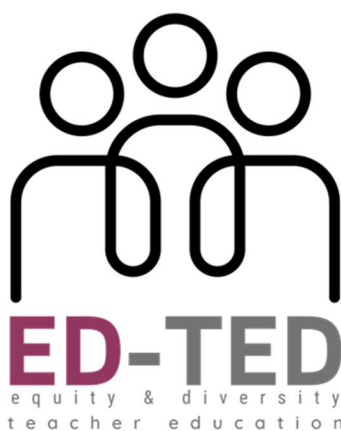




A narrative of provision for equity and diversity in Norwegian teacher education

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[ED-TED project]

This narrative is a first output from the EU-funded Erasmus+ project '*Equity and Diversity in Teacher Educators' Professional Development*' (ED-TED). The ED-TED project aims to establish a European professional network of higher education teacher educators to support teacher educators' professional development as they strive to have the requisite competences to address issues of equity and diversity throughout teacher education programmes. More information and regular updates on the project can be found [here](#).

A key initial step in the project involves exploring existing provision for teacher educators and student teachers in teaching for equity and diversity across the seven participating countries—Germany, Finland, Flanders, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal. Following a systematic approach detailed below, we identified and assessed the quality of provision at three levels in all project countries: macro (national policies), meso (teacher education programmes and institutions), and micro (practices). This mapping initiative serves a dual purpose: to contribute to an online resource bank with equity and diversity practices in and for teacher education, and to inform policy recommendations for enhancing teacher educators' competencies at local, national, and European levels.

This narrative describes, interprets, and contextualises the findings from the mapping activity for teacher education in Norway. As a living document, it will be regularly updated based on ongoing consultations with key stakeholders throughout the project's next stages.

[Teacher education in Norway]

Norwegian education system: Education in Norway is organized in two main levels; primary and lower secondary education, for children aged 6-15 and the organisational differentiated upper secondary education and training, for children aged 16-19. The children have right and obligation to attend primary and lower secondary education, and they have right to attend upper secondary education. Public schools on both levels are at no costs for everybody and all children in primary and lower secondary education have the right to attend a school closest to their homes. This is for all children, and this specifically also counts for those who have special needs (children who for example are deaf, physically impaired, or have downs syndrome do all have right to go to the school in their neighbourhood and get education adapted according to their needs in the same class as their peers). Primary and lower secondary schools are under governance of the municipalities, while the counties are governing upper secondary schools. Private schools are governed by an organisation or foundation and characterizes most often by pedagogical direction, faith/live philosophy or are international schools (also Norwegian schools abroad). Less than 5% (2023) of the children attend a private school which is financed for 80% by the national government, 20% is paid by the parents. Adapted language instruction (can be Norwegian or mother tongue) in school is mandatory for the schools to provide until the students are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow the normal instruction of the school. Normal instruction in school is for 87,4% of the students Norwegian Bokmål, for 11,4% Norwegian Nynorsk, and for 0,14% Sami. The right to Sami instruction is not geographically bound, it is possible for students to get Sami instruction in the whole country, which for practical reasons can be on-line. Instruction in Bokmål and Nynorsk are geographical bound to particular municipalities.

The position of teacher education in the Norwegian system: All teacher education programmes are regulated by their own general national curriculum framework. In addition, there are regulating national guidelines for each programme (11 in total) which specify binding standards for quality for good teacher education. These guidelines are based on the national curriculum framework and provided by

the practice field (teacher education and schools) through national collaboration. In Norway there are several ways to become a teacher; there is for example a 5-year teacher education, at master level, for primary and secondary teacher education, or to teach at lower and upper secondary school one can choose a 5-year integrated teacher education in a discipline master study or a 1-year post graduate teacher education after finishing a masters study in a school subject. Then there are kindergarten teacher educations and post graduate teacher educations for vocational education, for vocational education is also a way through a bachelor vocational education study available for those who don't have a bachelor, but have experience from the work field and want to teach and train in upper secondary vocational education.

Student teachers have most of their induction teacher education at universities or college universities, a smaller part is in schools in the form of practice supervised by experienced school-based teacher educators. School-based teacher educators mostly have in addition to at least three years of experience also a course in supervision. Most university-based teacher educators have experience as schoolteachers in the subject they teach at the teacher education. Others come into teacher education with an PhD in a school related subject. There is no formal expectation to the background of teacher educators besides content knowledge, context knowledge is preferred, this is mostly regulated through hiring procedures.

[Research project methodology]

The mapping process across all project countries followed a consistent methodology, combining the analysis of key documents at the macro and meso levels with an exploration of practices through focus group interviews with student teachers and programme leaders. This section provides details on the sample used for the Norwegian case narrative.

