SPECIAL ISSUE
Recruitment and Certification of Immigrant Teachers: Roles and Requirements

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This article deals with the recruitment and certification of immigrant teachers to Norwegian compulsory schools. Policy documents have for a long period of time underlined the desirability of diversifying the teaching force by recruiting minority members to teaching. The rationale given for this has been a number of important roles that teachers with an immigrant background could play in the school system. At the same time, until recently the formal requirements put on immigrant teachers have been weak and vague, and the special training programmes introduced for this group have not improved the status and working conditions of these teachers. Generally, teaching seems to be an unattractive alternative for immigrants entering higher education. Lately, the Government have taken a number of initiatives to encourage minority members to choose a teacher career. Simultaneously, stricter requirements for admission to teacher education programmes have been introduced. The initiatives to increase requirement and the initiatives to raise quality by stricter entry requirement may be in conflict with each other if teacher education is not better adapted to the needs of immigrant students. We propose a number of measures in order to meet these needs.

Keywords: immigrant teachers, recruitment, requirements, acceptance, education policy

Artikkelen handler om rekruttering og utdanning av lærere med innvandrerbakgrunn til norsk grunnskole. Politiske dokumenter har i lang tid uttrykt et ønske om å gjøre lærerkorpset mer mangfoldig ved å rekrutere innvandrere som lærere i skolen. Begrunnelsen for dette har vært en rekke viktige roller som lærere med innvandrerbakgrunn kan fylle i skolesystemet. Samtidig har inntil nylig de formelle kravene til disse lærerne vært svake og vage, og de spesielle utdanningsprogrammene som har vært introdusert for denne gruppen, har ikke bidratt til å øke statusen og arbeidsforholdene for dem. Generelt virker læreryrket

Introduction

Only 6.3% of the teachers in Norwegian mainstream school are of immigrant background (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2013, p. 18). Still, there seems to be consensus that the teaching force needs to be diversified so that it better reflects the ethnic and cultural composition of the population. Politicians have repeatedly highlighted the important roles that diverse teachers are to play in the school system, and have taken initiatives to attract minority members to the teacher profession. At the same time, immigrants have encountered problems in having their actual academic and pedagogical competence acknowledged, and there is anecdotal evidence that an accent in their Norwegian has been used as an excuse to hire them. And the fact is that teaching is far from being the first choice of minority youth when they enter higher education.

Those who agree that it is desirable that more linguistic, cultural and religious minority members become teachers, have to struggle on several fronts. On one front, the challenge is to strive for greater acceptance of minority teachers in schools and greater tolerance for accented Norwegian. Working for high standards in the education and certification of teachers with an immigrant background, including high competence in Norwegian language, is the challenge on a second front. On yet another front, one needs to argue for adapting teacher education to the needs of minority students — and, on a general level, strive for increased status for the teacher profession in society.

In this article, we will answer the following research questions:

1. What is the official rationale for having minority members in the teacher corps?
2. What are the formal requirements put on immigrants who are employed as teachers?
3. What is the situation of these teachers in the schools?
4. What are the reasons for the low number of minority applicants to teacher education?
5. What is being done to increase recruitment and secure the quality of the minority teacher candidates, and what further initiatives could be taken?

Compulsory education was introduced in Norway in the first part of the 19th century, and formalized teacher education goes back to the same period. In 1826, the first state teacher education institution opened. Before the end of the century, eight major colleges had been established (Jørgensen & Ording, 1914). Typically, the colleges were located
in rural areas, and the students were predominantly sons of farmers (Dahl, 1959, pp. 93-94, 101-102). Female students were accepted to the colleges in 1891 (pp. 171-172). They tended to come from more urban areas and had a middle class background, but for a long time they were relatively few in comparison with their male colleagues (Brock-Utne & Haukaa, 1980, pp. 125-127). So traditionally, the teaching force in Norwegian basic education was dominated by men from the countryside, practically speaking all of them rooted in the majority language and culture.

