



Oslo kommune
Utdanningsetaten

Improving Student Pass Rates and Performance

What do we know about "best practice" of schools in Oslo?





Education in the City of Oslo

- Oslo is both a county and a municipality – responsible for all education below higher education, for all age groups.
- Almost 76 000 pupils, 18 500 from ethnic minorities.
- 174 sites – 122 primaries and lower secondaries, 23 upper secondaries, 6 adult education centres, 23 schools for pupils with special needs, plus some extras





Quality Enhancement Initiatives Since 2000

- 2002: Restructuring of the organisation to modernize education in Oslo: all education, including business based learning (apprenticeships) under one roof.
- A Quality Barometer, defining quality in schools and supplying a tool for quality assessment within each school (under revision)
- Strategic work based on balanced scorecard thinking and result based development measures – 98 parameters.
- Contract-based leadership dialogue
- Accountability towards the public – the Quality Portal
- Intensive management training programmes
- Individualised salary system for teachers and school leaders
- The Knowledge Promotion Reform – a National Reform of the whole education system on primary and secondary level





Examples of Results

- A culture for measurement and target setting has had a breakthrough in Oslo schools
- Results are now available in about 100 different areas. Examples:
 - Reading skills for 7-8 year-olds have improved significantly since 2002.
 - The use of ICT in learning activities has improved significantly
 - The number of agreements between schools and trade and industries to increase learning outcome has increased
 - Attendance rates have increased
 - Drop-out rates have fallen continuously during the last years
- Almost 1/3 of school leaders have signed their contracts the last six years
- 133 people have passed a master programme in school leadership arranged in cooperation with the Norwegian School of Management.





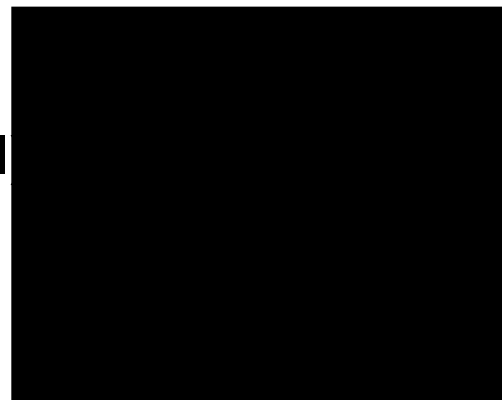
An new initiative: Improving Student Pass Rates and Performance

What do we know?

“The Black Box”

Resources

- Budgets (financial capital)
- People (human capital)
- Organisation
- Etc.



The learning arena



Results

- Grades/learning results
- Number of students who graduate from upper secondary school
- +++++.





The New Initiative: Improving student pass-rates and performance

- The aim of the project ‘Improving pass-rates and performance’ was to find out how we by changing central elements in the management of each school can
 - increase each student’s learning outcome
 - Increase the rate of students receiving a certificate for completing a 13 year basic education

Key Question:

To what degree does our ”corporate governance” support learning and secure good results?





Three main results:

- The loop of “corporate governance” (setting goals and targets, planning and performing, reporting and follow-up, review of strategy) is disrupted, leaving leaders with a loosely connected system, consisting of many independent parts.
- There is a lack of systematic documentation and follow-up activities in our school system, leaving the teachers disconnected from strategies and managerial measures.
- Schools do not share best practice, internally or with other schools





Hypotheses

There is a strong connection between students' performance and:

1. agreement about and communication of the school's vision, goals and strategy.
2. organisation and governing philosophy of the school
3. how well goals and targets are defined for the teachers.
4. the degree to which control information is used to create improvement
5. the way competence is built and maintained
6. the teachers' planning of the learning activities
7. how well the learning work is structured and monitored (class leadership)
8. how the school follows up each learning activity





Hypotheses (2)

There is a strong connection between students' performance and:

10. how the school designs activities for individual learning
(adapted teaching)
11. school practice in defining special needs and catering for
necessary remedial measures
12. how explicitly duties and responsibilities with regards to social
conduct are described to the students.
13. how lack of attendance is measured and followed up.
14. how each student is followed up by the teachers (feedback)
15. the degree of cooperation with parents
16. the degree to which the local community, trade and industry is
involved in educational activities





Best practice leading to quality

Roles and Responsibilities

- Roles and responsibilities are defined in relation to strategic aims, and they facilitate a strong strategic focus.
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and documented for each employee
- Roles are updated when necessary, eg. by changes in the environment or in the organisation
- There are clear guidelines for cooperation and interface between class teachers, councellors, and other staff. They are clearly understood, accepted and obeyed by the employees.





