



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Summary in English: Report No. 14 (2008–2009) to the Storting

Internationalisation of Education in Norway





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Foreword

For the first time, the Norwegian Government has presented a Report to the Parliament (the Storting), in which internationalisation of Norwegian education is viewed from an overall perspective and which includes all levels of education. It has been important for us that this should be a consolidated presentation so as to indicate that this has high political priority. The Report to the Parliament proposes many measures and at the same time establishes a framework for further development and priorities.

Education for everyone is important. The internationalisation of education should add more relevance in terms of the needs of working life and society through developing courses and programmes. The education provided should lay the foundation for our ability to meet the challenges and opportunities that arise from globalisation and increased international interaction. We have therefore been mindful of the fact that internationalisation of education is something that concerns *all* pupils and students, training and teaching staff, and academic, administrative and technical personnel.

Internationalisation of education should contribute to improving quality so that the education programmes and institutions become more attractive and competitive, both nationally and internationally. Greater interaction for pupils, students, employees, institutions and public authorities across national boundaries is an important source of inspiration. Comparing ourselves with others is vital to our development.

Pupils, students and staff in Norwegian schools, university colleges and universities travel abroad, and many come from other countries to Norway for shorter or longer periods of study or for purposes of teaching or research. These are longstanding traditions, and facilitating this type of mobility will continue to be a priority.

We live in a multicultural world, and Norway has also become a more multicultural society. The world has become more open and we travel much more now than ever before, both for work and for pleasure. Internationalisation of education also means better language skills and a better understanding of and insight into other cultures.

Norway enjoys close cooperation with other countries in the High North, the Nordic region and Europe, and we are also continually broadening our geographical perspective, for example in the direction of «new» economies. We have developed strategies and entered into agreements on cooperation with North America, Latin America (Argentina, Brazil and Chile) and several individual countries such as China, India and Russia. Naturally, this also has great significance for the internationalisation of education.

We have noted with interest that this issue has now attracted widespread attention. The Report to the Parliament gives direction and priorities, and we acknowledge the fact that we live in a world where cooperation, shared knowledge development and mutual respect are important.



Bård Vegar Solhjell
Minister of Education



Tora Aasland
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Table of contents

Foreword.	3	4	Internationalisation of higher education.	12
1 Background for the Report	7			
2 Internationalisation of Norwegian education.	9	5	Norwegian students who graduate from foreign universities.	15
3 Internationalisation of primary and secondary education and training.	10			

Internationalisation of Education in Norway

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1 Background for the Report

In this Report to the Parliament, internationalisation of education is described across all levels of our education system. This will ensure that different schemes, programmes and measures will be seen in relation to each other and that internationalisation will also be a recurrent theme in the Norwegian education system.

Internationalisation of education is gaining increasing significance and attention, both nationally and internationally. This gave rise to a need for the Norwegian Government to give a consolidated presentation in which the political priorities and guidelines that should form the basis of future development were described. Once the decision to do this had been taken, it was important to include all levels of the education system.

In the preparatory work leading up to the Report to the Parliament, the Ministry of Education and Research devised a process whereby a large number of national and international actors within the education and research sector provided suggestions on the work that was being done. This was important for a number of reasons: first and foremost because it has drawn good, professional guidance into the preparatory work on the Report, but also because it was important to engage in broad dialogue so that others were made aware of the realities and the priorities which the Ministry of Education and Research was developing. Heavy emphasis has therefore been put on these contributions during the work on preparing the Report.

Facts about Norwegian education

For the most part, the Norwegian education system comprises public schools, university colleges and universities (see figure 5.2). There are seven universities, twenty-four state university colleges (including two art colleges), five public and three private specialised university institutions and twenty-one private university colleges. Generally speaking, the private schools and university colleges receive a large share of public funding. In addition to these are the special public and private schools (*fagskole*) offering tertiary vocational education, which essentially are vocational continuing education and training programmes of between 6 months and two years' duration.¹

Up to and including the 10th grade (primary and lower secondary education), pupils attend schools that are owned by the municipalities. Upper secondary schools are owned by the counties. These schools offer education that qualifies pupils for further studies at universities and university colleges and for direct entry into various occupations. Vocational education and training at this level is organised so that pupils complete two years of school followed by two years of apprenticeship

¹ The Report to the Parliament (the Storting) also proposes measures for schools offering tertiary vocational education, which account for approximately 100 providers and approximately 10,000 students, but these are not discussed in this summary. For the most part these are measures for improving the statistical basis and for facilitating internationalisation at a later point in time.

training at a workplace or, alternatively, three years of school. A small proportion of pupils at both primary and secondary level attend private schools (approximately 3 %).

