

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1. Languages spoken

Norway is a small country with a population of about 4.5 million. It has two official languages - Norwegian and Saami ("Lappish") - the former has two written standards (*nynorsk* 'New Norwegian' and *bokmål* 'book language'). Saami is a collective word for several languages - South Saami (spoken in the middle part of the country) and North Saami (especially in the northernmost county) differ as much as do German and Norwegian. Both are minority languages, but southern Saami is most at risk having only a couple of thousand speakers.

In the northern part of the country, there is actually a language contact situation involving 3 indigenous languages - Saami, Norwegian and a species of Finnish (*Kvæn*) which is recognized as a separate language by Sweden (*Kvæn* is spoken in north Sweden as well).

Sociolinguistically, this is a very interesting situation; in different areas of the North, the population has varied with respect to trilinguality and bilinguality, but by the 1950's was rapidly becoming monolingual in most communities. Over the past decades, however, some effort has gone into promoting Saami, more recently also *Kvæn*, and research has been done and is being done on the language contact situation.

The University of Tromsø is the only university which teaches both Saami and Finnish, but some of the colleges offer courses in either of these, and there is a Saami Teacher Training College where the teaching medium is Saami (they also offer university level courses in Saami at the intermediate level).

In addition to the two (counting *Kvæn*, three) languages of Norway mentioned above, there are of course languages that are recently "imported". Thus 7% of the primary school children of Norway belong to other minority language groups (i.e. other than Saami and *Kvæn*). 31 % of these live in the Oslo area. Urdu is the most common of these other minority languages, followed by Albanian, Viet-Nameese and English.¹

1.2 Languages taught in schools

Pre-primary and primary schools are the responsibility of the municipality, while secondary schools are run by counties. (Obligatory school age is 6; grades 1-10 are obligatory; a majority, however, continue at school for secondary schooling of some type.)

The Norwegian primary school system defines four types of language teaching, notably Norwegian and Saami instructed as native languages, Norwegian instruction for non-Norwegians, so-called "mother tongue instruction" which refers to mother tongue instruction for children whose families speak foreign languages, and finally foreign language instruction. Municipalities are supposed to provide mother tongue instruction, but in actuality, only about 50 % of primary school children with a non-Norwegian/non- Saami linguistic background receive mother tongue training, while about 70% get extra Norwegian tuition. All in all, for a small country, quite a few languages exist or are taught in Norwegian schools.

The first foreign language taught at school is English, which is compulsory from grade 1 and throughout grades 1-12. In addition, students may (indeed must if they are to continue to high school) include other foreign languages as elective subjects in Middle Schools (grades 7-10). Which languages are offered will vary from school to school, but all schools will most likely offer German and French. Until about 25 years ago, every person who completed their high school studies, would have (at least) three foreign languages: French, German, and English. This is no longer the case. Classical languages have a severely diminished status as well and are studied by very few.

¹ All figures provided by *Statistisk sentralbyrå* (see References).

At the high school level a third foreign language is compulsory for academic lines, and for university entrance - again, the alternatives will vary, but French and German are most common - some schools offer Russian, Spanish (and of course Latin), while universities offer a great variety of languages – African, Asian, American, etc. - with variation from university due to their different sizes. However, compared to English as a foreign language, all other languages play a very minor role. Norway is inundated with English both officially and in the private sphere.² Until this year, Norwegian was officially and by law the language of the Universities, but this is not mentioned in the recent law. All universities have MA programmes taught in English - these are aimed at foreign students, but also Norwegians may do them. In addition, several courses are taught in English - psychology or physics or whatever - simply because teachers have been imported who do not know Norwegian. It should also be mentioned that no student (except of course those studying foreign languages) can expect to go through a degree programme without encountering large amounts of textbooks and curricula written in English; this is notably so in the natural sciences, as well as in Psychology, Pedagogics, etc..

1.3 Higher education

Norway has 4 universities, 5 or 6 specialized Universities (called *vitenskapelige høyskoler* ‘wissenschaftliche Hochschulen’) for economics, veterinary medicine, agriculture, etc. All these are owned by the state- in effect, the Ministry of Research and Education - but have a great deal of independence in most matters. In addition to the Universities, there are 26 other institutions; these would better be designated polytechnics, but the term college is widely used for them in English texts so will be used here. (In the following I will refer to the Universities and the aforementioned university type *Hochschulen* as Universities, as opposed to Colleges of this latter type.)