Benchmarking Quality Elements

Use of feedback in improvement work

- Each individual's degree of reaching personal targets is aligned to the school's strategy and followed-up in review meetings.
- Goal achievement is documented and is part of a personal assessment system.
- Strategic analysis and alignment is part of a broad and continual strategy process.
- Target reaching is rewarded
- Results are shared between relevant groups in the school community





Best practice leading to quality

Development of staff competence

- Schools run analyses of their "competence bank" at least yearly
- Each employee has her own plan for competence development which is part of the review dialogue each year.
- There is a clear policy for encouraging competence development initiatives.





Best practice leading to quality

Planning of learning activities

- There is a system for designing teaching programmes with learning goals and relevant teaching activities for each grade.
- Teaching of Basic skills is integrated in all subjects.
- There is focus on variation and choice of methods, and teaching is linked to the school's overall strategies.
- Planning is documented on different time levels (week, month, term) and plans are accessible to relevant groups, such as management, councillors, students and parents.
- Criteria for assessment are discussed regularly and agreed upon in relevant fora.





Best practice leading to quality

Student participation

- An action plan for student participation describes the role of the students in planning for learning.
- Students take part in important discussions around their learning strategies.
- Students' competence is valued in educational planning.





Best practice leading to quality

Leadership in the classroom

- Teachers and students are punctual
- Learning periods always start in a quiet and orderly way.
- Goals, targets and plans for the learning period are documented and properly communicated to the students.
- Teachers give proper instructions to the students before activities are started.
- Teachers terminate the learning period by summing up and give information about the next period.
- The teachers are able to restructure the learning period during the period if necessary.
- The students experience the learning periods as meaningfully challenging





Best practice leading to quality

Follow-up measures by management

- There is a system where significant deviations from planned activities are documented and reported to the management
- The management discusses and execute remedial measures when deviations are detected.
- There is a culture for follow-up activities by the management, and it is accepted by the staff.





Best practice leading to quality

Scanning of student profiles at entry and exit.

- Processes are established for reception of new students and gathering of relevant information about them
- Each student is met with a structured and documented interview and this is used to define the student's learning profile and plan for adaption of teaching programme.
- New students are systematically discussed in specified fora (work teams, department meetings etc) and results of these discussions are communicated to relevant staff.
- There are clear guidelines for the treatment of school leavers, and documentation is obligatory.
- Scanning of student abilities and learning results is undertaken regularly, and is planned and discussed between colleagues. Results are documented and the need for remedial measures is decided upon by relevant fora.





Best practice leading to quality

Adapted teaching

- There are systematic routines for collecting and discussing results leading to teaching methods adapted to students' abilities, subject and content.
- Adaption of learning activities is documented and students' or parents' acceptance is acquired where necessary.
- Dialogue with students and parents is important elements of the work with adapted teaching





Best practice leading to quality

Decisions about teaching for special needs

- The process of defining students with special needs and planning for their learning is explicit and involves a "resource team"
- Even students with special needs have plans with clear learning goals.
- All decisions about students with special needs are properly documented and filed.





Best practice leading to quality

Rules of conduct

- Rules of conduct are followed up in a consequent manner and are enforced in an equal way by all employees.
- Rules of conduct are continually reviewed to ensure they are sufficient and unambiguous
- Measures are taken to ensure that rules are enforced and function well.





Best practice leading to quality

Organising student dialogues

- At least two (obligatory by Norwegian law) dialogues between teachers and the individual students are performed each year, and the students understand that this has been done.
- Students are invited by written summons and the themes for discussions are stated. There is a fixed form for documenting the dialogue.
- The aim is to increase learning outcome, and this is universally communicated.





Best practice leading to quality

Follow up of student dialogue

- Measures arising from the dialogues are documented and followed up
- Management runs check-ups to ensure that all dialogues are performed according to directions and time schedule.
- There is a fixed system for giving and documenting feedback to the students, and this is accepted by the teachers.





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