A wide-ranging understanding of policy frameworks and objectives regarding teaching for equity was obtained through the legislative acts, national curriculum framework for teacher education, national guidelines for teacher education study programmes, white papers and other documents as "Teacher Education 2025, National Strategy for Quality and Cooperation in Teacher Education". The primary focus was on development over the past 10 years.

The second phase involved an analysis of equity and diversity provision for teacher educators and student teachers across 14 teacher education programmes. Participants to the mapping interviews and the national webinar were affiliated to 9 different teacher education institutes and represented the 14 study programmes. Some institutes were represented by study programme leaders, teacher educators or students teachers from multiple teacher educator programmes. We conducted two online focus group interviews with six study program leaders from six different programmes, and one online focus group interview with six students from 4 different programmes. Participants of the national webinar represented some of the programmes which already were represented by the study program leaders or the student teachers and four other study programmes.

In this phase we also examined institute or universities strategy and/or vision documents for equity and diversity which foremost was related to regulation in the institutes. Study program plans are not explicitly studied, Norway has both national framework and guidelines for all nine different kinds of teacher education programmes, which results in that many institutes have very alike descriptions of their study programmes. Differences between institutes occur at course level which is not a part of this projects focus. We would like to express the thought that due to missing the course level with the voices of the teacher educators, we might not meet the expectations from readers who are familiar with the Norwegian context.

Macro level provision

Attention for equity has been an important focus in Norwegian society in many years and therefore in the educational system. From the aim to contribute to equality through compulsory schooling for all children from as early as the first general educational act in 1739 to comprehensive unified schooling which was regulated in the educational act in 1939, the educational system developed and turned in the 80's from equality towards a focus on equity. Interesting is the combination of increased focus on individual needs from that period until today, and the strong social democratic ideology on community, which leads to a stronger emphasis on equity. The principles of general- and individual adapted education and 'nearby school for all' from the early 90's where all children are integrated in mixed-ability and non-differentiated classes are the underlying driving force for equity in the Norwegian educational system. As the principle of equity is historically a foundational part of the schooling system it permeates teacher education as societal starting point.

For both school and teacher education in Norway, there are common national frameworks and guidelines that all schools and teacher education programmes in Norway need to follow. This is possible to sustain by a geographical element in the aim for equity, the emphasis on the relation between the national and the local; even though no matter where in the country you take your teacher training, the various educational institutions will work based on the same curriculum / study plan, there is room and opportunity for local adaptations (methods, tasks, areas that can be emphasized more than others, etc.).

In recent years, in both parliamentary messages from the government and education policy documents, the terms inclusion, diversity and equity have been used to a greater extent than previously. These documents point to desired changes within the education system at all levels, both for schools, for teachers, for student teachers and for teacher educators. There are requests for changes at an overall level within the education system which are very general, but which at the same time express a desire for a changed practice. The documents have a clear expectation of changes at all levels in the education system, and that work must be done on areas such as strengthening the inclusion of all students, seeing diversity as a resource, a good and meaningful school for everyone regardless of background, working to reduce social inequality and actively working to reduce social exclusion.

In the national frameworks and guidelines for teacher education, the concepts of diversity and equity are not very often mentioned, but related concepts often arise and are repeated several times. Related to diversity are terms such as adapted education, cultural understanding, cultural knowledge, Sami perspectives, student diversity, gender, different learning requirements, etc. Related to equity are terms such as social differences, social equalisation, inclusion etc.

In the analysis of the documents, it emerges that concepts such as diversity, equity, inclusive learning environments, and social inequity appear multiple times across various teacher education programs. When compared to previous legislation and national frameworks related to teacher education, there seems to be an increased focus on terms associated with diversity and equity. However, these concepts are often discussed in rather general terms, using phrases such as developing knowledge about, ensuring that, being able to analyse and critically reflect, understanding, being able to identify, having broad competence, and so on. All these expressions emphasize the importance of having diversity and equity on the agenda in teacher education. At the same time, there is a sense that these terms are inserted to comply with regulations and that it is politically correct to emphasize them repeatedly in the same text.

National policies for support the professional development of teacher educators in the areas of equity and diversity are not stated as goals as such in documents. This is alike other topics which could be seen as important for professional development. Even though there are no direct policies for teacher educators' professional development, there are several policies which *imply* professional development for teacher educators. The national curriculum framework for teacher education describes at a general level what knowledge and competencies a student teacher is expected to develop during their studies.

