



Teacher Education for the Future

A Policy Document from the Union of Education Norway



UNION OF EDUCATION
NORWAY

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Teacher education that emphasises knowledge and quality

The education of teachers should concentrate on the learning, development and education of children, young people and adults. Teacher education programmes are marked by high academic and professional quality. Research affiliation and professional approaches must work together to promote the education of highly qualified preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary teachers.

A teacher education for the future

• Has a life-long perspective

Teacher education has a life-long perspective. It starts with the initial training, goes on through the years as newly qualified teacher and continues throughout the entire career. The initial training is the first step in the qualifying process, but in-service training and further education are indispensable elements in a life-long process of professional development.

• Is differentiated but builds on a common knowledge base

Both early childhood education and schools benefit from having teachers with a variety of educational backgrounds. Teachers with different education will broaden the scope of competencies and thus enrich the learning environment. Our union therefore promotes the continued existence of various types of teacher education:

- Early childhood education
- General teachers for compulsory education, years 1 through 7
- General teachers for compulsory education, years 5 through 10
- Practical-pedagogical education for subject teachers, academic and vocational subjects respectively
- Integrated master's degree education
- Subject specific teacher education
- Vocational education teacher

In order to enhance coherence in the education system, from early childhood to higher education, the various teacher education programmes must build on a common knowledge base. Teacher education programmes must strive for coherence and consistency both within each programme and across the whole range of programmes. Also, measures must be taken to allow for teachers to move from one area of the education system to another, by means of further education.

• Contributes to students achieving a high level of knowledge and professional awareness

Teacher education must be firmly grounded in the reality of everyday life in early childhood education, schools and apprenticeship businesses and industries. The overall purpose of the education programmes must clearly reflect the professions for which they prepare, and the professional aspects should permeate all teacher education. Thus, teacher education should combine high academic standards with sound professional knowledge. Future teachers should develop awareness about the content and complexity of the teaching profession and the conditions under which it is performed. All teachers should develop an ability to look critically at their own practical performance and be able to give valid reasons for the professional decisions they make.

Teacher education must combine knowledge and skills in pertinent subject areas with topics related to teaching and

learning (pedagogy, general didactics, subject specific didactics, and teaching practice). A strong teaching profession is characterised by competence in all these areas and by the ability of the professionals to see the various areas in conjunction.

- **Provides in-depth subject studies and knowledge about teaching and learning (didactics)**

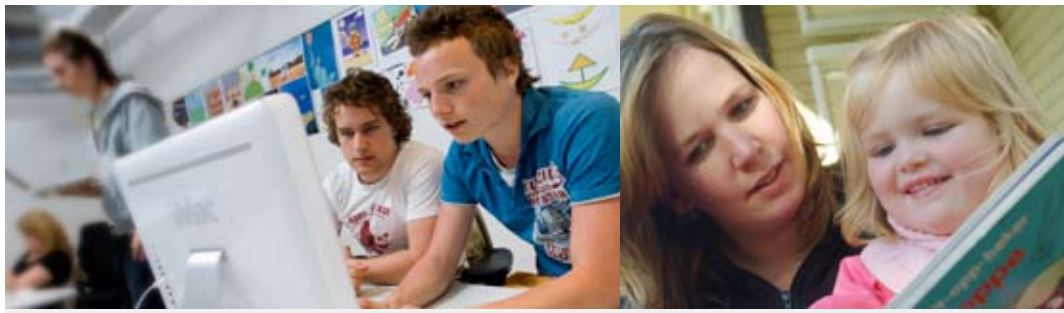
Teacher education programmes should provide future teachers with solid subject specific knowledge, including ample opportunities for in-depth studies. Knowledge about teaching and learning should be part of all subject studies in teacher education.

- **Includes a relevant study of education**

The study of education should be based in the profession and provide knowledge and skills needed to work with the learning of children, young people and adults. In addition, the study of education should provide a basis for reflection on teaching practice and thus equip the students with the means and tools to develop their own professional performance.

The study of education shall contribute towards a collective professional foundation for work in early childhood education and schools and support collective professional development processes. Teacher education programmes are comprehensive professional programmes that demand coherence across the various areas of study. Teachers of pedagogy, in close cooperation with teachers of specific subject areas and subject specific didactics, as well as teachers supervising student teachers (tutor teachers), should be responsible for the necessary coordination.





- **Provides high quality teaching practice**

The quality of the practical training is decisive, and requires close cooperation between teacher education institutions and local education authorities. Close contact and cooperation between teacher education institutions and practical training institutions should even comprise mutual participation in the learning activities of the students in the various learning arenas.

Quality practical training institutions see themselves as important learning sites for the students, and they look upon the teaching practice as an integrated and significant part of their tasks.

