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1. Legal regulatory frameworks concerning formal recognition

The legal regulatory framework concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning is based on (1) the Education Act and (2) the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges.

(1) Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education (Education Act)

The Education Act No. 61 of 17 July 1998 with later amendments covers both primary and secondary education. Chapter 4A concerns education and training organised especially for adults. Adults who need primary and lower secondary education have a statutory right to such education from August 2002. This education must be adapted to the individual's needs and life situation, such as when and where the education is to be provided and the rate of progression. The municipal authorities are responsible for providing this education.

Section 4A-3. The right to upper secondary education for adults

- Adults who have completed primary and lower secondary education or the equivalent but who have not completed upper secondary education have the right to take upper secondary education. The first sentence applies to adults older than 25 years. Education for adults shall be adapted to individual needs. This right may, among other ways, be met by means of distance education facilities. The Ministry may issue further regulations concerning issues such as the question of who shall be entitled to this right, admissions, ranking and preferential rights.*
- Adults admitted to upper secondary education have the right to complete the full course. This applies even if they do not have the right to upper secondary education pursuant to the first paragraph.*
- In the case of subjects where the syllabus requires a period of instruction longer than three years, adults admitted to upper secondary education have the right to education in accordance with the period of instruction laid down in the subject syllabus.*
- No charge shall be made for tuition. The county authority may require adults attending upper secondary education to pay for the teaching materials and equipment normally required for their own use in connection with the course. The county authority may require payment to cover the cost of copying such materials. The Ministry of Education and Research may issue further regulations.*

Section 3-5. Trade and journeyman's examinations without apprenticeship or schooling.

It is possible to sit a trade or journeyman's examination on the basis of sufficiently broad working experience of a trade of duration 25 per cent longer than the stipulated apprenticeship period. The County authority as represented by the county vocational training board decides whether the working experience stated by the applicant can be approved, and may in special cases approve periods of experience shorter than indicated above.

As mentioned in 1.6.b), this legal possibility to take craft examinations as a 'practice candidate' has been in force since 1952 as part of the then Vocational Training Act and has been widely used.

Adults with rights to enter upper secondary education are entitled to an assessment of their prior experiential learning, and to the acquisition of a proof of competence. Those not entitled to upper secondary are to have their competence assessed if so approved by the local district or the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. The county municipalities are to issue proof of recognition of competencies on the level of upper secondary.

(2) Act relating to Universities and University Colleges

All higher education, both public and private, in Norway is subject to the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges No. 15 of 1 April 2005. Two sections concern the validation of non-formal and informal learning, for admission and for exemption.

Section 3-6: Educational qualifications for entrance to higher education

1. The general basis for admission as a student (the general entrance requirement) is successful completion of the Norwegian upper secondary school and fulfilment of the requirements regarding subject combinations and hours of study laid down by the Ministry. The Ministry may stipulate that other suitable education or combinations of education and work experience shall constitute a general basis for admission. The institution shall consider whether applicants hold qualifications corresponding to the stipulated entrance requirements.

2. The institutions may grant applicants who are 25 years of age or older in the admission year admission to specific courses if they on the basis of their prior learning (formal and non-formal) hold the necessary qualifications for the course concerned. The Ministry may issue further provisions concerning documentation, procedures and any coordination.

Section 3-5: Exemption from an examination or test

Exemption from an examination or test shall be granted when it has been shown that a corresponding examination or test has been taken at the same or another institution. Such exemption may also be granted on the basis of another suitable examination or test. Documentation of prior learning (formal and non-formal) may also provide a basis for exemption. The Ministry may order the institutions to coordinate their practice. The board decides whether the faculty concerned or a special body at the institution shall decide on exemptions.

2. National statistics

- Statistics Norway SSB is responsible for figures related to education and training in Norway, www.ssb.no

- The Vox Mirror is an annual statistics report which presents data from the whole country regarding the participation of adults in learning activities.

A central topic covered by the Vox Mirror is the use of assessment and accreditation of prior learning among adults who want to participate in upper secondary education. The figures show that accreditation of prior learning can lead to a 60 per cent shortening of the training period.

Almost half of all adults who take part in upper secondary education have chosen health and social science subjects as their line of study. Of those, 62 per cent have been through assessment and accreditations of prior learning, and 80 per cent of them may have their training period shortened. A shortened training period not only makes the individual more motivated to take part in education, it also saves time and money for society at large.