The Colleges are also state-owned, but are less independent with respect to studies. They vary with respect to quality, size (from a few hundred students to several thousand) and type (whether they offer university type courses or not). Several of these incorporated the old pedagogical schools which provided primary school teacher training. In short, colleges were designed and established as non-research institutions, offering shorter study programmes; in recent years, however, many of these have become very university-like and the most recent university law – the Act of Higher Education - which will come into effect next year allows for such institutions to become upgraded to university status (offer master’s and doctoral degrees). Finally, there are a three or four private higher education institutions, the largest being a school of economics.

The Ministry is of course the owner of higher education institutions, but there are also other actors involved in the higher education scene. Chief among these is the National University Council, recently (1999) turned into the National University and College Council, where the members are the University Rectors and University Administrative Directors, as well as, since 1999, rectors and representatives from the colleges. Next in line are the National Faculty Councils for each major academic discipline group (Sciences, Humanities, Medicine, etc.). Members here are the respective Deans from the 4 universities, their Faculty Directors, representatives (as well as nonvoting representatives from the Ministry, and recently some

² A recent MA study at Lausanne showed that Norway was “best in Europe” – a dubious distinction - with respect to children “knowing” English before school age (Peter Trudgill, personal communication); this perhaps illustrates the fact that English has a very high status in the country.

representatives from the colleges). Under this latter council there are Discipline ("Fachrat") Councils, e.g. for Philosophy, English, etc. which give recommendations, discuss national standards, etc. Finally, the Ministry at the beginning of the 90's created a national Network Council which was supposed to work with (among other things) assessment as well as the implementation of plans to co-ordinate university research and studies better in the direction of a better division of labour. Following the work with the new law, this council has been discontinued, and will be replaced by some type of accreditation organ.

1.4 Bologna and onwards

Norway has been an eager participant in the Bologna process (and was a signatory to the treaty). Parliament has just passed a new Act of Higher Education which next year will implement the Bologna two-part structure in the university system: a 3-year Bachelor degree and a 2-year Master (indeed called by the English terms Bachelor and Master). However, these recent parliamentary decisions do not simply lead to a different course program structure, but will affect exams and evaluation, grading systems as well as other radical changes with respect to university elections and government, financing etc.

The new Act of Higher Education is the end result of a 3-4 year long process; a national committee (consisting of highly respected academics, but also students and representatives from research councils, etc.) was commissioned to write a report on higher education in Norway. The reason for this was of course the change experienced by the Universities – well-known all over the world – commonly described as a change from elite institution to mass university. The commission's report, the so-called Mjøs report, is an 800 page tome containing descriptions of status quo, but also, and chiefly, proposals for changes in higher education (teaching, evaluation as well as organisation changes); this report was then the basis for the recommendations by the Ministry, which again crystallized into the new Act of Higher Education recently passed by Parliament. It is thus the state that legislates the changes to come, while the universities themselves of course must work out the practical details that the framework of the law requires.

1.4.1 Status quo

The present system does, however, already include a two-cycle structure. I add a few words here about the present structure of university course programmes, focusing on the humanities (the natural science programmes will be slightly different; in fact, they are precisely like the 3+2 structure proposed at Bologna).

The first university degree (4 years) is called *candidata/us magisterii* (abbreviated *cand. mag.*) The higher degree is called *cand. philol.* (*candidata/us philologiae*) and takes 2 years. This degree includes a research thesis. The doctorate is meant to be another 3 years, but in fact both the *cand.philol.* and the doctoral programmes normally takes longer. A university *cand.mag.* degree will normally contain an introductory course in linguistics and one in Philosophy, 2 one-year studies (e.g. English or Art history; these are called *grunnfag*) and 1 one-and a half year study (e.g. French; this is a *grunnfag* and one additional semester and is called *mellomfag*). (People with teacher training education and others also come to university to do one-year studies, etc. rather than whole programmes or degrees.) *Grunnfag* and *mellomfag* courses in French, English or whatever language includes Literature as well as Linguistics courses - at the *cand.philol.* level one generally selects one discipline but some require introductory courses in whatever discipline one's thesis is not in.

For the *cand.philol.* degree, the one-and a half year study is required as a basis, and this study (e.g. French) continues for another 2 years (including a 100-150 page thesis).

As far as German, French, and particularly English are concerned, the students are supposed to know these languages fairly well and normally all lectures are in the foreign language. Less

well-known languages such as Russian, Japanese, etc. will usually include an introductory-level course the first semester, and instead of a one-and a half year study, *the storfag*, 2 years study is normal in languages such as these as a basis for the higher degree work.