This informs teacher education institutions what they need to work with their students. Even though these frameworks don't explicitly say something about professional development for teacher educators, it shows expectation of what knowledge and competencies a teacher educator need to have. Concepts such as diversity, equality, inclusive learning environments, and social inequality appear multiple times across various teacher education programs without reflecting specific provision for teacher educators' development.

Equity and diversity as a theme in the frameworks for teacher education are discussed in rather general terms, using phrases such as 'developing knowledge about', 'ensuring that', 'being able to analyse and critically reflect', 'understanding', 'being able to identify', 'having broad competence'. These provisional phrases are about the student teachers. Compared to previous legislation and national frameworks related to teacher education, there seems to be an increased focus on terms associated with diversity and equality.

In strategy document "Teacher Education 2025, National Strategy for Quality and Cooperation in Teacher Education" from 2016, is mostly an organisational provision and doesn't take equity and diversity in account. A more recent white paper (19 2023-2024) on higher professional education describe expectation to the institutions how provide the education related to equity and diversity. Here are, for the first time, also educators in higher education as a group mentioned, and expected to develop professionally within the areas of equity and diversity. They are called 'diversity workers' without explaining what this means or what is expected of this role. The white paper is not only about teacher education, but for all higher professional educations, as for example, nursing school and engineer studies.

Stakeholders as teacher associations and researcher association unions are as also teacher education institutes consulting organisations in shaping policies generally. Teacher educators don't have an own union, but are mostly members of the teacher and researcher unions, membership is a common practice for teacher educators in Norway. While generally around 50% of Norwegian employees are member of a unions, which is internationally compared quite high, are up to 80% of teachers and teacher educators union members.

Meso-level provision

All universities have, as by law is explicitly described, responsibility for the student's learning environment, student rights and student representation (*Act related to universities and university colleges*). This implies also regulations according the *Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act* (<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2017-06-16-51/> specifically § 13, 17, 18) and the *Working Environment Act* (<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2005-06-17-62> specifically §12-1 to 12-5 and 12-7). These paragraphs in the Working Environment Act are about pregnancy-, maternal- and parental leave. Even though it is said in *Act related to universities and university colleges* the rules apply as far as they are suitable, it is an issue in some situations. Teacher education have in most institutions mandatory education the students need to follow in order to be allowed to take exams in their subjects. Also, in-school practice hours are mandatory. To, for example, students who are or become parents during their studies it is a challenge, mostly due to practical conflicts in their daily routines, to navigate without using extra time to complete their studies. It is not just in this context students experience difficulty to manage their time and the mandatory requirements for presence. Most universities use 75 to 80 % mandatory presence in educational activities on campus and 85-100% mandatory presence at in-school practice hours. Students need to redo time/activities in subjects or practice days.

Universities have Disability Offices where students with disabilities and/ or special needs can apply for individual adaptation of their studies and exams (regulated by §10-5 in the *Act related to universities and university colleges* as mentioned above). Inclusion and diversity as a purely overarching link to the value base in the school is structural in all courses in teacher education. The Education Act, chapter 1 describes this value base. <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLEO/lov/1998-07-17-61>

At institutional level has for example OsloMet worked with increasing focus on diversity for teacher education. Both teacher educators and student teachers worked together to choose areas of importance for them. Four areas are particularly in focus and applies to all OsloMet's teacher education programmes; multicultural perspective, mental health, universal design, gender and sexuality.

Vision statements of universities can be found in the strategy documents on equity and diversity which are extensively mentions as structural factors at meso level for teacher educators. Teacher education must qualify to provide training on Sami conditions, including knowledge of the status of indigenous peoples internationally, and the right of Sami children and young people to education in line with the Education Act and the current curriculum. This is in the national framework for teacher education for all programmes. This is even though approached and prioritized in different ways.

University in Tromsø (UiT) for example has a goal to train more teachers to be able to use Sami language in all teaching and have now Sami language courses in both programmes for primary teacher education and teacher education for lower and higher secondary education. (<https://s.ntnu.no/UiT-news-about-Sami-language-education-in-teacher-education>).

Programmes for practical and aesthetical subjects (OsloMet, LUPE) and kindergarten teacher education with an emphasis on diversity (DMMH, Trondheim), have a much more detailed and precise language on diversity in their study programmes and course descriptions. It is although mostly focused on cultural diversity in the kindergarten teacher education.

Study program leaders from different programmes mention emphasize that equity and diversity are generic themes which are part of all courses. The students say they expect it to be most focussed on in courses on education and pedagogy

Student diversity is also a theme which is fronted and is specifically connected to adapted teaching for all students. Nationally it is a goal to recruit a more diverse student body into teacher education. Since it is perceived as not diverse enough to meet all pupils in schools, they need a richer diversity in role models. Program leaders mention this is a doubtful reasoning since we don't have research on a full scala diversity among students or teachers. We mostly know names and see how they look; this is a stigmatic way of concluding on diversity. They want to be cautious when saying we need more diversity in our student body. On the other hand, do we know which students tend to choose teacher education or who not, so due to that we can say we do not represent society in our student body. This also applies for teacher educators.