Leaders of these institutions would have a particular responsibility for organising good student teaching schemes. They should also see to it that students, as far as possible, be included into the staff and learn to know the whole scope of professional tasks and develop an understanding of the organisation in which they work.

Practical teacher training must be allotted sufficient economic resources. Financial arrangements must promote equity and quality for all students, irrespective of type of teacher education and place of study. Also, criteria and procedures for the assessment of student teaching must be developed.

- **Is anchored in relevant research**

All teachers should have a solid professional knowledge base, built on a combination of experience and research. Research based knowledge must therefore constitute a significant part of teachers' professional basis. Students of teacher education should learn to understand that research plays an important

role in the development of early childhood education and schools. Students should acquire theoretical knowledge and practical skills to be able to organise, carry out and analyse R&D projects. R&D projects within teacher education must relate to the teaching profession and take into account the specific nature of education.

Close cooperation between teacher education institutions, other relevant research units and early childhood education institutions, schools and apprenticeship industries is needed, in order to secure a sound development of the education system, teacher education programmes that are anchored in real life practice, and research that is relevant.

- **Requires Master's Degrees**

To secure sufficiently thorough subject studies and research based professional knowledge, teacher training for compulsory education, as well as the integrated higher level teacher education, must be at master level. Also, all teacher education programmes must be organised in a way so as to make it possible for students to build on a Bachelor's Degree to get a Master's Degree and continue studies at doctoral level. In the view of the Union of Education Norway the establishment of more Master's Degree programmes must be firmly founded on the knowledge base of the teaching profession.

The Union of Education Norway would like to have a discussion of the issue of a possible Master's Degree requirement in all teacher education. In our view, the length of teacher education does not depend on the age groups for whom the education qualifies. The required standards must be the same, although the content differs, for all teacher groups. It is equally impor-



tant for all teachers to be able to analyse the conditions for learning and the consequences of teaching and learning.

- **Includes advanced qualification programmes**

In order to strengthen the knowledge base of the teaching profession, and thus enhance the development of schools and early childhood education institutions, advanced qualification programmes should be established, in the form of doctoral programmes, research schools for teacher education and other qualification programmes. Designated qualification programmes would give opportunities for teacher educators and teachers to qualify as researchers within their own professional field.

The Union of Education Norway would also like to see more teachers engage in innovative development projects, in cooperation with established researchers in the field. Local education authorities should encourage these endeavours and support them economically.

- **Has highly qualified teacher educators**

Good teacher educators have high standards of professional expertise and knowledge, a high degree of respect for the professions for which they provide education and training, and regard themselves distinctly as teacher educators. Teacher education must have educators with a high level of profession specific knowledge combined with research skills. Conditions for doing research should be good, and teacher educators should have the right and obligation to engage in in-service training and further educational studies on a regular basis. This will ensure that they are in a position to fully accommodate the close connection between the education they deliver and the fields for which it provides qualifications.

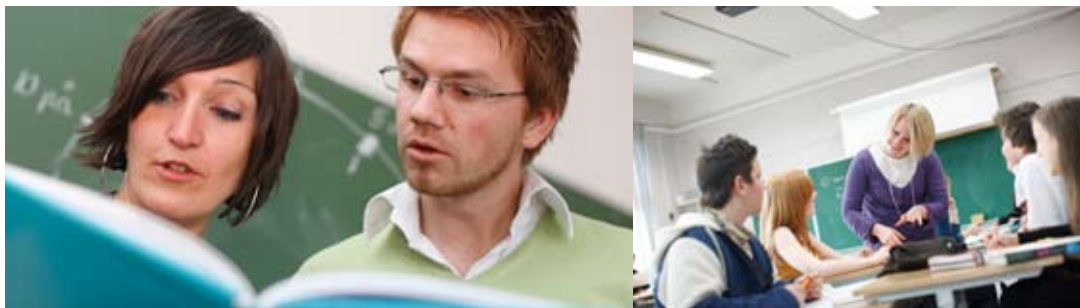
Educators at teacher education institutions should maintain a good and close relationship with the tutor teachers, and should engage in practice teaching in early childhood education institutions, schools and apprenticeship businesses at regular intervals in order to update their own practical experience.

- **Has tutor teachers that see themselves as teacher educators**

Tutor teachers are teacher educators on equal footing with teacher educators working in the teacher education institutions. The qualifications of tutor teachers are a decisive element in teacher education. Being a tutor teacher requires sound knowledge of subjects and teaching and learning, as well as of teacher education. Tutor teachers should be able to help student teachers build bridges between theory and practice. They should have documented tutor qualifications, and at least five years of teaching experience. They should have the right and obligation to engage in in-service training and further educational studies. Tutor teachers must work in close cooperation with teachers of theoretical subjects and should involve themselves continuously in the learning activities of the students at the teacher education institutions.