1.5 Accreditation

Again, the present report will deal with a situation which will soon change. Formerly, the Ministry was the accrediting instance with respect to all new higher degree programmes and degree courses. Universities could, however, initiate and decide which courses to offer at the lowest level (*grunnfag*) while higher degree programmes still had to be approved individually by the Ministry. The state colleges, however, had to submit proposals for all new courses to the National Faculty Council (see above section 1.3). The recommendations from this council would be submitted to the Ministry; in fact of course, the Ministry reigned supreme and could disregard such recommendations. Under the new law, institutions will be able to initiate programmes at will, even though the state colleges will still have to apply before they can initiate and start up master programmes.

New institutions will, when the new law goes into effect, be accredited by a state-appointed accreditation organ. It is not decided at this point precisely how this will be organized, but the law allows for a two-step/multi-step accreditation. The college must first achieve accreditation for doctoral programmes in at least three disciplines. When this is in place, university status may be granted.

1.6 Quality assessment

1.6.1 Bodies responsible

Institutional

The 4 universities have recently been evaluated by international committees – this as a direct result of suggestions made in the Mjøs report (cf. 1.4 above). These assessment procedures have been initiated by the Ministry and administrated by the Norway Network Council, a council financed by and an auxiliary of the Ministry of Education and Research.

Academic subjects/university departments

Over the past 15 years, there have also been an increasing number of evaluations of academic fields – for instance the evaluation of English departments at all the Universities in the early 1990's. These department (academic field evaluations have been initiated by the National Research Council, and the evaluation committees have been international.

Teachers

At the teacher level, Norwegian university academic staff are hired in accordance with government regulations after a very cumbersome and drawn-out procedure. Having applied for a position (these are chiefly tenured positions), and submitted copies of all one's academic works, there follows a very intensive (and long-lasting) evaluation by (normally international) 3 person specialist committees appointed by the Universities (only one of which can be employed by the university in question). The lengthy written report the committee writes is then dealt with by various administrative/political levels at the university; Professors are appointed by the University Board, while the Faculties themselves can appoint Lecturers. Hitherto the goal of evaluation has been solely a matter of research ability and publication record, but this is slowly changing in the direction of requirements being made as to pedagogical qualifications. Increasingly, too, interviews, trial lectures, etc. are being used in the evaluation process, chiefly in order to screen candidates. In principle, the Colleges have the same procedure, required by law, but especially in the former teacher colleges, academic prowess has been less important than pedagogical skills or experience.

Students

Quality assessment of students is a very complex and expensive and time-consuming business (specified in the present Act of Higher Education) since Norwegian academic studies so far have been extremely exam-driven (cf. also various OECD reports) in that in every course, the result depends on the final exam, with a 2 or 3 person commission (one of which must be an external examiner) evaluating and grading. Thus every student's every exam has an external examiner from another university. The fact that students are assured complete anonymity is another feature of this system – papers have numbers instead of names, and only after all grades are set are names matched with the numbers. (Needless to say, theses and dissertations such as Master degree/Diploma thesis are not graded anonymously.)

1.6.2 Teaching vs research

As suggested above, assessment and evaluation so far has been typically research based. The one exception is the large-scale evaluation of the universities themselves, where all aspects of university life were evaluated. On the other hand, while all university, and increasingly also college staff, consider themselves first and foremost as researchers, are hired on that basis, Norwegian universities have also been traditionally teaching-based, in the sense that teachers have provided a great deal of teaching, students generally being free to take it or leave it – the important thing is the exam at the end.

Recently, however, many institutions have started to require documentation of pedagogical skills when hiring. (Students, and student organizations have been instrumental in many cases in this change.) Clearly, however, assessment committees will not disregard lack of research ability and a scholarly output, however great the pedagogy. With the new reforms such teaching based evaluation will become very much more important, and there is already discussion as to how useful it is to require that all teachers should be researchers.

1.6.3 Categories

One distinguishes between formal pedagogical training (exams from teacher training courses) and actual performance. The latter, as mentioned above, is only rarely assessed. It will, however, for the future include portfolio assessment. While most departments now encourage course evaluation, this is by no means obligatory; most departments nevertheless have regular evaluations (by students), or even (especially at the higher level) entire days or sessions called *fagdag* ("subject day") where teachers and students discuss courses and curricula. To what extent these measures lead to serious changes or simply function as psychological relief outlet for students will vary; it should be noted, however, that students are represented and can exert influence in political bodies at all levels of the University. Student representatives are indeed often highly articulate and very well organized, and thus may often be successful.³

1.6.4 none

1.6.5 Ranking

There are no official rankings so far. However, since in recent years there have been some additional funding allocated on the basis of programme proposals within universities, these are ranked and given earmarked project-based funding in accordance with that ranking. In addition, the Research Council at present is evaluating Centres of excellence – 10 such centres will be established across the country, and these of course will be selected based on strict ranking of the departments applying for this funding.