Norwegian pupils and students are organised in a number of democratic organisations which in turn are represented on various councils and committees. Pupil and student organisations represent the pupils and students in consultations with both political and administrative authorities.

- *The Norwegian Student Council (Eleveorganisasjonen)* organises pupils in the upper secondary schools.

- *The National Union of Students in Norway (Norsk Studentunion, NSU)* organises students at universities and university colleges.
- *The Norwegian Association of Students (Studentenes Landsforbund, StL)* organises students at universities and university colleges.
- *The International Students' Union of Norway (ISU)* organises foreign students in Norway.
- *The Association of Norwegian Students Abroad (ANSA)* represents Norwegian students abroad.

Box 1.1 Number of pupils and students in Norway, 2008:

- Pupils in grades 1–10 (primary and lower secondary level): 614,033
- Pupils at upper secondary level: 183,520
- Pupils in private schools: 29,155
- Students taking higher education in Norway: 193,359¹
- Students attending universities: 84,367
- Students attending state university colleges: 78,052
- Students attending state specialised university institutions: 5,309
- Students attending private specialised university institutions: 15,684
- Students attending university colleges of the arts: 788
- Students attending private university colleges: 9,159
- Students taking higher education abroad (degree students): 11,793
- Population in Norway (2009): 4,838,759

¹ This figure covers self-financed students. In addition to these are the externally financed students, making the total figure for 2008 206,151.

2 Internationalisation of Norwegian education

In recent years, globalisation has become a driving force of vital importance to development, both nationally and internationally. In this connection, more attention and importance has been given to how the national education system should meet the challenges and opportunities that globalisation represents.

In the Report to the Parliament a definition has been adopted of internationalisation of education which is in line with international use:

«The process of integrating an international, intercultural and/or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education».²

Because internationalisation of education in our context covers all education, it is important to develop the quality of the content in the education programmes here at home, and it will be important to be seen internationally as an attractive cooperation partner at all levels. This means that internationalisation of Norwegian education and development of content in education programmes will serve as the mainstay of the national work on internationalisation.

Norwegian students have long traditions in taking all or considerable parts of their education abroad. It is of great value to individuals that good opportunities for this exist, and it is important for Norwegian working life and society. Development

of the national education system, however, does not take such a form of internationalisation as its basis. There is therefore a need to broaden our perspective of internationalisation of education to include the development of education in Norway to a larger extent.

When internationalisation at home and of Norwegian education is now put forward as the key element in the internationalisation of education, it is done so on the basis of the education system itself. Through internationalisation at home the education programmes will offer more relevant education to those attending school and receiving their education in Norway, and the quality will improve. The education programmes and educational institutions should be perceived as more attractive to foreign pupils, students and teachers and as attractive international cooperation partners within education and research.

Through internationalisation at home it will be important to develop an internationally-oriented content in the education programmes at all levels by means of relevant courses and study programmes. It will therefore be important to facilitate mutual exchange and mobility at many levels, including within upper secondary education. Within higher education, internationalisation at home entails facilitating exchanges of students and staff with partner institutions abroad and also courses and programmes for foreign students taking shorter or longer periods of study in Norway.

² Jane Knight (2003): Updated internationalization definition. *International Higher Education*, 33/2003, pp 2-3.

3 Internationalisation of primary and secondary education and training

The Norwegian school has long traditions in placing importance on respect for other countries and cultures. One of the purposes of education is to give insight into our common international cultural heritage and our cultural diversity.

Internationalisation in primary and secondary education and training, particularly in upper secondary education and training, entails greater mobility, strengthened language teaching and clearer international perspectives in the education and in the curricula. Internationalisation should give higher quality and more relevant education.

In the National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training («Kunnskapsløftet»), which was formulated in connection with the most recent reform of Norwegian primary and secondary education and training, many of the competence aims had an international and global character. A key task will be to ensure that the local curricula retain this in a satisfactory way. Many schools, teachers and trainers will require further guidance in order to implement this.

Many schools have various projects and exchange schemes with foreign schools. This is extremely valuable for pupils and teachers and is used by many. However, the way in which opportunities are offered to pupils is far too arbitrary. Some schools and some counties offer good opportunities of high quality while others offer practically nothing at all. Much of the responsibility for developing good opportunities is left up to individual teachers and schools. There is therefore a need for more accessible information and better structure.