There was one exception to this. More precisely, the college that was established in 1826 at Trøndenes near the town of Harstad in Northern Norway actively recruited members of the Sami ethno-linguistic group. This was seen as instrumental for the teaching of literacy – and Christianity – to the Sami people (Jørgensen & Ording, 1914, p. 7). At that time, the Sami language was used alongside Norwegian in schools in the Sami area. This bilingual educational policy was however abandoned in the middle of the century as a monolingual nation building strategy was implemented in Norway with school as a primary arena (Jensen, 1991, p. 19-20). Teachers with a Sami background gradually became agents for a policy with the ultimate goal of total assimilation of the Sami people linguistically and culturally. Special schemes for stimulating Sami to become teachers were discontinued (Jensen, 1991, p. 32).

It was not until the 1980s that the question of recruiting minority members to teacher education was put on the agenda again. Since then, policy documents have repeatedly emphasized the need of diversifying the teaching force by employing more persons with an immigrant background as teachers.

This article begins by exploring how Norwegian official documents argue for the desirability of recruiting immigrants to teaching, not just for teaching newly arrived pupils from the same linguistic background, but also for all pupils in Norwegian schools. We look into what is required for immigrant teachers who are employed to teach the subject ‘Mother tongue for teaching for language minorities’, or specific subjects through the mother tongue (also called bilingual subject teaching), or specific school subjects in the mainstream, that is, for all pupils and thus through Norwegian. From this, we explore who teachers with minority background in Norwegian schools are, what their working situation is like, and why they are so few. In conclusion, we look ahead and reflect upon new opportunities, remaining challenges and future strategies, particularly addressing teacher education.

Materials and Method

This is first and foremost a policy study, and the focus is on central steering documents of relevance for the recruitment of teachers with an immigrant background in Norwegian schools. The basic principles of education policy in Norway are determined by the Storting (Parliament) and laid down in the Education Act. Pursuant to the act, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training issue regulations specifying the overarching principles. The rationale behind the act is spelled out in Propositions to the Storting, and these are often developed on the basis of Official Norwegian Reports to the Government from committees of experts. In white papers the Government orientate the Storting on various aspects of its policy in educational matters.
Documents of particular relevance to the present article are first of all white papers and propositions to the Storting on immigration and integration policy, the most recent ones came from the Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (in 2011 & 2012), and white papers and propositions to the Storting on education and teacher education, e.g. Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2010a). Furthermore it is the Education Act (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 1998, most recent relevant amendments 2012), which contains paragraphs concerning the education of pupils from linguistics minorities, and the national curriculum for the subject ‘Mother tongue teaching for language minorities’ (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2007), which regulates the aims and content of the work of many immigrant teachers. Pertinent are also the national curriculum regulations for teacher education for grades 1 to 10 (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2010b), where the scope and objective for the preparation of teachers are formulated and the expected learning outcomes described. In addition, there are various other Government documents that need to be taken into account to get a more complete picture of the policy in the area at hand, e.g. strategy plans for better education and social integration of linguistic minorities (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2004, 2007) and circulars from the Ministry to local school authorities, e.g. Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education (1978).

The documents are analysed with a qualitative research approach in which concepts and notions, statements and arguments with direct or indirect bearing on the research questions are identified and interpreted through a repeated reading of the texts and critically examined in light of the contemporary socio-political context of the documents and with reference to relevant theoretical constructs and models (cf. e.g. Bowen, 2009).

Why Teachers with an Immigrant Background?

Before turning to Norwegian official documents, we need to stop at the concept person with an immigrant background. In Norway, this notion is primarily used and defined by statisticians. Statistics Norway considers a person to have an immigrant background if he or she is either an immigrant himself or herself or is born in Norway of foreign-born parents (Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2011, pp. 31-32). This definition is very broad and covers a wide range of persons, many of whom have very little in common except that they themselves or their parents are not born in Norway. When discussing recruitment of teachers with an immigrant background, it is necessary to be more nuanced. Talking about a white person whose father and mother happen to have been born just across the border to Sweden and talking about a person who himself or herself is born of black African parents in the Africa are two different things in this context. Policy documents rarely take this up.