1.7 University funding

³ A recent example is the fairly widespread introduction of requirements as to teaching qualifications for university staff. Students at many universities favoured portfolio assessment of various types and generally carried the day despite a widespread protest from some staff and leadership.

The greatest part of university funding is state/ministry funding, although external funding is increasing and will continue to do so (also an explicit Ministry decree!). Private organizations, but also Norway's Research Council, are sources of such external funding. Naturally, there are differences between academic fields with respect to how much such funding they are able to attract – medicine being most successful.

Until a few years ago (2000), universities were given a lump sum, largely, but not entirely based on size, basically student numbers (for instance, the youngest university - Tromsø - was given disproportionately more money in a 20 year "build-up" phase). The funding was severely earmarked – so much for salaries, so much for equipment, etc. Building projects are financed separately. Since 1999, however, universities have been able to spend their appropriations as they see fit. Funding is also increasingly result based - so far mainly based on number exams taken/ECTS produced (as opposed to number of students enrolled). In the future, funds will be allocated on the basis of research results as well as student "production" and general innovation and reform measures; however, a certain amount will be a so-called basis allocation, i.e. a minimum allocation. Language departments, and indeed all of the humanities – at present not prioritized areas! – are naturally somewhat apprehensive about some of these funding measures.

1.8 Admission

University admission is free in the sense that there are no entrance exams. However, certain study programmes operate with a *numerus clausus* system, and thus admission is not entirely free. This is particularly true of medical schools, but also other types of "professional studies" such as Psychology, Law and certain technological programmes, while the Humanities and Social sciences normally only require a high school diploma (or what is called "General study competence") (By high school diploma I mean the "academic high school" version; there are several types of vocational high school "lines", and in those cases, additional exams - for instance in Norwegian and Mathematics - must be taken before admittance). In addition (since last year), from the age of 25 people who feel they are qualified to undertake a course of study due to qualifications acquired via employment or other channels may apply to universities and be evaluated as to *de facto* qualifications and be admitted on the basis of that.

1.9 Student funding

Higher education is free in the sense that there are no tuition fees. All students must pay a small fee to the national student organization (approx. 40E per term). The state provides student loans; after the student is 20, parents' incomes are not taken into account for this. Part of the financing of students by the Student Loan Association (state-owned) consists of grants, which do not have to be paid back. Grants and loans are not quality-related except that university courses must be completed within the defined period of time, or funding will be discontinued.

1.10 Departments in charge

At each university, the study of languages will be located in the Faculty of Humanities. The elected Dean and the Faculty Board will therefore be *de jure* in charge. However, for each language taught, there will be a department, department head, etc. as well as, at a different level, a national Discipline Council (cf. section 1.3) which has no power as such, but which gives recommendations (to the National Faculty Council), discusses national standards, etc. and functions as a control instance.

2. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF QUALITY MEASURES

2.1 Definition of learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are defined in that there are specified study plans for every single language (or other subjects) programme. To some extent, there are highly formal procedures and mechanisms in place for defining such learning outcomes. Indeed, there is a hierarchy of definitions in that the ministry (on the basis of recommendations from National Faculty Council and the Discipline councils/Fachrat) will have superordinate goals and criteria for every subject. (It should be mentioned that students are represented in all of these councils and in councils/boards at every level in universities.) These may for instance be evoked if a college applies to start a programme in a certain field. Thus any person who has completed e.g. first-year English, whether at one of the universities or at a college, will have pretty much the same background in grammar, literature, etc. In general, this holds true also for higher degree studies at the universities (though of course here research profiles at a given institution will play some role in differentiating individual studies).

In addition it should be mentioned that the exam system insures that conceptions of learning outcomes remain fairly similar nationally, since there is always one external examiner for every exam.

Within the formal limits suggested above, Universities (i.e. the Faculties) are given much freedom and the Faculty decides whether a new programme or changes in an older one satisfy these criteria.

In the cases of colleges establishing new programmes, these criteria also deal with other matters than learning outcome, even if this is implicitly the superordinate criterion. For example, a specified infrastructure (e.g. certain standards of library facilities), a specified number of teachers, etc. are required before a new programme may start up. This will change from 2003; from then on, Colleges and Universities are freer with respect to establishing new programmes, and the criteria setting and control will be solely at university level. It should also be mentioned that apart from courses in first-year studies, which are fairly bound by a set pattern, individual teachers have a certain amount of freedom when creating proposals for courses and seminars. Required reading etc. will however have to conform to the above-mentioned criteria and is controlled at Department (or Faculty level).