There are many different programmes in which Norwegian students can participate, both nationally organised and through the EU. There is however a need for better information about the opportunities for participating, and this must be improved if the aim of having more students take part in programmes such as Comenius and Leonardo da Vinci is to be achieved.

The Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund runs national schemes which offer whole groups of pupils at some upper secondary schools the oppor-

tunity to take a full school year at a partnership school abroad. Experience with this scheme has been good. The challenge, however, is that it is difficult to have new schemes approved, and the aim is to make the scheme more flexible in terms of changes. The Report to the Parliament proposes that a closer look be taken at this scheme with a view to including new groups of pupils/new schools.

Norway cooperates with a number of bodies and through many organisations such as UNESCO, OECD, the European Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, and much of this is directed at the education sector at the primary and lower secondary level. This cooperation is important for comparing and developing the education sector from an international perspective. The work done on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) will be particularly important for purposes of comparison, transparency and mobility, not least within vocational education and training (VET).

The Report to the Parliament also puts forward a proposal for closer cooperation between school and working life. Many enterprises have an international orientation, and cooperation between the business community and schools can be used more actively to develop the international perspectives in and the quality of education provided.

The main objectives of the measures in primary and lower secondary education are:

- Help the schools and teachers develop good local curricula in which the international perspective is well addressed.
- Ensure that Norway seeks active participation in new and existing international cooperation programmes directed at schools and that best possible use is made of the schemes.
- Develop a plan for internationalisation work in primary and secondary education and training and disseminate examples of good practice and ideas for how international cooperation can be made use of in the courses.

- Develop better cooperation with working life and the business community in terms of international perspectives in the education programmes.
- Evaluate different study financing measures to develop good and fair mobility schemes for individual pupils and groups of pupils.

4 Internationalisation of higher education

Globalisation, internationalisation of education and research, and a more internationally oriented working life also represent major educational challenges and opportunities for Norwegian universities and university colleges. First and foremost, there is the challenge of developing and providing education that is qualitatively good and relevant to today's working life and society, including academia. The universities' and university colleges' legitimacy and role in society will increasingly become linked to attractiveness, quality, cooperation and relevance, and internationalisation will increasingly become viewed in this light.

There are many driving forces that influence the development of higher education. The modernisation process in Norwegian higher education in recent years, which has many parallels with developments in other countries, has been driven by the demand for equal educational opportunities for everyone. Many more are taking higher education than ever before, and this has had considerable significance for development at the universities and university colleges. In addition, globalisation reduces the significance of national boundaries.

Norway has actively participated in the Bologna process to create a common area for higher education in Europe (European Higher Education Area (EHEA)). In Norway, implementation has mostly been linked to carrying out the so-called Quality Reform from 2003. This has led to a new degree system in line with international developments (bachelor, master and PhD), the introduction of a common system of credits (European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)), grades (A-F) and a number of changes to administration and management within the sector. The financing system was also changed by introducing a number of incentives for production and quality.

In connection with the Quality Reform, the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) was established to support the work of the institutions on internationalisation. Furthermore, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) was established as an independent body that should control and develop the quality of Norwegian universities, university colleges and tertiary voca-

tional schools and process individual applications for general recognition of foreign qualifications.

In both the Bologna process and the Quality Reform, internationalisation has been made a topic of vital importance. Internationalisation in higher education should give higher quality and more relevant education.

Through the Quality Reform a right was introduced into Norwegian higher education for students to take study periods abroad. This in turn has led to Norwegian universities and university colleges entering into cooperation agreements with a large number of foreign institutions.

The result of this has been an increase in the number of Norwegian students who take half a year or a full year at foreign institutions (see Figure 4.1). The students travel to a wide range of countries, USA, Australia and the UK being the most popular, although there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students choosing new cooperation countries such as China, India and countries in South America.

There has also been a dramatic rise in the number of foreign students who choose Norway for shorter or longer periods of study at Norwegian institutions. In 2008 there were 5,054 foreign exchange students attending Norwegian universities and university colleges and a total of 12,648 students with foreign citizenship in Norway in 2009. Overall, most of the students come from Germany, Sweden and France, while most of the exchange students come from Germany, France and Spain.

