Education System of Norway

In the year 2000, the United Nations set eight ambitious millennium development goals to achieve by the year 2015. These goals included eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving mental health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development. How can one entity plan to accomplish all of these? By the one major factor that can impact them all, education. A globally educated population leads to a better understanding of ourselves and the world around us. The United Nations Global Education Initiative set forth three priorities to improve education on a global level. These priorities included putting every child in school, improving quality of learning, and fostering global citizenship. The following report is on the education system of Norway and how it’s working toward the United Nations Global Education Initiative.

The compulsory education in Norway is a ten year period beginning at the age of six. For the first seven years, a student is enrolled in primary school. Here, students are not given formal grades, but are tested on their knowledge base. A student’s test scores do not determine promotion, but rather are used as a tool to determine what subjects need additional emphasis. A student then attends the lower secondary school for three more years. A student’s academic performance at this level will determine whether or not they may attend upper secondary school. If a student is not accepted into upper secondary school, or chooses not to attend, they may attend a trade or vocational school. The key indicator to whether a student will attend the upper secondary school is the grade 10 exit examination. The upper secondary school is an additional three year period. As the needs for highly skilled labor workers increased in Norway, a greater number of students have been accepted into upper secondary school. The higher education system in Norway consists of Universities, colleges, and private schools for higher learning. Admittance into one of these programs requires the completion of upper secondary school. A Baccalaureate degree can be earned after three years of schooling, a Master’s degree after five years, and a Doctorate after eight years and the completion of a dissertation.

The most basic principle of the Norwegian education system is “education for all." The Ministry of Education and Research continues to promote and ensure equal rights to education for all independent of their gender, cultural, geographical, or social background. Statistics from the World Bank as reported by Trading Economics, states that the number of school aged children officially enrolled in primary school in Norway in 2012 was 99.4%. This statistic displays how Norway supports the United Nations Global Initiative priority number one, putting every child in school. In addition, UNESCO as reported by TheGlobalEconomy.com states that the primary education completion rate in Norway in 2012 was 99.34%. Entering secondary school, statistics provided by UNICEF continues to display Norway’s high enrollment rate at approximately 94%.

In support of the UN’s second priority within the Global Education Initiative, improving the quality of learning, Norway has enacted a government program aimed at creating schools that will provide a stronger educational foundation. This program entitled the “Promotion of the Status and Quality of Teachers – Joint Effort for a Modern School of Knowledge” puts forth several key elements. The first key element is strengthening the educational foundation of teachers. Future teachers will need to score higher marks in mathematics to be accepted into the teaching program, as well as needing to complete a five year Master’s program beginning in 2017. The government, as a result of this requirement, will invest 1.2 billion NOK beginning in 2015. Additionally, the Promotion of the Status and Quality of Teachers program pushes for schools to build teams with strong subject based communities within schools. This will then extend to building strong skill-based teams throughout the counties and municipalities to create a knowledge rich education system.

The last priority set forth by the Global Education Initiative is to foster global citizenship. Currently, the Norwegian government launched a Global Health and Education Initiative Vision 2030. This initiative encouraged companies, experts and academic professionals to create proposals with innovative ideas and concrete suggestions on how to meet the major health and education challenges that the world is currently facing. The Norwegian government received 116 proposals, many creatively combining both the needs of health and education throughout the world.

In conclusion, Norway continues to support the three priorities set forth through the United Nation’s Global Education Initiative. Evidence of its support of putting every child in school, is shown through its basic principle “education for all,” that is further supported by its statistically high enrollment percentages. Norway’s support of improving the quality learning is evidenced through the recent government program “Promotion of the Status and Quality of Teachers.” Lastly, support for fostering global citizenship, is shown through the governments most recent initiative, the Global Health and Education Initiative Vision 2030. The 116 proposals received by the Norwegian government are currently being further researched and will be presented later this year.

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