Language programmes in Norwegian universities are not very preoccupied with proficiency; what matters is the academic content of the course. Unlike in some countries, *all* teachers in language departments are first and foremost linguistics or literature scholars, and have little or no training as teachers of practical skills - we teach such practical skills courses as we must (e.g. translation, practical grammar, composition, etc.) as rank amateurs for the most part. Nor do Norwegian universities have a system such as in Switzerland, Poland, etc. of native speaker foreign language *Lektoren*, or, as in many countries, including Finland, language centres, etc. (but see section 4.1 below). Indeed, even though we certainly expect our students to have proficiency, teaching of this practical knowledge of the language in question is a major concern only at the lower level course (*grunnfag*). This is the more interesting since students of foreign languages continue to be graded also on the basis of their language skills and not simply on academic content throughout their career as students. Thus, both the structure of the studies and the lack of special teachers (and perhaps the quality of the students) conspire to create graduates whose writing training and other practical training often leave very much to be desired (albeit with differences here from language to language).

There are of course implicit and very general standards with respect to what proficiency is required by students, but these are rarely spelled out; as language teachers at university level we expect students to be able to write grammatically and spell correctly, and to speak fluently with a relatively large vocabulary (large enough to be able to read the literature of the language in question, for instance, and to answer exam questions, write one's thesis, etc. in it).

Most languages are taught in the language in question at every level, which also implies certain expectations as to proficiency. (Actually, there are certainly exceptions to this – relatively rare languages like Chinese, or Russian, where students start at zero level.) And indeed, in the case of languages such as English where students arrive with 12 years of background, one may clearly expect quite different levels of proficiency than less widely taught languages.

2.2 Who defines?

See above for participants in the definition. Consultations with other relevant social instances, employers, etc. and so on take place very seldom in this process. In recent years, nevertheless, there have been certain changes in this direction. Thus a great deal of discussion and debate is going on in Norway at this time with respect to the needs and requirements of society and to questions as to what we educate students for. Language students formerly were chiefly meant to enter the Gymnasium or Middle School teacher profession; standards and criteria were therefore based on the needs of these institutions. Since this no longer is the case, new criteria are being discussed and taken into account at all the levels mentioned above.

2.3 Employability

See also above in 2.2. The needs of students with respect to employability are indeed in very recent times beginning to be a very important factor in this respect and with respect to what types of courses are offered. As far as languages are concerned, programmes often require study abroad periods, and students are required to work in different ways related to such employability needs. For instance, presentations, cooperation projects and independent student "research" projects – hitherto largely unknown as methods in Norwegian universities – are becoming specified and obligatory parts of study programmes, precisely due to the requirements of modern society and business.

2.4 Specific profiling

Language studies were traditionally undertaken as education for *lektor* positions in the non-primary system (former *realskole* and *gymnas*) and thus specifically were geared at these groups, so again, this means that they were indirectly reflected specific professional profiles. More recently developed study programmes such as those of the translation department at one of the state colleges, are specifically developed for professional translators and indeed do reflect that in their over-all study plans and curricula. (There is no degree, however, called translation degree or some such. Actually, to become a so-called certified state translator interpreter one does not even have to do any specific studies at all – the important thing is to pass the highly demanding national test.)

In addition to degree programmes, most universities offer individual language courses for students in other Faculties (e.g. French for mathematicians, Fisheries English) or for business people (e.g. Bank English) or other professional groups (German for Lawyers). Learning outcomes definitions for such courses tend of course to be very specific, and programme/course proposals must generally be approved by Faculty level bodies just like other programmes. These courses are often taught by non-researchers and form a separate niche in the subject portfolio of a University.

Indeed, one might say that such courses have increased greatly in importance over the past couple of years since Lifelong Learning became a political aim and an ideology accepted by all political parties and by the Government.

2..5 no

2.6 no

2.7 Admission

At most Universities, general study competence (cf section 1.8) is the only requirement for admission, so too to admission to language programmes of Universities and Colleges. There are a few exceptions, and certain colleges have programmes which require special admission; not tests, simply competition between applicants based on grades. One such college course is the translation studies at one of the colleges where students are admitted only with very good grades and a very good background in the language/languages in question. In principle, then, a person with a very inadequate (but passing) high school French exam might be admitted as a student of French at a University. (It should be mentioned that students and student organizations are very much opposed to any restrictions on admissions practices - equal educational opportunities, is the slogan; strangely, however, no student organization has opposed the admission restrictions in medical schools!)

