

Diversity and Educational Challenges in Oslo and Los Angeles

- A Metropolitan Perspective nr 2

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Received: 12.01.2014 / Revised: 17.04.2014 / Accepted: 09.06.2014


Abstract

Receiving, accommodation and education of children with immigrant background is one of the challenging issues in almost all the metropolitan areas in many countries. In our study we are exploring the impact of demographic changes on political agendas, legal frames, educational approaches, research findings and student achievement in the field of education of linguistic minorities in Oslo, Norway and Los Angeles, USA. Although there are significant historical and socio-economical differences between Los Angeles and Oslo, many of the educational challenges facing the educational policy makers and the linguistic minority students are quite similar.

Keywords: Education in Metropolitan Areas, Linguistic Diversity in Education, School Achievement, Oslo, Los Angeles.

Introduction

Although different in many respects, both Los Angeles and Oslo are ports of immigration in their respective countries. The public school systems in each city are charged with educating large numbers of immigrant children whose home language differs from the national language of the country. In both cities, the academic achievement of the largest immigrant group lags in national and local measures. In both cities, the education of immigrants and the strategies to be used have become politically controversial, and policies for learning the national language have been buffeted by ideological winds. In both cities, the economic and social future depends on the successful education of immigrant children. Thus, an exploration of immigrants and their progress as learners of the national language may be

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profitable to educators in both countries, and such an exploration may serve as a basis for future research. In our first paper, which appeared in an earlier number of this journal, we have focused on Los Angeles (Kerchner & Özerk, 2014). In this paper, we are focusing on Oslo.

Immigration in Norway

Norway has a long history of emigration. During the period of 1850-1950, about a million Norwegians immigrated to the United States. During World War II the country was occupied by Nazi Germany. After the occupation, Norway intensified its industrial development with a great success. As a result, during 1950's Norway received some hundreds of refugees from Hungary and in 1960's some from former Czechoslovakia, but the main immigrant groups were from other Scandinavian countries as a result of labor demand in the industry and service sectors. By 1967 the country changed from being an emigration country to become an immigration country.

In 1970 statistics, the biggest immigrant groups were from other Scandinavian countries, Sweden and Denmark, and English-speaking immigrants from the U.K. and U.S., this as a result of oil industry jobs in the North Sea. Beginning in the 1960s, small industries and the service sector needed labor. Several thousands of young male workers mainly from India, Pakistan, former Yugoslavia, Turkey and Morocco came to Norway. At the same time, the country started to receive refugees from Vietnam and Chile. In 1975 Norway introduced a law to regulate immigration curbing the automatic ability of male immigrant workers to bring their families to Norway. Still, in the period of 1975–2010, the number of immigrants increased as a result of family reunion and refugees mainly from Pakistan, Vietnam, Iran, Iraq, Somali, and Afghanistan. At the same time, many immigrants came from European Union countries like Poland and Germany as a result of the economic cooperation agreement between Norway and the EU. In 2010 new arrivals from Poland became the largest immigrant group. By 2010 there were 552,000 immigrants or people born to immigrant parents. They represent 11.4 percent of the country's population of 4,858,200. They come from about 200 different countries. (SSB 2010) However, 50 of those countries are represented by fewer than 20 people. Some 257,000 have a European background, 199,000 persons have a background from Asia, 67,000 from Africa, 18,000 from Latin-America, and 11,000 from North America and Oceania. The fastest growing immigrant population is from Poland, Germany, Pakistan, Somalia and Iraq. They have come as labor migrants, as refugees, as students, or as a result of family-reunion.

About 35 percent of immigrants have Norwegian citizenship.

Table 1. *The Country of Origin of the Main Immigrant Groups in Norway*

Country of origin	Population 1.1.2010	Country of origin	Population 1.1.2010
Poland	52 125	Bosnia-Herzegovina	15 918
Pakistan	31 061	Iran	16 321
Sweden	31 193	Turkey	15 998
Iraq	26 374	Sri Lanka	13 772
Somalia	25 496	Russia	14 873
Germany	22 859	Philippines	13 447
Vietnam	20 100	U.K.	12 843
Denmark	19 298	Kosovo	12 719
Lithuania	11 341		

Source: SSB aktuell statistikk 2010

No Schooling for Illegal Immigrants

In contrast to policies in the U.S., undocumented or illegal immigrant children do not have the right to go to public schools. According to the Education Act of 1998, as in previous laws, every child in the country between the ages of 6 and 16 years must attend school. However these children must be a Norwegian citizen or have legal residency in the country of longer than three months. Each legal resident has a state-issued identity number, which is necessary for enrollment in school, and it is against the law for a school to enroll a student without a residency permit and an ID number.