- **Recruits good students**

Children and young people should meet well qualified, competent and professionally secure teachers. It is therefore necessary to ensure that teacher education recruits students that are motivated, able and eager to learn. The student body as a whole should reflect the composition of the population with regard to gender, and social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.



The Union of Education Norway believes that it is right to impose special enrolment criteria in teacher education. The enrolment criteria must be adapted to the content and objectives of the various categories of teacher education.

- **Meets the students with high expectations**

The teaching professions are demanding and complex. This must be reflected in the studies. Teacher educators and trainers must therefore impose clear and concise standards and have high expectations of the students' efforts and achievements.

Students that fail in their attempt to master the studies must be identified at an early stage and receive advice and guidance that is relevant to their personal situation. All teacher educators have a responsibility to assess and evaluate whether individual students have the skills, abilities and personal qualifications that are necessary to become a teacher. Such assessments and evaluations must be carried out regularly throughout the study period, not just at the end of the education.

- **Provides knowledge of inclusion**

Inclusion is an overall principle in our education system. Thus, inclusion must permeate all teaching and teaching practice in teacher education. The education of teachers must afford all future teachers with research based knowledge that enables them to act according to this principle. Teacher education programmes should provide the students with theoretical knowledge and practical competence to meet the needs and expectations of children, young people and adults, in such a manner that everyone may learn in accordance with his or her own abilities.

Teacher education should enable students to identify special needs that children and young people may have, and to take responsibility for implementing necessary measures to meet those needs. Students should also learn about the support system of the school and develop a professional working relationship with the various institutions within this system.

- **Protects and preserves the diversity of the education system**

Reflecting the demographic structure of society, schools are marked by social, ethnic, language, religious and cultural diversity. Good teacher education provides students with knowledge of and insight into multi-cultural work, thus enabling them to make use of the resources embedded in this diversity in their teaching. Teachers should be able to meet different groups of children and young people with open minds and respect and in this way contribute to dialogue and democracy. Equity and respect, as fundamental values, must be translated into their practice.

- **Emphasises the societal perspective**

The tasks of all teachers are outlined by society, through democratic processes. Good teacher education emphasises this societal perspective, by providing the students with knowledge of and insight into current legislation and national plans and curricula, as well as major political priorities in the sector. At the same time, students should develop a capacity for critical thinking about the tasks and functions of education in society. The students should be encouraged to take part in education policy debates. Students and teacher educators should know about national and international trends and be



able to reflect critically on these trends. The global perspective must be made clearly visible. Thus, the studies should include exchange visits for both students and teacher educators, and resources represented by overseas and immigrant students should be fully utilised.

In the view of the Union of Education internationalisation is both an objective in itself and a means to ensure quality education. Internationalisation embodies seeing and understanding our own reality in a globalised world. Knowledge of international work, cultural dimensions and decision-making should be integrated into teacher education programmes.

- **Makes use of information technology – technically and pedagogically**

In good teacher education, information technology is taken into use as an integral part of the study in both technical and pedagogical terms. Students must have necessary knowledge of the technology and be afforded insight into and experience with using ICT-based systems and equipment in their studies. Students should work with professional, pedagogical and ethical challenges brought about by ICT.

- **Follows up newly qualified teachers**

The Union of Education believes that systematic guidance and follow-up of newly qualified teachers during the first year of professional life should be a right and an obligation for the newly qualified teacher. Good follow-up schemes must be based on the needs of the newly qualified teacher, and demand close cooperation between the newly qualified teacher, the work place and the teacher education institution. Systematic guidance to

young teachers would ensure that both experience based and research based knowledge is disseminated in a way that will benefit all involved parties.

Teachers mentoring newly qualified teachers should have documented mentor qualifications, as well as necessary time and scope to perform these duties. The newly qualified teachers should have time to utilise the guidance and reflect on the experiences made.

- **Offers quality in-service training and further education**

Good teachers need updated knowledge and should be able to participate in the development of their professional knowledge base. Access to professional development should therefore be a right and an obligation for every member of the profession, within the framework of a well planned, predictable and binding system of continuous in-service training and further education for all teacher groups. The professional development should take place as a cooperative effort in which both teacher education institutions and practice arenas take part.

- **Is developed within the framework of a national development programme**

In order to strengthen teacher education programmes, it would be helpful to establish a national development programme lasting for several years and comprising all teacher education programmes. The national development programme should involve all stakeholders, i.e. teacher educators and other pertinent professional groups, all teachers, and teacher and student organisations.

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NORWAY**

Union of Education Norway
www.utdanningsforbundet.no

Hausmanns gate 17,
NO-0182 Oslo, Norway
Tel: +47 24 14 20 00 Fax: +47 24 14 21 50
post@utdanningsforbundet.no