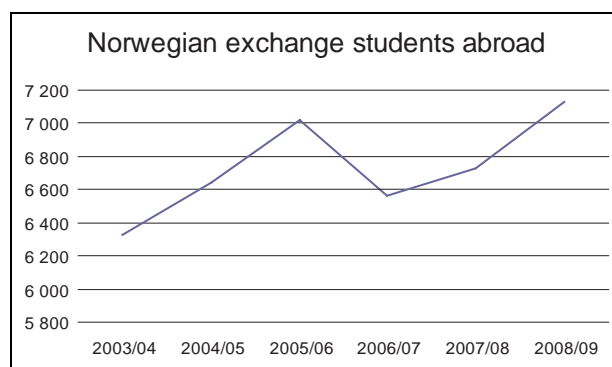


Figure 4.1 Number of exchange students abroad up until 2009.

An evaluation of the Quality Reform in 2007 showed that there is still potential for increased internationalisation in higher education. Many institutions have developed good agreements with foreign institutions which it is important to expand on, but in some cases the links between courses, faculties and management are too weak. It is important that internationalisation is followed up with strategic priorities from managements, and the conclusion of the evaluation is that measures for promoting greater internationalisation must be directed at several actors, not just at the students. A close link between education and research will also be important for succeeding in the work on giving internationalisation a better academic foundation.

Internationalisation at home will become increasingly important for the universities and university colleges. The Quality Reform emphasized that internationalisation should be part of an overall strategy at the universities and university colleges. The argument for this was that internationalisation should be a part of the quality improvement in both education and research. One key point was to ensure that students and staff who did *not* travel abroad on various forms of exchange schemes should also receive international impulses and be offered a good internationally oriented education.

Internationalisation at home therefore means developing the provision of better and more internationally oriented education in Norway, and one in which foreign students are made a natural and integrated part of the international campus. This also means that good relations with partner institutions in other countries should be developed. In the first instance this will apply to exchanges of students and staff, but academic and research cooperation is also important.

Many study programmes aimed at foreign students have been developed in recent years, partly through offering courses in English. Today more than 3,500 foreign-language study programmes are offered, 200 of which comprise English-language masters programmes. This is a trend which ought to continue, at the same time as it is important that courses in Norwegian for foreign students are developed. Many Norwegian students take advantage of these internationally oriented study programmes, which is very positive.

As already mentioned, internationalisation is not just about student and teacher mobility; it is also about integration of an international perspective in all areas of activity: in the place of study and employment, throughout the entire organisation

and in the institution's management. Besides integrating international perspectives into study programmes and curricula, internationalisation also entails cooperation across national boundaries on the development of common study programmes, common grades and courses and professional development. This requires an integrated review of content, and many institutions have already come a long way in this work.

Internationalisation of researcher training is an important area that demands several different approaches. Some of these include submission and publication of doctoral theses in languages other than Norwegian, publication in international journals, sabbaticals at foreign institutions and the use of foreign supervisors and assistant supervisors. Norwegian researcher training has in recent years gained a clearer international profile and is attracting more and more foreign applicants.

Some institutions have long traditions in presenting a distinct aid and development profile, and the authorities have also established various programmes and schemes with this in mind. There is, for example, a scheme under which a total of 1,100 students from developing countries and countries in the Western Balkan region, Eastern Europe and Central Asia are offered the opportunity to study for an academic degree – usually a masters – in Norway. This scheme is financed through the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund, with the stipulation that the loans can be converted into grants on condition that the students return to their home countries once they have completed their studies. There are also other programmes that support academic cooperation between Norwegian institutions and institutions in developing countries, and these have also made significant contributions to development work at a number of Norwegian institutions.

The Quality Reform focused more attention on internationalisation at Norwegian universities and university colleges, and many have been working purposefully on this for several years. At the same time, the evaluation of the Reform showed that some work still remains if we are to do better at viewing internationalisation in relation to developing quality, relevance and attractiveness. The work that lies ahead will therefore be directed towards this main goal.

The main objectives of the measures in higher education are:

- Contribute to the development of internationalisation at home and achieve better, closer cooperation between Norwegian and foreign institutions.

- Work on creating more projects and programmes for developing common degrees and common study programmes, first and foremost at master and PhD levels, and to develop tuning-oriented projects through cooperation between Norwegian and foreign institutions.
 - Establish pilot projects for internationalisation of shorter professional studies programmes, with particular attention being placed on teacher, nursing and engineering training.
 - Work should be done on focusing more attention on mobility for all staff members, both academic and non-academic, through developing methods and tools that make this easier to facilitate.
 - Develop indicators within the field of internationalisation for helping the institutions and for administration by the authorities.
 - Initiate measures for promoting Norwegian higher education abroad.
- Give more attention to research and development activities linked to the internationalisation of education as an area of research.
 - Strengthen cooperation and shared thinking on internationalisation in the areas of education and research, something that will be important for successful development within both areas.
 - Improve the organisation of conditions for international students in Norway.