As mentioned in the macro level provision, general and not very concrete term are used in the provision for student teachers. Into the next step, the study program plans are often the same ways of describing mentioned. So, also here is diversity mentioned and in fewer occasions equity. Indigenous people are specifically mentioned in both the national frameworks and the local. Mostly are Sami mentioned and in some programs also the national minority groups: Kvens/Norwegian Finns (people of Finnish descent in Northern Norway), Jews, Forest Finns, Roma and Romani people/Taters.

Teacher educators seen as university teachers are obligated to take courses in higher education pedagogy within the first couple of years of their employment. Most courses do have a component on diversity. This course is a onetime obligation and for many it is a long time ago they took this course. One can take the course again, but there is no encouragement on that from the institutional leadership. Most universities update their staff with voluntary workshops on for example general design for teaching. All universities have in their general strategy and vision plans for equity and diversity, often as a part of their HR strategy. This contains mostly recruitment of a diverse staff and safeguard diversity. Teacher educators, as higher education educators are expected to respect and relate to the general strategy and vision of their university.

Teacher educators invite NGO's as for example non-profit organisations for gender and sexuality, or a representative of the Equity and Anti-Discrimination organisation, into their education. In this way also teacher educators develop their competency on these areas.

Most professional learning is done locally through research groups who give seminars or lectures for colleague teacher educators. Sami people and culture is an important part of Norwegian history and today's society, and in both frameworks for schools and teacher education it is a separate topic. Colleague-learning is a much used way of professional development in this area. Sections in teacher education are often the unity which provide the non-organized colleague-based professional learning.

Study program leaders, who work interdisciplinary, emphasize their role in teacher education is mainly an organisational role, and not involved in teacher educator professional development. Some programmes have the possibility to meet with all teacher educators who teach on the programme, these groups can learn across sections in teacher education. Discipline sections have the responsibility to develop content in courses for the student teachers, in this way teacher educators also work on their professional development on equity and diversity, although this is than mostly located in programmes with an emphasize on diversity.

NIFU (Nordic Institute for Studies of innovation, research and education) lead the competency centre *BalanseHub*, this network will conduct research on gender balance, diversity and inclusion in Norwegian research. As such they are connected to some of the teacher educations in Norway also. One of the projects is mentioned in the next section on practices (micro).

Micro-level provision

Pedagogy and education is a course all student teachers take and equity and diversity are a part of this course. Equity and diversity are also in other courses, but might be more connected to the subject, like diversity in natural science has a different approach than diversity in social science. Some teacher educations have mixed courses for subject and didactics and a mix of pedagogy and subject didactics, where other programmes there is a clear dividing line between, subject, subject didactics and pedagogy.

Norwegian school is for alle children, in that way we can assume all schools are diverse. But not all kind of diversity is in every school. Whether teacher students have school practice in schools in areas that are typical for an upper social class / an area consisting of wealthy families, the student teachers will not so easy meet equity problems because of social difference for example. Some universities have a policy to find schools in all part of the larger cities, just to give the student teachers the opportunity to meet a more diverse group of pupils during their education.

In interviews with student teachers, it is also clear from those we interviewed that teaching and arrangements related to diversity and equity in their opinion are too random. They describe it as a lack of holistic and coherent thinking about diversity in teacher education. They feel that the importance of working well with diversity is emphasized, but when it comes to teaching in the different teacher educations related to diversity, the impression is that it is random and used little time to. In questions related to whether the teacher education at the institutes has contributed to learning about diversity and equity, they say they feel not to have learned enough, both on the knowledge or competence needed to meet the great diversity in the school. At the same time, they state they know a lot about equity and diversity, it emerges that the teacher education is not necessarily what has contributed to learning, but rather experiences from other parts of life such as sports, leisure activities, work alongside studies and general being a part of society.

About learning on and for equity and diversity during school practice periods, the student teachers say it depends a lot on how much attention their practice teacher has for these topics and in what way. Adapted teaching is a main and fundamental concept in teaching in Norwegian schools and teacher education, this is prioritized and often takes first and for most in diversity related to learning and socialisation. Students don't always at first site experience this as diversity, they say they miss more insight in and attention to cultural, social and gender diversity. Many universities offer also the possibility to take practice abroad. There are connections to school in Canada, Australia, Spain, The Netherlands, Gambia, South-Africa and more.

