education, systematic bridging of curricula between educational levels as well as improved education and vocational guidance - at least during compulsory schooling. Shorter and more streamlined training offered at the level of higher education can be added to this list of successes, assuming that students receive more systematic access to further and continuing training after they have graduated.

The traditional cleavage between a ministry of education and a ministry of labour that nearly every public administration is faced with during attempts to improve guid-

ance and counselling services, could now become less severe in Norway. In terms of co-ordination of policies, the birth of a 'New Administration for Work and Welfare' can probably better liaise education and training policy with social and labour policy.

When judging LLL in Norway from the achievements of the Competence Reform, its employability perspective has been dominant but without overriding other stakeholders in the field. The willingness of public authorities to address contested issues, like financing of educational leaves for employees, during the implementation of the reform, is a proof of a conciliatory policy that have contributed to avoiding possible frictions.

Widespread devolution of responsibilities in the field of education and training might slow down the implementation of LLL. This danger persists in terms of access to counselling services (such as validation of prior learning, vocational and educational guidance) as well as the provision of training in line with statutory rights to complete education at primary and upper secondary level. There are expectations that counties and municipalities will give priority to LLL during their annual exercises of budget austerity. If these expectations are not met, the voluntarism at a ministerial level can be attenuated by local and regional control over decentralised budgets. From our historical retrospective at the beginning of our report it is however apparent that devolution in the field of education and training is more than a contemporary policy choice. In this regard, J. Lauglo (2002) refers to the slow evolution of "an infrastructure of local civic life". This has resulted in local control of education, community control and power for parents (op. cit. 322). If this diagnosis is correct, future achievements in LLL will depend on more than political determination and voluntarism at a central level.

7 Conclusions

The Competence Reform (1999) marks in many respects a watershed although lifelong learning practices have long historic roots. Three main concepts of LLL can be distilled from the Norwegian discourse before and after that reform:

- provision of education and training during the whole life span.

  This interpretation is close to the older notion of 'further and continuing training' but with the accent on smooth transitions between initial and continuing education

- education and training from cradle to grave

  This means that more interfaces are constructed between education levels and institutions in the entire education and training system

- life wide learning

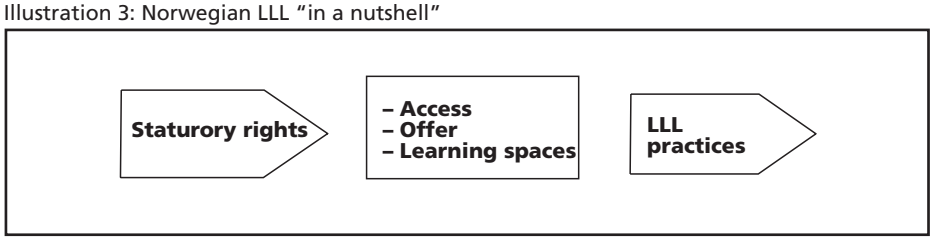
  This embraces appreciation of learning in different settings as well as life situations, resulting in systematic attempts for valorisation of non-formal and informal competencies

In an attempt to make lifelong learning operational we have assumed that for the average learner the concept boils down to three characteristics:

1. better learning opportunities for the individual => improved ACCESS ("LLL for all")
2. more tailor-made training during the initial education period as well as later => improved OFFER, which is a challenge for public and private providers of further and continuing training.
3. better opportunities for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning => more learning spaces (contexts) need to be mobilised during the life span.

Coupled to these *characteristics* several *statutory rights* have been introduced leading to LLL *practices* that can be related to the same characteristics. Our attempt to make the concept of LLL more operational can accordingly be illustrated as follows:

Illustration 3: Norwegian LLL "in a nutshell"



The Competence Reform of 1999 offered improved access to formal education for "second chance learners" allowing them to complete their education at the level of primary or upper secondary education. In addition, the reform enshrined a right to training leave for employees and equal treatment of adolescent and adult learners by the State Educational Loan Fund. A third statutory right guarantees adapted education according to learners' individual needs. This right applies to everybody and is undoubtedly a very ambitious goal, depending on how it is being implemented at local level. These statutory rights have definitely put LLL in Norway on a judicial path, guaranteed by the State.