Another important distinction that is not always made in the documents is between persons with an immigrant background as mainstream teachers on the one hand and as mother tongue teachers and/or bilingual subject teachers on the other. These two categories of teachers have quite different roles and functions – and status – in the school system. The latter is exclusively linked to the teaching of minority pupils from the same language background, that is, the term mother tongue teacher is linked to the curriculum subject ‘Mother tongue for teaching language minorities’ (Norwegian
Directorate for Education and Research, 2006), whereas the term bilingual subject teacher is often used for teachers who use the pupils’ mother tongue for the teaching of specific school subjects. The Government want to recruit new teachers of both categories, but at the same time, teachers with an immigrant background report that they have problems in getting permanent jobs in school and being accepted as fully qualified professionals (Valenta & Berg, 2008).

The first official Norwegian report on the education in a multicultural Norway came in 1995. Here it was argued that teachers with a minority background are needed in schools for a variety of reasons (Norwegian Ministry of Church Education and Research, 1995, pp. 40-41). First of all, international research had shown that minority pupils profited from being taught by teachers who shared their cultural and linguistic references, but in an internationalized world, recruiting teachers from the linguistic minorities could also give considerable cognitive and instrumental advantages to majority pupils. In particular, it was argued that teaching the mother tongue and teaching through the mother tongue should have a central place in the education of pupils with a minority background. Several well-known political, pedagogical, psychological, economic and social arguments were put forward. Among these were:

- Education in the mother tongue shall help the child develop as a human being
- It shall stimulate the development of intellectual skills
- It shall help the child know itself and develop communicative competence
- Mother tongue education shall provide identification and cultural affiliation
- Educating minority pupils in their mother tongue will strengthen the country’s social, cultural and economic capital
- Education in and through the mother tongue should be a right for every linguistic group
- Language is not only a means of communication; it is often the best instrument for thought and reflection (Norwegian Ministry of Church Education and Research, 1995, pp. 40-41).

At the time this report was written, so-called functional bilingualism and bicultural belonging were overall goals for the education of pupils from linguistic minorities in Norway, that is, the aim that pupils should be able to use both Norwegian and their mother tongue for oral and written purposes, and that they should have a sense of belonging to the Norwegian majority culture and the minority community. The committee behind the report recommended that these goals be maintained, and that instruction in and through the mother tongue should be strengthened at all levels of the school system. However, these recommendations were not followed. On the contrary, political winds had turned: the diversity friendly positions that had dominated the 1980s were being replaced by a policy with a much stronger focus on Norwegian language in minority education. After some hesitation, mother tongue for linguistic minorities was preserved as a school subject, but only with a compensatory function and a transitory status. It was to be offered just to minority pupils who were considered to have insufficient mastery of Norwegian to receive ordinary tuition. Once the pupils had acquired necessary skills in Norwegian, they were no longer entitled to mother tongue teaching. Instruction through the mother tongue in the form of so-called bilingual subject
teaching was restricted in the same way. Later, the position of the pupils’ mother tongue was further weakened.

On the basis of relevant paragraphs in the Norwegian Education Act (1998), we can distinguish between three categories of pupils with a minority background. The broadest category consists of pupils who have a mother tongue other than Norwegian and Sami. Belonging to this group does not in itself give pupils any particular rights, and there is no official national statistics that tells how many pupils there are in this category. According to Statistics Norway (2010a), there were in total approximately 65,000 immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents in the age group 6 to 15 in 2010.

The next category are pupils who have a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami and who after having been tested are considered to be in need of special tuition in Norwegian until they are able to follow the ordinary teaching in school. In 2010, approximately 45,000 pupils in primary and lower secondary school got special training in Norwegian, which equals some 7% of all pupils.

The third category is a subgroup of the previous one, consisting of pupils who are considered to be in need of tuition in their mother tongue as subject and/or bilingual tuition in other subjects – in addition to special tuition in Norwegian. In 2010, 4% of the pupils attended mother tongue training and/or bilingual training (Statistics Norway, 2010b). This amounts to some 20,000 pupils. More than half of them lived in Oslo, and as the local politicians in Oslo have decided that merely bilingual teaching be offered, only a minority of pupils received instruction in their mother tongue as a subject.