For teacher educators there are few possibilities of learning about and for equity and diversity. Universities do organize courses for all teachers in higher education as mentioned in the former section, these practices are mostly to educate those who are new in teacher education. There are also seminars or lectures for an update of knowledge on relevant but random organised topics for teacher educators and is attended based on interest. Work forms here are lectures, discussions, research presentations, workshops and more. Voluntary participation makes it an individual focused practice and doesn't necessary strengthen teacher educators as a group of colleagues. There is no organized (standard) series of courses for teacher educators specifically.

Stakeholders as teacher association unions take often initiative in discussing new policy or political informed topics important for school and/or teacher education. There are organized lectures and discussions both locally at teacher education institutions and nationally during national meetings. Topics as for example the new white paper mentioned in the section on policy are discussed to see what the impact for teacher education can be. This form for professional development is initiated by the stakeholder and directly implemented on micro level.

A new initiative, which might provoke a new practice, is the BalanseHub project at NTNU (Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim), this has as sub-goal the development of diversity competence among employees at the institute of teacher education. Workshops will be organized in 2025 for all sections and teacher educators participate together with their colleagues from their own section.

Cross-cutting considerations and future development

One challenge that emerges is the use of the terms diversity and equity. In most of the documents, we have reviewed in this work, diversity and equity are discussed in vague and general terms, and they can have several meanings. On the one hand, these terms should be able to be broadly defined, but on the other hand, it can be both challenging for teacher educators, teachers and student teachers to put this into practice. When there is a lack of a unified understanding, there is also a challenge with the desired outcome, which student teachers particularly point out as problematic. This is because it is not entirely clear to student teachers what is expected of them, and it is not entirely clear to teacher educators what or how they can teach about this topic.

Another challenge related to diversity and equity in teacher education is that the students (and teacher educators) experience teaching in these topics as sporadic, random and not coherent. In other words, there is a lack of holistic thinking about what diversity and equity are and how it should be taught. Additional mapping of course plans and interviews with teacher educators who teach these course could give insight in where to pinpoint where to improve and initiate a more holistic approach to teaching about and for equity and diversity.

Since goals for teacher educators' professional development at policy level almost are not existing explicitly is the underlying expectation of equity and diversity knowledge and competency of teacher educators not regulated in a provisional document on this level. Provisions don't become clearer at meso level, but this doesn't mean it is an important topic teacher educators work with in their teaching. Since it is explicitly present in both the frameworks for school and teacher education, teacher educators are forced to develop their knowledge and skills on a regularly basis. Collaboration on courses with colleagues is the main source of this development.

It can be seen as a challenge that policy document focus on provision for teacher education as an institution; the teacher educators are not seen as part which need this kind of provision. The latest white paper is an exception and it is interesting to follow the path this is going. Another point of interest is the role of expectation to teacher educators' professional development through what student teachers need to be prepared for and what they need to be able to prepare their pupils for. This can be seen as trust in teacher educators' knowledge, skills and personal interest in professional learning, which also includes equity and diversity. Autonomy on professional development is a great good which should be governed with care. Regulation of professional development is not recognizable structured and we could

interpretate this as a gap. The question is at which level this gap is and whether and/or where it should be addressed. Here there it could be of importance to make a difference between general professional development and professional development for specific topics as equity and diversity. As mentioned in a former section do stakeholders often come in on micro level and is in that way not in the line of provision through policy. We could ask ourselves if it is desirable if teacher educators' professional development would be regulated by the political macro level.

Recommendations

- To promote collaboration within school/teacher education partnerships on equity and diversity, to enable emphasizing on what pre-service teachers need to learn to feel prepared to teach in school.
- To continue to emphasize on Sami perspectives and knowledge, in teacher education.
- To develop strategy on equity and diversity at institutional level where organisation, research, teaching and content are closely connected. The expectation to the role of the teacher educator need to be clarified at this level (since this is not the case in policy documents or national frameworks, neither it is the level to do this).
- To promote a culture which encourages professional development for teacher educators in general and to design a system or establish a local/national network which gives the teacher educator room to initiate and keep autonomy in their professional development. This system or network should be organized at meso level where the academic is prioritized and not the political.
- To develop coursework for teacher educators for professional learning and updating professional knowledge, skills and abilities, in general and equity and diversity specifically, reinforced by meritorious acknowledgement.
- To develop a more explicit use of concepts related to equity and diversity in national frameworks, to enable teacher educators to act upon it.
- To promote holistic thinking in teacher education about what equity and diversity is and how it should be taught, a local and national discussion could enable a more coherent teacher education within these concepts.