Following local and sectoral experiments launched in the late 1990s, the validation of non-formal and informal competencies aims to appreciate and compare learning experiences from the labour market, civil society and the education system. In light of experiences gained so far, the ambition to develop a unitary validation system at national level has been scaled down to the benefit of one framework document for the labour market and another for civil society. The average learner is not yet offered substantial tools for translating learning experiences gained in these two settings. Comparisons of such experiences to the education system are not widespread either.

The abovementioned rights and arrangements have provided Norway with an advanced framework for LLL. Compared with efforts to put into place an LLL regime in other countries covered by the project LLL2010, the systematic thinking on education and training in Norway is fairly developed. This does not eradicate doubts that the idea of LLL is rhetorically exploited in the official discourse on education and training. In most countries, ministries of education tend to report any change in education and training as a sign of fulfilment of a lifelong and life-wide education policy (O. B. Ure, J. P. Gavigan 2000:30).

In the case of Norway, such exploitation is less apparent because of the fact that prior to the 1999 Competence Reform, the Norwegian education and training system had gone through changes supporting an LLL vision. One example is the smooth transi-

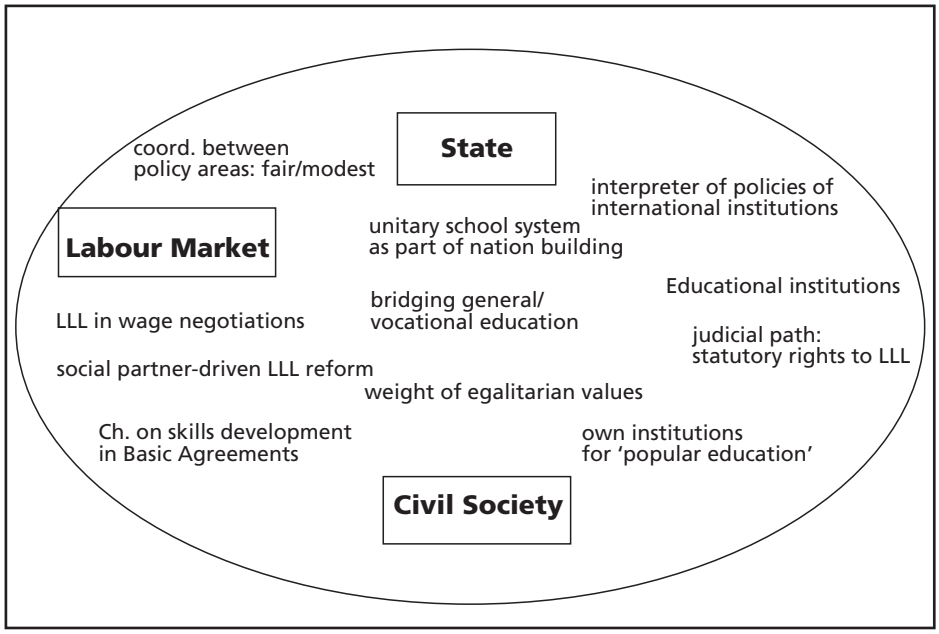
tion between education levels for the age group 6-16 on their passage from primary to lower secondary level. The ease of switching between vocational and general education programmes in upper secondary education points in the same direction. In parallel with attempts to equalise the status of these programmes, the two tracks were made more distinct with a view to combat high dropout rates and to better guide hesitant students in their educational choice. Furthermore, mutual recognition of exams from higher education institutions in Norway was standard procedure before the Bologna-Sorbonne process started to influence Norwegian universities and university colleges. All in all, the low degree of compartmentalisation in the Norwegian education system bears proof of long-lasting attempts to install practices that fall under an LLL paradigm. The Competence Reform could therefore further cultivate some prior achievements in the field of education and training.