The three categories of pupils with immigrant background in basic education are illustrated in the following figure:

![Figure 1: Pupils with immigrant background. This figure illustrates the three different categories these pupils can belong to.](image-url)

The core roles of teachers with a minority background in Norway today is to teach the 20,000 pupils in the third category in their mother tongue and/or through the mother
Recruitment of people with immigrant backgrounds as educators in schools and kindergartens is important for several reasons. All professions should as far as possible reflect the population. They can provide kindergarten and school with important resources and thus help to make kindergartens and schools better. At the same time, children and young people will get good role models. Having more teachers with a different language background than Norwegian can also help kindergartens and schools to create better contact between school and home. (p. 62, authors’ translation)

As can be seen, the first argument is phrased in a very general way: “All professions should as far as possible reflect the population.” No further justification is given. The same goes for the next argument: “People with immigrant backgrounds can provide kindergarten and schools with important resources and help to make them better.” The Ministry does not explain what kind of important resources we are talking about. The third argument has to do with minority teachers as good role models for children and pupils, while the last argument highlights minority teachers as mediators between school and home.

Among the background documents for the proposition was an official report submitted to the ministry in 2011 with a title that can be translated as follows into English: Better integration. Goals, strategies, measures (Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2011). Here the rationale for recruiting teachers with a minority background is much more developed – although it is done indirectly, first of all by pointing to the educational needs of minority pupils. For the sake of their motivation for learning, they need to experience that there are connections between their personal life and cultural background and what is going on in school:

Learning depends on the pupils perceiving the teaching as relevant to them. It is most effective when it is based on the pupils' own life stories and cultural experiences. It is important for the development of the pupils that they see that the cultural codes can be transferred between the home and teaching situation. If not, education can easily be perceived as instrumental and alienating. This can in turn have negative consequences for motivation and ambition. (pp. 173-174; authors’ translation)

Furthermore, the report strongly advocates mother tongue teaching and bilingual teaching in other school subjects. This not only facilitates the acquisition of the Norwegian language, but also has an intrinsic value as an element in the development of multilingualism. Likewise, it can help strengthen the pupils’ identity and self-esteem and the feeling of being valued in school and society (Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2011, p. 208). Giving minority pupils the opportunity to
further develop the mastery of their mother tongue also means exploiting an important resource for the Norwegian society in a globalized world.

On this background, we can summarise the rational given by the authorities for having minority members in the teaching corps:

- Teach mother tongue to minority pupils
- Take part in bilingual teaching of other subjects
- Contribute to enhanced quality in schools
- Link teaching to the experiences and background of the pupils
- Be a link between home and school
- Be good role models for minority pupils
- Increase Norway’s linguistic capital

As we can see, there is a clear focus on the roles that minority teachers play for minority pupils. Most of the documents do, however, also mention that other pupils and the whole school community profit from the presence of teachers with a minority background in the teaching staff. So what kind of qualifications do we require of these persons who are to perform such important functions in the educational system?

**What Do we Require of Them?**

In the strategic plan *Equal education in practice* from 2004, and the revised version from 2007, it is noted that many minority teachers employed in Norwegian schools lack the formal qualifications required to work as teachers under prevailing Norwegian rules, and that many of them only have mother tongue teaching assignments (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2004, 2007). This section deals with what is required from minority teachers in order to be qualified to carry out different assignments in Norwegian school. In this connection, two points are worth drawing attention to. First, requirements for teachers involved in the subject 'Mother tongue for teaching language minorities' have always been different than those required for other teaching assignments in Norwegian schools. Second, the subject Norwegian was until recently compulsory for all students in teacher education, and has been an obstacle for many minority teacher students.

The first time staff from newer minority backgrounds was mentioned in a policy document was in a circular from 1978 (Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education, 1978, April). Here, the term “mother tongue instructors” (p. 3) was used, and as it indicates, no formal qualifications in terms of pedagogical competence were required, in contrast to teachers in the mainstream. In fact, it was sufficient to have good skills in the mother tongue and have passed a test in Norwegian language in a satisfactory manner. The tasks of such an instructor were strictly limited to the teaching of the mother tongue for pupils from the same language background.