2.8 New course designs

The recent changes in higher education in Norway mentioned above (many of them not even implemented, yet ideologically very influential) have led to a multitude of plans for new course designs. Specifically one may mention the new Bachelor degree, which is not only shorter by one year than the old cand. mag. degree, but has a changed definition of learning outcome in that it is meant to be designed as a more complete whole, or indeed as an inter-disciplinary whole, in order to better serve students' needs (cf. employability, etc.). Also, this new degree necessitates smaller teaching units which again necessarily entails attention to new course design. It is the present writer's opinion that these new degree programmes will be excellent from the language teaching point of view – interest in modern languages have (as many other places in Europe) has decreased greatly, but these programmes will enable us to create new combinations which might seem more tempting and will be useful also for those who do not want to teach.

2.9 New evaluation methods

New pedagogical methods and goals will, among other things (indeed already has in several cases), lead to new and better types of assessment. The Ministry opened for experiments in this direction 3 years ago, by application only; meanwhile the new law changes the old assessment practice to a considerable extent and opens up new avenues.

3. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF QUALITY MEASURES

3.1 New methods

As mentioned above, Norwegian universities have slowly discovered that they are no longer elite institutions where teachers can simply transmit their research findings to elite students. New student-centred methods, therefore, are slowly trickling through the system, first on a more or less individual basis, once in a while also as part of Faculty or University strategy planning, and finally, now officially decreed from above in various reports and recommendations commissioned by and disseminated from the Ministry (including notably the new university law).

First and foremost e-learning would be an example of one type of new methods; to what extent this facilitates language learning is, I believe, at present unknown, but these are certainly in principle powerful tools. The universities have varied enormously with respect to adapting to these new methods; not unexpectedly the Humanities Faculty at the University of Technology and Natural Sciences in Trondheim is worth a mention here for being very advanced with respect to innovation in this field; their ICT-based Italian course is one example (but their work is not simply in languages, but also in other humanities). At this University, attempts are made to integrate humanities and sciences with respect to research as well as to teaching.

However, all the universities and the National Faculty Council, are very much involved in developing and facilitating work in this respect, including distance learning programmes in languages. A few examples may illustrate the general trend. As far as distance learning and programmes are concerned, two universities (Bergen and Trondheim) in cooperation have a large-scale distance e-project in French. At the University of Tromsø, there is a major project in cooperation with the University Library designed to eventually involve all language teachers in e-learning as well as to develop programmes and systems. The University of Bergen has a Humanities Research centre whose main function is to provide information technology assistance for research and teaching in the humanities and social sciences. This centre also helps develop e-learning programmes for the language teaching courses.

Finally it should be mentioned that e-learning and ICT are a priority of the Ministry of Education and Research, which for several years now has allocated funds to e-learning/ICT projects.

On a less grand scale, it is worth mentioning again that Norway's rehauling of educational methods includes a very strong student-centered focus with features such as student presentations, more writing training and various research projects - all of which definitely facilitate language learning.

3.2 Learning environment

The most important point here, and one that illustrates that officially, languages and language teaching are considered important. The Ministry and the four Norwegian universities share the financing of Institutes or Centres in Britain, Germany, Russia, France and Greece where students (and staff) can spend time. In addition Oslo University owns an Institute in Rome (which all the other universities may use), and Istanbul (Swedish, but may be used by Norway). How these places are being used, varies considerably, but clearly, they offer great opportunities for language learning. One example of good practice that might be mentioned here is the summer course in Modern Greek that the four Universities offer in cooperation at the Athens Institute, where intensive language training is combined with cultural input. Additionally, sharing work and expenses among the universities ensures that resources are maximally exploited. Scandinavian cooperation should also be mentioned here.

The practice of sending students abroad to a centre of some kind is fairly long established, since both universities and the former pedagogical colleges started sending English students to York and Lancaster a generation or so ago (often as an obligatory part of their course); other languages have had less established routines in this respect until fairly recently. In any case, with increasingly large numbers of students now being older, often with family obligations, obligatory programmes abroad are becoming quite rare.

Today, of course, all the universities are involved in the various EU programmes, and thus send students abroad within Socrates, etc. – and, in increasingly large numbers, to North America and, especially, to Australia (as well as receive them from abroad, but naturally there is a language problem since few Europeans know Norwegian). Even non-language departments now have discovered that professional abilities might be enhanced via language learning. To mention but one example - the Law School at the University of Oslo allows (or rather, encourages) students to combine law and language learning through studying law for a period at a German university, in combination with language training before going to Germany.

As far as staff is concerned, the Research Council does some financing of scholars abroad, but these grants seemingly become fewer and harder to get the more the reigning ideology is directed towards more internationalization and more language learning.