Throughout this report we have identified drivers on LLL policy and practice that correspond to the constituent elements of the Norwegian education and training system. In Norway these elements received a national stamp during the project of nation building, which above all placed the State in a central role in the framing of an education system. This process was certainly influenced by similar processes in the neighbouring countries. Other Nordic countries have e.g. had a strong say on the framework of study circles, study associations and folk high schools of vital importance for the citizenship dimension of LLL. The weight of international organisations in cross-border policy learning is on the increase. Through the work undertaken by OECD and UNESCO the comparative position of Norway in a more global LLL setting is scrutinised. In addition, Norway attempts to liaise with the political LLL co-operation in the European Union, although the only formal access point is the agreement on a European Economic Area.

What characterises the constituent elements of Norwegian LLL and how LLL schemes and measures are situtated in the picture, can be summarised as shown on the next page.

One implication emanating from this illustration is the mobilisation of learners to undertake smooth learning trajectories built on 'alternance' between training and work. This perspective can be contrasted with highly compartmentalised education and training, decoupled from two constituting elements in LLL, viz. civil society and the labour market. Assessed along these lines, Norway is on track by virtue of a reasonably equal treatment of general and vocational education, systematic bridging of curricula between educational levels as well as improved education and vocational guidance - at least during compulsory schooling. Shorter and more streamlined training offered at the level of higher education can be added to the same list of achievements, - but on condition that students get systematically access to further and continuing training after they have graduated.

Illustration 4 Characteristics of each constituent element of LLL



In the midst of this picture of political will to install a systematic LLL framework it is a paradox however that for years there has been a gentle drop in the participation in further and continuing training (FCT). There are also indications that the Competence Reform has not altered the traditional biased pattern of participation in FCT: sectors and branches with a low wage-level, staffed with employees whose education level is below average, have less frequently participated in projects financed in the frame of the LLL reform. Simultaneously, employees still report that they face barriers in having access to further and continuing training in terms of time, motivation and resources.

Apparently, the introduction of provisions on FCT in Basic Agreements between the social partners in the mid-90s and the launch of the national LLL reform in 1999, did not spur the participation level. There is little evidence of the importance of these agreements for everyday staff training at an enterprise level. However, if doubts of their practical importance hold water, there are reasons to question the success of Norwegian practices of *collective action in training* supported by broad-based employers' associations and trade unions underpinned by public policy. Similar practices can e.g. be found in other Nordic countries and Germany. At least, such interrogations might spark off discussions on how appropriate the present Norwegian arrangements for collective action in training are. A first step would be to collect empirical evidence of the actual use of collective agreements when enterprises in all sectors plan and undertake staff training. The winding-up of the Competence Reform provides a suitable opportunity to look at future challenges, adjust what has already been achieved or move into new directions in the field of further and continuing training.

From conclusions to the title

After considering Norwegian LLL throughout six sections, and particularly taking into account the Competence Reform of 1999, how far can Norway be said to have come in the field of LLL? Should the reader close the last page with an image of a deflating policy balloon or an act of piecemeal implementation?

Considered as a reform with the potential for mobilising the social partners and actors in civil society, the Norwegian LLL agenda has been deflated. This has partly to do with a lack of continued interest in the lower echelons of the social partners, coupled with the fact that claims on educational benefits are not given high priority compared with other claims encompassed by collective bargaining. Apart from significant mobilisation in a few trade unions, rank-and-file members in the 1990s were lukewarm supporters of using further and continuing training as a major bargaining issue during negotiations with the employers. Later, this issue did not reappear in negotiations.

This illustrates a need to better underpin public LLL policies by mobilising stakeholders in the field. This applies not only to the social partners but also to study associations traditionally linked to the citizenship dimension of LLL. Some study associations show moderate enthusiasm for a reform profoundly stamped with an employability perspective. An unresolved challenge is therefore to mobilise broader than the education and training counsellors in nongovernmental organisations and among their counterparts in organisations representing the social partners.