When mother tongue for linguistic minorities was introduced as a subject in Norway in 1987, a circular from the Ministry gave guidelines for how the municipalities should prioritize among applicants to positions as mother tongue teachers (Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education, 1987, May, p. 7):

1. Applicants with approved teacher education and additional education from the home country
2. Applicants with a degree in education from the home country
3. Applicants with other higher education from Norway or the home country
4. Other suitable applicants

Many were employed without any formal pedagogical qualifications whatsoever. Several reports and white papers pointed to this as a serious impediment to the education of pupils from linguistic minorities (Norberg, 1991; Norwegian Ministry of Church Education and Research, 1995). In a survey from 2008, indications were found that more than 20% lacked formal qualifications, other sources pointed to an even higher number, maybe 45% (Rambøll Management, 2008). Some of the unqualified teachers may have gone through short and limited courses connected to mother tongue and bilingual subject teaching, which cannot be compared to other teacher certifying programmes. In 2005, a three-year undergraduate programme in teaching of specific school subjects for bilinguals was established at seven university colleges (Ringen & Kjørven, 2009). This programme was to recruit and qualify minority students for mother tongue and bilingual subject teaching, in addition to mainstream subject teaching.

As noted, requirements for mother tongue teachers were from the start not the same as for teachers in the mainstream. In 2007, revised regulations to the Norwegian Education Act introduced stricter qualification requirements for mother tongue teachers too (Regulation to the Education Act, 2006). In order for someone to be employed in such a position, one of the following conditions must be met:

- Teacher training from the home country and documented good Norwegian language skills
- Teacher with the same language background as the learner: University and/or university college education of an overall length of at least 3 years including approved teacher training, and documented good Norwegian language skills. 1 1/2 years of training must include the language and culture of the learner
- Norwegian language teacher who does not have the same native language as the learner: University and/or university college education in the pupil’s language that combined accounts for at least 90 ECTS, and a good knowledge of the cultural background of the pupil, in addition to the approved training programme
- Three-year undergraduate programme in teaching of specific school subjects for bilinguals pursuant to the approved plan. Appointment can be made for teaching when the teacher has the same mother tongue as the pupil

The requirement for good Norwegian language skills deserves special attention. As we can see, this is explicitly formulated under the first two bullet points, and it is taken for granted under the third bullet point, because this apparently deals with teachers who have Norwegian as mother tongue. It is also supposed that persons who have gone through a three-year undergraduate programme in teaching of specific school subjects for bilinguals have good Norwegian skills. However, in this undergraduate programme, Norwegian is not a subject, and there is no requirement for a special grade level in Norwegian, English and Mathematics to be accepted into the programme (contrary to students in general teacher education).
Returning to our second research question, we can conclude that strict requirements for the employment as mother tongue teacher were introduced in the regulations to the Norwegian Education Act as late as in 2007. This means that there is a long tradition, and thus acceptance, of unqualified staff for this position. In the next section, we will argue that this leads to a low degree of professionalism for mother tongue teachers.

**Who Are These Teachers, And What Is Their Situation?**

Immigrant staff is a diverse group, not only in terms of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but also with regard to their qualifications and employment. First of all, there are of course persons with an immigrant background who work as ordinary teachers in Norwegian schools. Some have a teacher education from Norway, while others are educated abroad and have had their foreign education accredited in Norway, sometimes after having taken supplementary courses and exams. As already pointed out, there are also persons who teach without formal qualifications.

The most recent overview of the immigrant teachers’ national backgrounds is from 1996 (Norwegian Ministry of Church Education and Research, 1996, pp. 31-32). In total, 1568 immigrant teachers were registered, and as can be seen in the table below, of those 50% came from Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and Turkey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Total %</th>
<th>% mother tongue teachers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nordic countries</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe (excl. Turkey)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa, Asia, Central and South America</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America, Turkey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>North America and Oceania</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the table shows that only 3% of teachers from the Nordic countries and 6% of those from Western Europe, North America and Oceania were employed as mother tongue teachers. This is in contrast to 45% of all teachers from Eastern Europe and 67% from Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and Turkey. A likely reason of explanation is that many of the latter group did not meet the requirements for mainstream teaching.