3.3 Delivery of programmes

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??? A possible candidate here is the stated intent of all universities to develop language and technology courses.

??Although in recent years there has been increasing worry about the general language abilities of scholars and the lack of training for these, very few courses of any sort are designed particularly for this group..

??? Lifelong learning requiring new courses and programmes.

3.4 Student mobility

The Ministry, the Act of Higher Education, and the Universities themselves wish for and promote student mobility. The extent to which students are prepared and supported may nevertheless vary immensely. Those students who go to the Centres mentioned above, will naturally receive more support than "free lancers" in that there is an established support system. In most respects, however, student mobility has indeed become facilitated with respect to easy transfer of credits (i.e. recognition, validation, and certification of skills and competences). (From a technical point of view as well - Norway started to use the ECTS conversion schema a few years back, and will from 2003 use ECTS as a primary credit calculation system in all higher education. The grading system, too, has been given a long overdue overhaul, and – symptomatically - as a new grading system, Norway chose the EU conversion system – A-E (F))

3.5 Language learning centres

Alas, no

3.6 Languages of communication

In general, in foreign language departments, the language of communication, instruction, exams, etc. is the language in question. However, this will vary since students of the less well-known (from a Norwegian point of view) languages will have only a rudimentary knowledge of the language throughout the first years of study. Frequently, colleagues in departments of English, German, etc. will use the language in question at all times – at meetings, etc. - because there so frequently have visiting scholars or even permanently employed scholars without a working knowledge of Norwegian.

3.7

3.8

3.9 Lifelong learning

As mentioned above, Lifelong learning is politically very important and is one of the guiding principles of Norwegian educational system as well. The Act of Higher Education (the old one as well as the new one) says explicitly that the Universities have a special responsibility with respect to providing further education and education to different types of groups in the community. (The new Act specifies that Universities are to cater more for community and business needs than has been the case.) Distance education for large groups of people has been relatively well organized by universities and colleges for decades. As far as languages are concerned, teachers in particular are good customers for such programmes. Specifically one may mention recent attempts by all the universities (and the Ministry) to upgrade primary school teachers' qualifications in German, especially in Northern Norway – distance courses combining on campus meetings with e-learning (and courses at the German study centre at Kiel) have proved quite successful.

3.10

3.11

4. TRAINING OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

4.1 Status quo

There are no specific study programmes for training university language teachers. Teachers in language departments are required, as are all university teachers, to have a doctoral degree in the subject in question (the doctoral degree presupposes that the person's cand. philol. degree and thesis were of excellent standard). In some departments, there are also a few persons hired in the 1960's that were hired, not as scholars, but as native speakers of a language (with varying degrees of academic background). Some departments have also hired persons who are especially qualified to teach language for special purpose courses; the minimum requirement for such *universitetslektor*'s is the cand. philol. degree.

As mentioned above (section 1.6), the focus has traditionally been on the teacher's research ability and the amount and quality of publications, while pedagogical skills have been less important – to some extent this is changing, and in order to get a permanent position at a university, one must now either have some formal pedagogical training or do a university pedagogical course within a specified period of time.

As far as updating of qualifications are concerned, there are no specific measures. Most Universities (and some of the Colleges) provide for sabbaticals at regular intervals; often these are used to spend time abroad, and naturally, this is true of language teachers as well, who would naturally go to countries where their language is spoken.

While University staff are supposed to have (as a right and as a duty) a 50% teaching and administration and 50% research time, Colleges encourage their staff – in varying degree – to do so-called FOU "research and development" work; this very frequently involves very innovative course development.

Universities vary with respect to how they support such sabbaticals abroad financially; all pay normal salaries, some allow for additional funding (normally not huge sums, but travel expenses, etc.. The Research Council, as well, in principle funds sabbaticals abroad, but such grants are becoming extremely difficult to get. It should be added that universities look upon sabbaticals less as updating of personnel qualification than in terms of facilitating research and facilitating internationalization (BUZZ word no 1)!

4.2 Status, career prospects

Really none specific for language teachers since they are just like any other university teacher. It should be added that as a matter of legal regulations, the main type of employment in universities (or in general) is that of permanent positions. If the state or anyone else wishes to employ someone for shorter periods of time, heavy restrictions apply. Consequently very few contract based positions exist. The aforementioned new Act, however, allows Universities to hire temporary academic staff for periods up to 12 years (needless to say the Unions are not very happy about this).

4.3 Changing qualifications

Recently, hiring staff has involved much more consideration being given to pedagogical qualifications in that formal training is required. Every in service university pedagogical course is also geared to new teaching methods. Otherwise, institutions – with varying degrees of success or indeed varying strength of purpose - are attempting to train people at least in ICT based teaching methods.