In addition, the universities and university colleges are requested to continue work on developing relations with foreign institutions through agreements and cooperation programmes, and to better entrench internationalisation in courses and programmes as well as in managements and strategic processes.

5 Norwegian students who graduate from foreign universities

Norwegian students have a long tradition for taking all or part of their education abroad. This has provided the Norwegian labour market with valuable competence, where foreign language skills and cultural understanding, in addition to solid professional competence, have been important. In certain areas this has also provided the Norwegian labour market with necessary competence which the Norwegian education system has not had the capacity to supply.

From a historical perspective, there have been major changes in mobility. In the first decades after the Second World War, when the capacity of higher education was limited, it was necessary for a relatively large proportion of Norwegian students to study abroad. In 1950, 30 % of Norwegian students took their education abroad. Today there are around 12,000 Norwegian degree students abroad; this accounts for around 5 %-6 % of the total student population. Figure 3 shows the trend in the number of degree students studying abroad in recent years. Compared with other countries, the proportion of Norwegian students studying abroad is relatively high.

Facilitating studies abroad through state funding in the form of student loans and grants and recognition schemes is an important education policy tool. Most students who take their education abroad return to Norway to work or work for international companies with close ties to Norway. Some degree students work abroad for a while,

acquiring international work experience, before returning to Norway. Four years after taking their degrees, around 80 % of the students have returned to Norway.

Compared with other countries, Norway has very good financing schemes for studying abroad. Students receive funding for subsistence at the same rates that apply in Norway, they receive grants for travel between home and place of study, and tuition fees are financed in full or in part by a combination of student loans and grants.

Today, basic requirements to students and to the type of education apply for entitlement to financial support. Students are required to be Norwegian citizens and to have general university admission certification in Norway. A basic requirement to the offering institution abroad applies to quality assurance; the programme of study must be approved as higher education in the country in which it is being offered. Financial support is generally not granted for the first year of bachelor programmes of four year's duration and where the first year is not considered to correspond to higher education in Norway. Exceptions are made, however, in the case of the first year at some universities in the USA (freshman year) that hold a particularly high level of quality. These are described in a separate list administrated by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU).

Most Norwegian students studying abroad study at bachelor level, though in recent years the numbers of bachelor and master students have evened out. The UK and Denmark are the most popular countries. For a few years after the turn of the millennium, Australia was the most popular country, but these numbers have fallen dramatically in recent years. The number of students choosing the UK and the USA has also fallen but is now slowly rising again. More and more Norwegian students are now travelling to countries such as Poland and Hungary, predominantly to study medicine.

The decline in the number of foreign students after 2003/2004 has been a subject of debate in Norway. The explanation is probably complex. Some claim that the decline is due to changes that

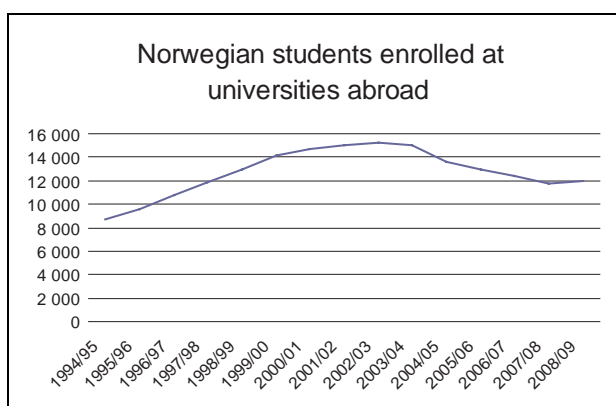


Figure 5.1 Number of degree students up until 2009

have led to a larger proportion of loans amounts to cover tuition fees, but it is likely that the decline is also due to a broader and better provision of programmes since the Quality Reform in Norwegian higher education. Favourable conditions in the Norwegian labour market in recent years may also have had an effect.

Out of consideration for both individual students and working life, the Report to the Parliament sets an educational policy goal that studies abroad should hold a high quality. In order to ensure this, greater importance will in future be attached to schemes and incentives in educational support that will influence students to choose education and educational institutions of high quality, over and above the basic requirements that apply today.

Also presented in the Report to the Parliament is the ambition that overall student mobility, in the form of both degree programmes and exchange programmes, should be viewed as a whole and that overall mobility should increase. In this connection, the Government wants to pursue work on reorganising the educational support scheme relating to both degree students and non-degree students and to make it financially more attractive to study at institutions of high quality.