However, the mobilisation of people and projects around a reform – including an LLL reform - can by nature only last for a limited period. Follow-up work of the reform is still being introduced and often carried out at local and regional level. This smooth continuation of the reform is a further sign of a piecemeal implementation process. Widespread devolution of responsibilities in the field of education and training might however restrain the pace of implementation. There are expectations that counties and municipalities will give priority to LLL during their annual exercises of budget austerity. If these expectations are not met, the voluntarism at a ministerial level can be attenuated because of local and regional control over decentralised budgets. One remaining challenge is therefore to ensure that the devolution of responsibility during the implementation of LLL policies - particularly statutory rights for individual learners - is well co-ordinated between local, regional and central levels.

After summarising the state of LLL, one central question remains: Has the historical constitution of education and training in Norway back to the 19th century influenced the piecemeal implementation of LLL? The democratic project of achieving LLL (for all) seems to touch on a historical line of development in Norwegian education and training; the idea of a unitary school system. In spite of a recent tendency to question basic assumptions behind this idea, its underlying values still hold a grip on stakeholders in LLL. The processes surrounding the launch of and the implementation of the

Competence Reform illustrate this point. Although the reform was initially conceived by the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions and pushed forward together with fellow unions, the extensive political support for the reform shows that it coincided with mainstream political ideas. After some initial hesitation, the employers' associations also rallied behind the reform, although they did not accept further claims from trade unions on better financial arrangements for employees on training leave. This claim remains an unresolved issue and illustrates one of few exceptions from a consensus underlining a historical continuity based on shared egalitarian values in the field of education and training.

8 Policy Recommendations

As in most countries, equal access to learning is a central tenet of Norwegian LLL policy. The ambition of reaching out to a wide array of target groups therefore underpins the national LLL policy. Appraisals of the LLL reform launched in 1999 have attached importance to whether the measures introduced really target those who most need to be upskilled. Not surprisingly, highly-educated learners with a strong motivation for further upskilling have been most active in making use of the new schemes introduced as part of the LLL reform. This is one reason why public LLL policy is now being redirected towards low-skilled learners, including those in employment.

The evaluators of the 'Competence Development Programme', which formed part of the LLL reform, recommended pursuing and broadening the ongoing work between the social partners and professional associations at industry level in order to reach out to SMEs and learners throughout the whole country. They also suggested that the State continues to improve the framework conditions for employees in training, above all the way in which training is financed. Subsidies combined with a low fee so that each learner proves personal commitment by using his/her spare time for learning purposes, are proposed as a mechanism for public intervention in the field of LLL.

These experiences from the national LLL reform spark off two questions:

1. How can the supply of learning to target groups on the brink of social exclusion be improved?
2. Does the reorientation of LLL policy towards one specific group of learners entail harmful side effects for other learners who should benefit from public LLL schemes?

In this section we will briefly reflect on these two questions and suggest some recommendations, while bearing in mind that any policy recommendation should avoid the elaboration of primarily domestic LLL measures. The purpose of a transnational project like LLL2010 is to compare national experiences and to point at joint European actions.

Lifelong learning for basic skills

The provision of learning to target groups on the brink of social exclusion has been stimulated by the introduction of statutory rights to free education from primary to upper secondary level. This calls upon the school administration at municipal and county level but numerous reports point to a slow implementation due to unclear responsibilities, budget constraints and general administrative inertia in setting up arrangements for untraditional learners. As already demonstrated in the follow-up work to the Competence Reform, much can be achieved by a better co-ordination of public authorities involved in the implementation of LLL measures and arrangements. However, if the future State policy in the field of LLL is primarily directed towards learners with low reading, writing and numeracy skills, some experiences from the LLL reform might be lost.

High quality lifelong learning for the entire workforce

Experiences with projects for work-based learning financed by the 'Competence Development Programme' suggest that many of these experimental projects have had positive learning effects. In particular, workplace demonstrations of theoretical issues in the curricula have proven to be very beneficial for workers having been out of school for several years (O.B. Ure 2006b:4)[39]. In the future, the previous trial-and-error experimentation can be reduced by improved support and guidance to project promoters. One idea is therefore to provide public support to project promoters in their development of work-based learning of high quality, not only for employees with learning difficulties but for the entire workforce.