4.4 Training

All universities have departments for training teachers after they have completed their degree programmes (often called Pedagogical seminaries!). They offer one-year courses in didactics

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(in their chosen field or language), guided practice in schools, etc. Schools require new teachers to have exams from these departments before they are hired on a permanent basis. For the past 5-6 years, these departments have also been responsible for training university staff without formal teacher training, as an in service training programme. See also above in 4.1 and 4.3.

4.5

4.5 & 4.8 Staff development programmes

See above in section 4. 1

4.6

4.7

4.9 Staff mobility

Foreign language teaching staff and indeed all teaching staff at Universities have relatively bad mobility if this is defined as mobility within the country.⁴ Especially at the University of Oslo (and partly the University of Bergen – i.e. the oldest and, in the case of Oslo, the largest universities) large proportions (95%) of the staff are educated and have always worked at this University. So far, figures are very much lower in this respect for the University of Tromsø and of course for the Colleges.

Mobility may also be looked at from the point of view of mobility abroad, the opportunity to spend time in other countries and so on. On the whole conditions are good in this respect in that there are Scandinavian exchange programmes and programmes allowing for inviting guest lecturers for shorter or (relatively) longer periods. The Universities (and Colleges) also have cooperation with Universities abroad which allow for staff mobility and internationalization. Finally, the Centres mentioned above in section 3.2 provide excellent opportunities for this latter type of mobility.

5. Management of process of teaching and learning

5.1 Descriptions of programmes, courses, modules and other offerings

While individual teachers may initiate and design courses, these are subject to approval by Study Commissions as well as the political bodies of the Department and Faculty. Following the process of change in Norwegian Universities there has also been a great deal of work done inter-faculty-wise with respect to interdisciplinary study programmes. Such programmes will receive final approval at university level as well as of course locally (department level). The point is that teachers, while they may create and design courses, have an entire system of controllers (at Department and Faculty level, Department Board, Faculty Council, and the Study commission).

Each University has a catalogue where courses are described; standard, obligatory courses with relatively cursory descriptions, while advanced courses make use of more extensive descriptions - as they function as "advertising"!

5.2 Calculation of student workload (in relation to learning outcomes and levels)

This is the responsibility of the Department/Faculty, but based on national norms (and lately also EU standards and norms). From autumn 2002, most universities will use ECTS study points as their only credit measure (instead of as a conversion system). Courses and workloads are in accordance with general guidelines from Discipline Councils, National Faculty Council, etc. as described above in section, but are also overlooked by (at Department and Faculty level) Department Board, Faculty Council, and the Study commission.

5.3 Introduction of information management systems (for example, for keeping track of the academic achievement of individual students, of the development of student numbers in

⁴ Note that the exam terms provide interchange of experience on that large numbers of teachers travel to other institutions as examiners for oral or written exams.

specific programmes, courses, modules etc, of overall assessment results, of graduates' careers etc.)

Information management systems are in place at each University where information about students, grades and courses is available. The University Study Director Office keeps track of and publishes statistics based on these records (figures such as student numbers, exam results, etc.). In fact, with respect to Admissions, Norway now makes use of a national system so as to best and most easily assign students to available study places (not always the university of their choice). Very little is done about keeping track of the graduates, though there has over the past years been some talk about getting systems going for that purpose.

5.4 Division of tasks among staff members teaching on a specific programme

Since each department is fairly small, no staff members can - normally - teach only his or her own special research fields. Professors also teach courses at the lowest level.

5.5 Systems for the external and internal evaluation of courses or programmes (including categories underlying the evaluation)

Evaluation of courses is not in most places obligatory, but most departments nevertheless have regular (each semester) evaluations (by students), or even (especially at the higher level) entire days or sessions called *fagdag* ("subject day") where teachers and students discuss courses and curricula. To what extent these measures lead to serious changes or simply function as psychological relief outlet for students will vary; it should be noted, however, that students are represented at all levels in all political bodies of the universities. Norwegian students also tend to submit written complaints if they are dissatisfied with teachers or courses!

As mentioned above, there is also in place - to an increasing degree - subjectwise external evaluation of course programmes (such as English), and recommendations resulting from such evaluations may have some impact (evaluation reports are public in the sense that universities disseminate them to the department in question)

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Professor dr. philos. Toril Swan, Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, University of Tromsø, N-9037 Tromsø, Norway. Tel. 47- 776-44266; Fax 47- 776- 44239;
Tel. home: 47-776-35792