The main objectives of the measures for degree studies taken abroad are:

- Quality will be emphasized when choosing studies abroad, also in the financial support to students. A set of criteria will be developed to make this possible.
- Information work associated with study opportunities abroad will be strengthened.
- An evaluation will be made of whether cooperation between Norwegian and foreign institution can also facilitate Norwegian degree students at selected foreign institutions.

The entitlement to support for studies abroad requires that the education corresponds to higher education in Norway, and this condition will be retained. This particularly applies for the freshman year at American universities and for similar schemes in some other countries which are generally not considered to be equivalent to higher education in Norway. The exception, which is already the case today, is if the education meets certain quality criteria. Nevertheless, it is expected that there will be more opportunities in connection with the new quality criteria.

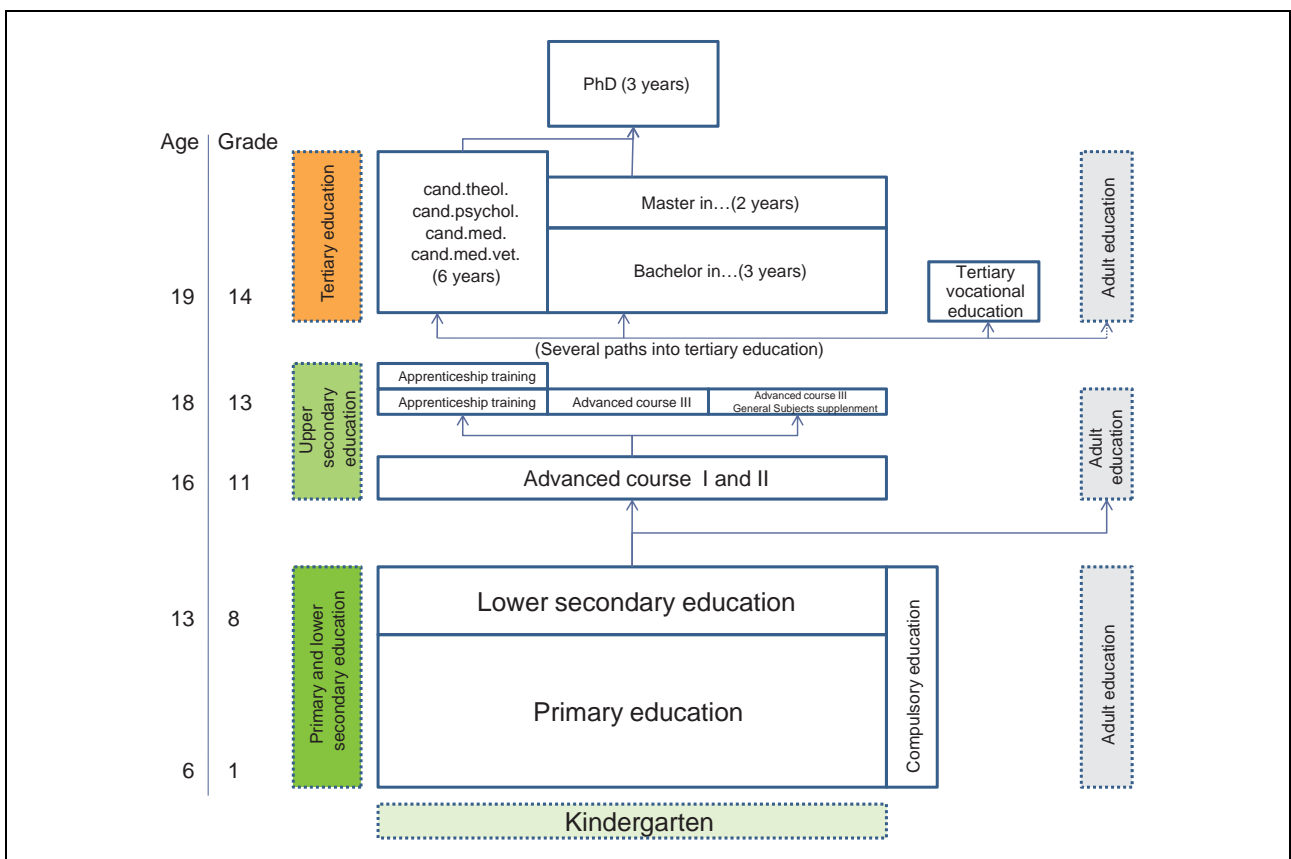


Figure 5.2 The Norwegian education system

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