More than 60 per cent of adults who take part in adult education are less than 40 years old.

The Vox Mirror reveals that 19 per cent of the participants were born after 1978. The need for upper secondary education and vocational training is considerable among young adults and it must count as positive that certain counties include this group in their offer of free education.

Part of the Vox mirror will be translated to English in the beginning of 2009.

The Norwegian version:

<http://www.vox.no/templates/ArticleOverview.aspx?id=2989>

3. Published during the year 2008

Vox (2008): Basis

Vox publishes an annual status report on adult learning in Norway. It covers achievements and challenges and it also contains certain recommendations. The publication is called «Basis!». Chapter 4 describes the situation and the challenges for implementation of a system for validation:

<http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=2728>

Vox (2008): På rett vei med realkompetanse

This report is a description of how four counties has developed and organised tailored training provided for adults based on validation of learning outcomes. Challenges and recommendations for further work are also included. Evaluation of the results shows that there is a need for:

- anchoring of the intentions of adult learning at all stakeholders' levels in a county
- good communication between the different actors involved in the process
- a common understanding of the intentions of tailored and adapted training
- developing of an individual learning plan
- modularisation of the training provided
- dissemination and implementation of the results of these projects

The main conclusion is that there is possibilities and a willingness in the counties to change their way of provide adult learning but there is a need for giving more attention to this part of the system, to develop adult learning as a professional area and to open up for organisational and economical flexibility.

www.vox.no/rappporter

Vox (2008): Økt bruk av realkompetansevurdering for arbeidssøkere

www.vox.no/rapporter

The main goal for this project was to use validation and formal recognition of learning outcomes as a tool for making job seekers more employable. The first step was to develop a common understanding of validation and to establish routines for cooperation between the employment offices and the training providers in the counties.

Different products have been developed:

- A common electronic platform and a common procedure for communication between the two public providers
- Guidelines for all actors (www.vox.no/realkompetansevurdering)
- Information material and training of those responsible for the process

Important success factors for implementing validation and formal recognition of learning outcomes in the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service are: Employment guides with sufficient knowledge about validation and implemented routines for cooperation with training providers, clear benefits for users, effective tools for communication, clear routines for payment, predicted timeframes and information adapted to the end user.

Vox (2008): "Realkompetansevurdering som metode i opplæringen innenfor kriminalomsorgen"

In the beginning of 2005 the Government introduced a White Paper on Education and training in the correctional services. Research shows that 7.6 % of the inmates have not completed their primary and lower secondary education, while 49 % has not completed upper secondary education. In consequence, the Storting has recognised a need to focus more closely on the socio-economic perspectives of rehabilitation. The government underscored the need for more focus on validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, with a view to promoting forms of education that can be adapted to the needs of the individual. In collaboration with the correctional services the educational sector has initiated a number of pilot projects for further development and strengthening of educational activities within the correctional services. This report is both a description of the current situation and challenges/benefits of using validation and formal recognition of learning outcomes in the system of education and training in the correctional services.

Vox (2008): Valuation and validation of non-formal and informal learning in Norway - experience and challenges

http://www.vox.no/upload/6437/Valuation_of_learning_SEC.pdf

Tobiassen, A.E, Døving, E. Olsen, K.M (2008): Realkompetansevurdering i kommuner Sluttrapport SNF rapport nr. 20/2008, Bergen:SNF

http://www.ks.no/upload/117956/071004SAMMENDRAG_realkompetanse.pdf

The Norwegian Directorate for Education launched a circular for a more common understanding of laws and regulations in the counties:

http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/Rundskriv/2008/udir_2_08.pdf

Information:

Press release: "Prior learning can shorten your study period"

<http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=2993>

Related articles:

<http://www.nyteknikk.no/index.php?artikkelid=2725>

<http://www.euroinvestor.no/News/ShowNewsStory.aspx?StoryId=9742570>

Local TV: <http://www1.nrk.no/nett-tv/klipp/340306>

Case description for Norwegian press:

From transport section

<http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=411>

From a farmer:

<http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=405>

Film: validation of persons in prison:

<http://www.vox.no/templates/CommonPage.aspx?id=2982>