Several public agencies should be called upon when setting up a scheme for work-based learning. The scheme could particularly address small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in search of strategies for Human Resources Development (HRD), not necessarily a training strategy per se. A 'programme - project logic', with call for proposals and deadlines for submission of projects, can be found in most public training schemes. This leads to some formalisation of paperwork, which in understaffed SMEs is perceived as red tape. Hence, the 'programme-project logic' tends to discourage many SMEs from joining public training schemes. It follows from this diagnosis that a lighter administrative procedure is needed. One approach is to permit allocation of funds to small groups of e.g. branch and professional associations, which together with intermediaries, could organise a kind of 'training circles' for enterprises. It would

[39] cf. also Boreham et al. 2002:8.

then be the responsibility of the promoters of each 'training circle' to channel money into work on HRD among groups of SMEs. Provided that such 'training circles' are pre-qualified through an open call for tender, formal rules of impartiality and correct utilisation of public money should be respected. The main idea is to alleviate the administrative burden for SMEs in need of HRD strategies but short of manpower for handling formal procedures.

Without delving into the administrative set-up of such a scheme, it should be noted that beside Vox, the Norway Open Universities (Norgesuniversitetet) is in charge of financing as well as disseminating projects in which higher education institutions and enterprises join forces in developing technology supported learning. At lower levels of education, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for supporting arrangements for better quality in learning, including those encompassing enterprises and making use of new learning technology.

Along with public support for state-of-the-art training, it is pertinent to forge links between Norwegian work-based learning and European LLL projects, which have been nurtured from a wider range of experiences. This will improve the quality of Norwegian projects and can be achieved by means of targeted dissemination of LLL experiences. In concrete terms, domestic projects should be encouraged to extend their partnership towards non-Norwegian partners. Finally, public agencies in charge of national and European education and training programmes could be better co-ordinated.

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List of abbreviations and specialised terms

Blue Paper/Green Paper/White Paper. Applied to the Norwegian public administration, these British terms signify the increasing elaboration of governmental documents:
Blue Paper: internal report prepared by civil servants
Green Paper: report often supported by external expertise, e.g. a commission composed of experts and civil servants
White Paper: a document supported by the Government as such and presented to the national assembly.

EC = European Commission
ECTS = European Credit Transfer and accumulation System[40]
ECVET = European Credit (Transfer) System for Vocational Education and Training[41]
EQF = European Qualifactions Framework[42]
EU= European Union
FCT = further and continuing training
HE = higher education
HRD = Human Resources Development
HRM = Human Resource Management
IR = Industrial Relations
LLL = lifelong learning
PISA = Programme for International Student Assessment
SME= Small and medium-sized enterprise
TIMSS = Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
Vox = The National Centre for Learning in Working Life

[40] http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/index_en.html

[41] http://www.ecvet.net/c.php/ecvet/index.rsys

[42] http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html

GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE LLL 2010 RESEARCH PROJECT

In March 2000, the then 15 European leaders committed the European Union to become by 2010 “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment”. The Lisbon strategy, as it has come to be known, was a comprehensive but interdependent series of reforms, which has significant implications for a whole range of social policies, including policies for learning.

As part of the Lisbon strategy, the European Union has set the goal of raising the number of adults participating in lifelong learning to 12.5% by 2010. However, the proportion of learning adults in Europe differs widely across countries. The project **"Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: the contribution of the education system"**, which forms part of the European Commission’s 6th Framework Research Program, is dedicated to identifying the reasons behind these differences and to studying the policies and practices related to adults’ participation in and access to lifelong learning in a number of European countries (see project's web-page http:// LLL2010.tlu.ee).

The project involves researchers from thirteen countries and regions of Europe: Scotland, England, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Norway and Russia.