Today, we know that only 4% of all teachers in Norwegian schools have an immigrant background, but there is no recent information available in terms of national origin, or how many of them are employed as mainstream teachers. The exact number of mother tongue teachers or teachers employed to provide bilingual subject teaching is also unknown due to the lack of trustworthy national sources (Rambøll Management, 2006). There is reason to suspect that many of these teachers may be registered twice, because they very often work in part time positions at different schools as so-called “travelling teachers” (Valenta, 2009, p. 32). As for their qualifications, as noted above, perhaps as many as 45% are not formally qualified. They often have long teaching
experience. 62% have taught in the home country, and 50% have been employed for more than 10 years in Norwegian schools.

Several researchers have drawn attention to the low status of mother tongue teachers and teachers providing bilingual subject teaching in Norwegian mainstream schools (e.g. Dewilde, 2013; Engen & Ryen, 2009; Hvistendahl, 2009; Myklebust, 1993; Valenta, 2009). In addition, Valenta and Berg (2009) found that many of the students enrolled in the three year undergraduate programme in teaching of specific school subjects for bilinguals primarily wished to be acknowledged as mainstream teachers and not as mother tongue or bilingual subject teachers. It is reasonable to link these teachers’ low status to the fact that many of them are only employed part time at several schools and many are ambulant. “Mother tongue teachers in the school do not hold the same status, and are seldom employed at one school and are therefore not able to mark the institution”, Knut Kjeldstadli (2008, p. 119; our translation) argues. As we have seen, the answer to our third research question is that a fairly high percentage of teachers with immigrant background lack formal qualifications and by that have low status in the system. Even those who are qualified, often do not have permanent positions, but have to apply for the job year after year.

Why Are They So Few?

There are several possible reasons for why there are so few minority teachers in Norwegian schools, and this section will particularly centre round two, that is, the alleged low status of the teaching profession in non-Western communities in Norway, and the high demands of Norwegian language skills in order to qualify and become employed as mainstream teachers.

A fairly large percentage of persons with an immigrant background in Norway go on to higher education after upper secondary school. Among Norwegian born children of foreign-born parents, the average is in fact higher than in the population at large (37% vs. 30%). Among persons who have immigrated themselves, the percentage is somewhat below the national average (Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2011, pp. 195-196). But there is a clear tendency that students with an immigrant background opt for other professions than teaching. In 2011, there were 7746 student teachers preparing for a career as teachers in primary and lower secondary school. Only 172 were either immigrants themselves or children of immigrants, which equals 3.2%. In the media, it is often claimed that immigrant students are particularly drawn towards the so-called ALI professions, ALI being an acronym for the Norwegian words for lawyer (advokat), doctor (lege) and engineer (ingeniør) (e.g. Grinde, 2012; Mellingssæter, 2014). These are prestigious and well-paid professions. The statics show that in general science and technology are the most popular fields of study among persons with an immigrant background (Norwegian Ministry for Education and Research, 2012, pp. 41-42).² The studies with the highest percentage of this category of students are pharmacy and dentistry, where 33% and 12.5% respectively of the

² Although there is a shortage of engineers and people with a degree in science, a recent study shows that 19.2% of master graduates with an immigrant background have problems finding a job after graduation. The percentage is 4.7 among other students (Hammerstad, Krekling, Imrie, & Halsør, 2013).
students taking a Master’s degree in 2012 had an immigrant background in 2012 (Bordvik, 2012; Statistics Norway, 2012).

So far then, there seems to have been a low motivation in the immigrant population to become teachers in primary and lower secondary school. But for those who have wanted to choose this career, there still have been obstacles, such as difficulties to get approval of former education from the home country, another the fact the subject Norwegian has been a compulsory subject in general teacher education. Many of them have thus been working as unqualified mother tongue teachers or bilingual subject teachers.

The subject Norwegian has been highlighted as a major hindrance, both in terms of recruitment and completion of teacher education, for minority students (Norwegian Ministry of Church Education and Research, 1995; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2004). In order to simplify the situation, it has been possible from 1997 to grant exemption from examination in one of the two written forms of Norwegian. Even though it was hoped for that the removal of this barrier would make it easier to recruit general-subject teachers from minority language backgrounds, this has proven not to be enough (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2004, p. 23). One of the premises for the three-year undergraduate programme in teaching of specific school subjects for bilinguals was therefore the absence of Norwegian as a compulsory subject as the programme was not to qualify students for teaching the subject Norwegian. This, combined with the low entrance requirements in Norwegian, has unfortunately led to the graduation of too many students with poor Norwegian skills, as there were few opportunities to improve their Norwegian language skills during the programme.

