Promising Practices

Ownership and Understanding of the National Teacher Preparation Guidelines in Norway

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This case study describes a “promising practice” drawn from an OECD review of initial teacher preparation in Norway from 24-27 April 2017.

The OECD Review Team – Hannah von Ahlefeld (OECD), Philippa Cordingley (Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education), Liesbeth Hens (Ministry of Education and Training, Flanders) and Danielle Toon (Learning First) – identified a number of “promising practices” in each country. These practices may not be widespread or representative, but seen in the context of other challenges, they represent a strength or opportunity to improve the country’s initial teacher preparation system – and for other countries to learn from them.

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Context

In Norway, national teacher preparation guidelines are used by teacher educators to frame the teacher education curriculum and its delivery. The effective development, use, monitoring and assessment of these guidelines over time requires continued consultation and collaboration between teachers, school leaders, teacher educators, programme leaders, and national and local authorities. As with teacher standards, making sure that such tools are working effectively requires a shared understanding of their objective and what following them exactly means (Toledo, Révai and Guerriero, 2017[1]).

Norwegian initial teacher education is regulated by the Norwegian Qualifications Framework (NQF), which defines the knowledge, skills and competences for 25-30 general learning outcomes (“Framework plans”). This covers progression in the instruction of the basic skills each year, including practice; and pedagogic and subject didactic knowledge (Ministry of Education and Research Norway, 2011[2]).

In March 2010, the Ministry of Education in Norway reviewed and set new regulations for university colleges and universities providing four-year differentiated primary and lower secondary teacher education programmes for years one to seven and years five to ten. The regulations defined teachers’ learning outcomes on the basis of the NQF (i.e. knowledge, skills and competences) (Ministry of Education and Research Norway, 2010[3]). The regulations defined:

- the structure of primary and lower secondary initial teacher education programmes, in terms of the requirements for specialisation and academic content, compulsory subjects, scope of subjects and teaching practice
- how ITE programmes should be structured for each year of study.

In 2011, the government commissioned “very broadly composed professional groups” mainly drawn from teacher education institutions (TEI) to work together to translate the regulations into national teacher preparation guidelines. The guidelines stipulate academic content, teaching practice, including the requirements of the organisation of the teaching practicum and “partner school agreements”, organisation, working methods and assessment methods, in addition to the general responsibilities of TEIs. The guidelines seek to “…promote the integration of theory and practice training, academic progression, consistent professional orientation and a research basis.” (Ministry of Education and Research Norway, 2011, p. 3[4]).
How did the national teacher preparation guidelines come to be owned and understood?

**Collaboration**

The guidelines command a high degree of ownership from TEIs in Norway; a commitment that is generated and supported through the collaborative development and co-critique of the guidelines by professionals working within and between those institutions. Many TEIs created institutional groups. According to a teacher educator interviewed during the review visit, “Groups from each subject area worked on outcomes and on how to fit them in to the standards and guidelines. Staff are very loyal to them”.

**Development and implementation**

Subject and phase teams were established to take responsibility for developing the guidelines to support the implementation of the national regulations – and to help embed best practice and use of evidence. This was an intensive and high-status activity. The TEIs were pleased to identify and support colleagues nominated to participate in national groups. Those nominated to head up overview groups tasked with co-ordinating revisions across all subjects for key phases are accorded high status. From 2015 the responsibility for updating and developing the guidelines are delegated to Universities Norway (UHR), a cooperative body for universities and university colleges – and UHR's strategic unit Teacher education. The meetings and discussions that attended the translation of the regulations into a series of guidelines and learning outcomes nationally (Ministry of Education and Research Norway, 2011[4]), and the translation of the guidelines into descriptions of programmes within TEIs were seen as developmental and as providing a foundation for building ownership and coherence building. The process is believed to have helped to open up dialogue between TEIs, which is thought to be crucial as the system works towards implementing a five-year master’s programme from 2017.

**Validation**

The guidelines are checked by those co-ordinating and leading their development for the system and their translation into descriptions of programmes within each TEI is also carefully scrutinised. Colleagues who were asked about the guidelines’ quality, valued the way that they are professionally oriented and specific to teaching practice.

**Why is it a strength?**

The OECD Review Team in its visit to Norway from 24-28 April 2017 considered that the degree of ownership of the guidelines on teacher education preparation was a strength in that:

- National regulations and guidelines for the content of ITE programmes are adopted *consistently and coherently* by TEIs.

**How could it be improved?**

The OECD Review team noted that the:
There appears to be limited agency and responsibility for innovation. Although there was widespread collaboration around the development of the guidelines, TEsIs and schools must now take responsibility for experimenting with different approaches and adapting national guidelines to meet local needs and new challenges.

There are opportunities to sustain, expand and deepen initiatives to share and scale best practices and research on effective teacher education across all universities and schools, for example by setting up a national portal for teacher education where national curriculum and guidelines are linked to supportive research summaries and case studies. According to one interviewee, such a portal would “contribute to making visible the knowledge base for teacher education through research, but also stimulate a more systematic model of learning across institutions. Many institutions today have excellent practices in different areas of teacher education, but these practices are unknown to most educators.”

For more information