Project objectives

The objectives of this project are to:

- Show to what extent the countries differ in terms of patterns of lifelong learning.
- Reveal how these differences depend upon specific institutions and policies of each country.
- Assess the contribution of each country’s education system to the development of lifelong learning.
- Trace the ways institutional and policy prerequisites for lifelong learning have been developed in European countries.
- Identify the barriers to participation in lifelong learning in terms of policies, educational institutions, enterprises’ practices and potential learners’ motivation.
- Identify the best solutions and most successful practices in terms of participation in lifelong learning and to decide to what extent these would be applicable in other countries.
- Propose changes, which would enhance adult participation in lifelong learning and decrease social exclusion.

The LLL2010 research project extends over five years (commencing in September 2005), and these questions will be addressed in various ways through five sub-projects.

Potential impact

Project is expected to contribute both to competitiveness and cohesion of the EU by (a) developing and carrying out a joint agenda for a better understanding of the tensions between the knowledge-based society, lifelong learning and social inclusion in the context of enlargement of the EU and globalisation, (b) identification of best practices and suggestion of ways for implementation in order to reach the objectives for lifelong learning. The LLL2010 research project extends over five years (commencing in September 2005), and these questions will be addressed in various ways through five sub-projects.

The plan for disseminating the knowledge

The project aims to examine and report on national differences in approaching formal lifelong learning, but also to assist policymakers and practitioners in learning appropriate lessons from contrasting practice in other countries. Therefore, disseminating knowledge to relevant audiences – individuals, institutional actors and policymakers – is of the core issues within this project, and so dissemination activity will take place throughout the life of the project.

The preliminary results will be discussed in the workshops and conferences and introduced to national as well as international audiences. The results of the different research projects within LLL2010 will be presented in five comparative reports – one per subproject – and a final report, and two books will be published as a result of the project. A Conference “The Contribution of the Education System to Lifelong Learning”, scheduled in the end of the project, is aimed at discussing findings, conclusions and expert opinions on a European level.

To contribute to scientific discussion and enhance comparative studies in the field, further analysis of the results of the research will take place in articles published in specialized and interdisciplinary journals. As LLL2010 will undertake a number of original studies, the data, questionnaires and codebooks, and all the other relevant materials generated in the project will be made available to the scientific community at large.

Results achieved

The present summary covers the findings of the team during the first Sub-project, ‘Review of Literature and Policy Documents’; the full comparative report of the results of this Subproject will be made available on the project website by the end of 2007. The Sub-project undertook comparative research on lifelong learning policies and practices. The aim was to review how lifelong learning is being conceptualised and put into operation across a range of countries in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe.

Purpose & Methodology of Sub-project 1

The purpose of the first Sub-project was to review how lifelong learning is being conceptualised and put into operation across a range of countries in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe. The nature of the educational and lifelong learning regimes in each country, and how they are changing, were investigated. The report considers how far lifelong learning has entered the policy rhetoric in each country, and in what forms it has done so – in particular, how far it has been shaped by the European Union’s thinking, or by national or other influences. It considers how far rhetoric and practice diverge in each

country. It also considers how far actions of different areas of policy and government support lifelong learning, or hinder its development.

The Sub-project applied a comparative documentary analysis of approaches to lifelong learning, through analyzing national policy documents and addressing lifelong learning in participating countries.

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2. Higher Institute for Labour Studies, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium
3. University of Nottingham, England, United Kingdom
4. Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom
5. Educational Disadvantage Centre, Centre for Human Development at St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University, Ireland
6. Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research, Oslo, Norway
7. Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, Ljubljana, Slovenia
8. TÁRKI Social Research Centre, Budapest, Hungary
9. Centre for International Relations and Studies, Mykolo Romerio University, Vilnius, Lithuania
10. Institute of Sociology, Bukarest, Bulgaria
11. St. Petersburg State University: Department of Sociology, Department of Retraining and Improvement of Professional Skills for Sociology and Social Work, Russia
12. 3s research laboratory, Vienna / Danube University, Krems, Austria
13. The National Training Fund, Prague, Czech Republic
14. Institute for Social Research, Vilnius, Lithuania

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