Norwegians have a reputation for being exceptionally tolerant towards linguistic diversity. According to the British sociolinguist Peter Trudgill (2002, p. 31), the tolerance is enormous. In a study Lars Anders Kulbrandstad (2007) did a few years ago, 318 student teachers were asked to express their opinion on foreign accented Norwegian. 77% of the responded strongly or partly disagreed with the following statement: “A person who speaks Norwegian with a foreign accent should not teach Norwegian pupils”, only 12% agreed. The respondents were more divided when confronted with the statement: “A person who speaks Norwegian with a foreign accent should not teach Norwegian pupils”. Here 55% disagreed, while 32% agreed. 19% did not know what they should mean. In another study, 55% of a representative sample of the Norwegian population agreed that it is OK that programme hosts in national radio and television channels speak Norwegian with a foreign accent. Kulbrandstad found the 87% had a very positive or a rather positive attitude to dialect, while 69% had a very positive or rather positive attitude to foreign accented Norwegian (Kulbrandstad, 2011).

In Sweden, Sally Boyd (2004) and her colleagues have studied attitudes to teachers speaking with a foreign accent. They found that the degree of accentedness plays an important role in the exclusion of foreign-born teachers from qualified employment. We lack such studies from Norway, but on the background of what we just have seen, we might assume that there is more lenience towards foreign accented speech from the teacher’s desk in Norwegian classrooms. There is, however, a survey from 2010 where Norwegian leaders in both private and public sector answered questions about what Norwegian language skills should be required from immigrant employees. Close to 90% of the leaders in both sectors meant the insufficient language
skills were the main reason why immigrants have greater problems in finding a job than the rest of the population. 70% of private leaders and 60% of public leaders said that they require immigrants ought to master Norwegian as well as native speakers (Dischler, 2011). It would be very interesting to get similar information on the attitudes of Norwegian school leaders.

In our fourth research question we asked why there are so few with minority background among applicants to teacher education. We have argued that the two main reasons for this are the low status of the teacher profession in immigrant communities, and the high demands of Norwegian language skills, both in education and in order to be hired as mainstream teachers.

New Opportunities, Remaining Challenges And Future Strategies

The Norwegian Government have recently declared that it wants to recruit more people with an immigrant background to teacher education, and the GNIST campaign to motivate young people to become teachers includes special measures targeted to the immigrant population (Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2012, p. 62). The Government also want to prolong the effort to educate bilingual teachers (p. 64).

In order to recruit minority students to the teaching profession, GNIST has had two main strands during the past two years. Firstly, there have been general measures which have aimed at showing the diversity of Norwegian schools today, including minority pupils and staff. Campaign videos include minority members, the GNIST webpage showcases role models of minority backgrounds, and regions have been asked to bring along students from minority backgrounds to recruitment education fairs. Secondly, there have been more targeted measures where the focus has been on the importance of the diversification of the teaching professions. Examples are lectures for target groups or influential people with close ties to target groups, open days for upper secondary school pupils at the University of Oslo and Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, gatherings for school advisors, meetings for upper secondary school pupils organized by Mifa (Diversity in focus in academia) at the University of Oslo. There has also been a conscious media strategy related to the topic (e.g. Mellingssæter, 2014; Messel, 2014).³

Originally, the three-year undergraduate programme in teaching of specific school subjects for bilinguals was aimed at unqualified immigrant teachers already working as mother tongue and bilingual subject teachers in Norwegian schools. In order to enable them financially to qualify, a grant scheme for minority language teachers who lack formal qualifications of 100,000 NOK (approx. € 12,000) per year for each student was set up (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2004, p. 39). In the course of the past eight years, several hundred have graduated and come out with a formal teacher qualification. But there are challenges with the programme. First of all, the undergraduate programme in teaching of specific school subjects for bilinguals is only three years and does not allow students to take more than one main subject in addition to the pedagogy, language didactics and mother tongue. With this rather narrow

³ Personal correspondence with Synne Nordmark Børstad, Advisor for the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 20.03.2014.
qualification, they are not very attractive on the general job market for teachers (Valenta & Berg, 2008). In addition, the way the programme is organized gives the students few opportunities to improve their Norwegian skills and this contributes to the problems of getting positions as mainstream teachers. Thirdly, without requirements in the subjects Norwegian, English and mathematics, some students enter the programme with too weak skills. Where do teacher educators work from here? How much can be achieved in a three year period?

With regard to the requirements, the Government have announced that from the academic year 2015-2016, entrance requirements for the three year undergraduate programme in teaching of specific school subjects for bilinguals will be the same as those for all other teacher programmes (Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2013-2014, p. 2). In addition, the Government have tightened the requirements with regard to the number of students who graduate per year per teacher programme (Norwegian Ministry for Education and Research, 2014, p. 33). In 2014 the number of students was put to 20, which means that in all likelihood only Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences will be able to recruit enough students to offer the three year undergraduate programme in teaching of specific school subjects for bilinguals. The rest of the institutions will accordingly be forced to mainstream bilingual teacher students.

In 2010, the Government established new national curriculum regulations for differentiated primary and lower secondary teacher education programmes for grades 1 to 7 and grades 5 to 10 (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2010b). Now Norwegian is a compulsory subject in the teacher education programme for grades 1 to 7, but not in the programme for grades 5 to 10. Without special assistance to further develop their Norwegian language skills, immigrant students who fulfil the requirement may nevertheless be forced to apply for the teacher education programme for grades 5 to 10. This could lead to even fewer immigrant student candidates than today opting for or graduating from primary school teacher education, and ultimately to even fewer immigrant teachers in Norwegian primary school.

In the first part of our fifth and last research question we asked what is being done to increase recruitment of minority members to the teaching profession and to ensure the quality of the candidates. As we just have seen, the Government have taken initiatives on both these points. However, with the new measures for quality assurance, there is a danger that the effort to increase recruitment will have as little success as the former initiatives. Without other measures stricter admission requirements will lead to fewer students applying for and entering into teacher education. And those who apply will apply for general teacher training programmes, and many of them will probably find out that these programmes are not well suited for them.

We support the stricter admission requirements, particularly in Norwegian, and see it as an advantage that immigrant students are enrolled into ordinary teacher training programmes. And irrespective of the Government’s demand of 20 students per year per programme, we think it is necessary to discuss whether it is time to mainstream the education of teachers who are to teach mother tongue to minority students and perform bilingual subject teaching. But as we have just noted, there is a risk that the general teaching programmes will not work for this group of students. On these grounds, we strongly believe that mainstreaming would require an adaption of the ordinary teacher
education so it could better cover the needs of students with an immigrant background in order for it to be successful. The adaptation would include the following elements:

- For students with insufficient mastery of Norwegian, intensive and systematic language training together with special language support in the subjects studied
- Possibility to take mother tongue as a subject as part of the teacher education
- The mother tongue subject should have a didactic focus
- Multicultural and multilingual perspectives should permeate the education

Such a reform would entail a challenge to teacher educators. An official report from 2010 on the education of children, youth and adults with a minority background in Norway raises doubts whether those who teach future teachers have sufficient competence in multilingual and multicultural perspectives to be able to offer students the education they need (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2010a, p. 376).

To conclude, the main finding of this article is that the Government repeatedly have stressed the importance of diversifying the Norwegian teaching force by recruiting minority members to teaching and over the years a number of initiatives have been taken. At the same time, we have seen that until recently there have been weak and vague requirements as to the formal qualifications for teachers with this background. With the new measures to secure the quality, there is a danger that the effort to increase recruitment will be not more successful than previous initiatives. In our mind, without adapting teacher education to the needs of immigrant students, neither of the goals will be reached. This why we have proposed concrete ideas for teacher education that will prepare immigrant teachers better for work in school, which in turn should improve their working conditions and contribute to their status in school.

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