The Structure and Basic Policy of Education of Norway

Compulsory education in Norway lasts ten years and consists of primary and lower secondary education. Upper secondary high school education is optional. The responsibility for ensuring that appropriate schooling is accessible to children, young people and adults has been assigned to educational authorities in each county. Individual municipalities operate primary and lower secondary schools, while the upper secondary schools are administered at the county level.

The higher education sector comprises educational programs at the universities and university colleges. Admission to these programs is normally contingent upon completion of three years of upper secondary education. With the exception of a few privately-run institutes, all institutions of higher education are operated by the state. However, each institution enjoys a large degree of academic and administrative autonomy.

Public education in Norway is free up to and including the upper secondary level. Tuition for higher education programmes at state-run institutions is normally minimal.

The Storting (Norwegian national assembly) and the Government are responsible for specifying the objectives and establishing the budgetary frameworks for the education sector. The Ministry of Education and Research implements national educational policy.

Although locally operated, schooling in Norway is based on a common standards and a national curriculum. However, Norwegian schools are expected to adapt teaching to the abilities and skills of the individual pupils. Special education is available for persons with disabilities or those with special needs who are otherwise unable to participate in ordinary schooling. Norwegian education policy stipulates that consideration be given to the special needs of language minority pupils in order to better enable them to complete upper secondary education and pursue higher education and employment. As a result of the increase in immigration, the number of pupils belonging to language minorities is on the rise.

The Norwegian public educational policy is based on equality and equity. The principle of equal rights to education for all members of society is the main guiding principle in the country's educational policy. Both the 1997 law of education and national curriculum document of 2006 stress the Norwegian concept of equity: "...to provide equal opportunities in education regardless of abilities and aptitudes, age, gender, skin color, sexual orientation, social background, religious or ethnic background, place of residence, family education or family finances."

Furthermore 'positive discrimination,' 'inclusive education,' and, 'adapted education' are seen as important strategies to accomplish equity in education: "To ensure Equity in Education for all, positive discrimination is required, not equal treatment. Equity in Education is a national goal and the overriding principle that applies to all areas of education." With regard to 'inclusive education', the officials stress the following:

“...everyone should participate in society on an equal basis – academically, socially and culturally. This places demands on the education arena and on each individual, who must be able to build good relations while respecting individual differences and values.”

The national curriculum document (Knowledge Promotion 2006) stress the following:

“Adapted education within the community of pupils is a basic premise of the comprehensive school for all. The education shall be adapted so that the pupils can contribute to the community and also experience the joy of mastering tasks and reaching their goals. When working on their school subjects, all the pupils shall encounter challenges that they must strive to master and which they can master alone or with others. This also applies to pupils with special difficulties or particular abilities and talents in different areas. When pupils work together with adults or each other, the diversity of abilities and talents may strengthen the community and the learning and development of the individual. The diversity of pupil backgrounds, aptitudes, interests and talents shall be matched with a diversity of challenges in the education. Regardless of gender, age, social, geographical, cultural or language background, all pupils shall have equally good opportunities to develop through working with their subjects in an inclusive learning environment. Adapted teaching for each and every pupil is characterized by variation in the use of subject materials, ways of working and teaching aids, as well as variation in the structure and intensity of the education. Pupils have different points of departure, use different learning strategies and differ in their progress in relation to the nationally stipulated competence aims. The provisions governing special education shall be applied when more comprehensive adaptation is required than what can be arranged within the framework of the regular teaching.”

After introducing the national curriculum document in 2006 the minister of education announced a strategy-plan for implementation of equal education in practice in 2007. The main purpose for the plan (Equal Education in Practice 2007) has been:

- 1) Improving the language skills of minority language children of preschool age.
- 2) Improving the educational achievements of minority language students in basic education.
- 3) Increase the proportion of minority students and apprentices who commence and complete upper training.
- 4) Increase the proportion of minority students in higher education and better opportunities for implement training.
- 5) Improve Norwegian language proficiency adults to increase opportunities for education and Active participation in work and social life.

Furthermore, the document stresses that:

The Government will work against racism and for a tolerant, multicultural society. Everyone shall have the same rights, obligations and opportunities regardless of ethnic background, gender, religion, sexual orientation or functional efficiency. We will invest in people by to give them access to development and new knowledge in kindergarten and school, in higher education, continuing education, and through research. From 1980 to 2006 there has been more than a tripling of the immigrant population. Without this immigration, Norway would lack manpower and expertise in several areas. Cultural diversity is not only an enrichment of each of us, but the immigrant population also brings important resources to the wider community through cultural and linguistic competence - knowledge that is very important in our work nationally and internationally.

The Impact of Immigration on the Norwegian Schools

Norway has 19 counties and 430 municipalities. While all have an immigrant population, and in 7 of 19 counties the immigrant population comprises more than 10 percent of the population, immigrants are concentrated in Oslo.

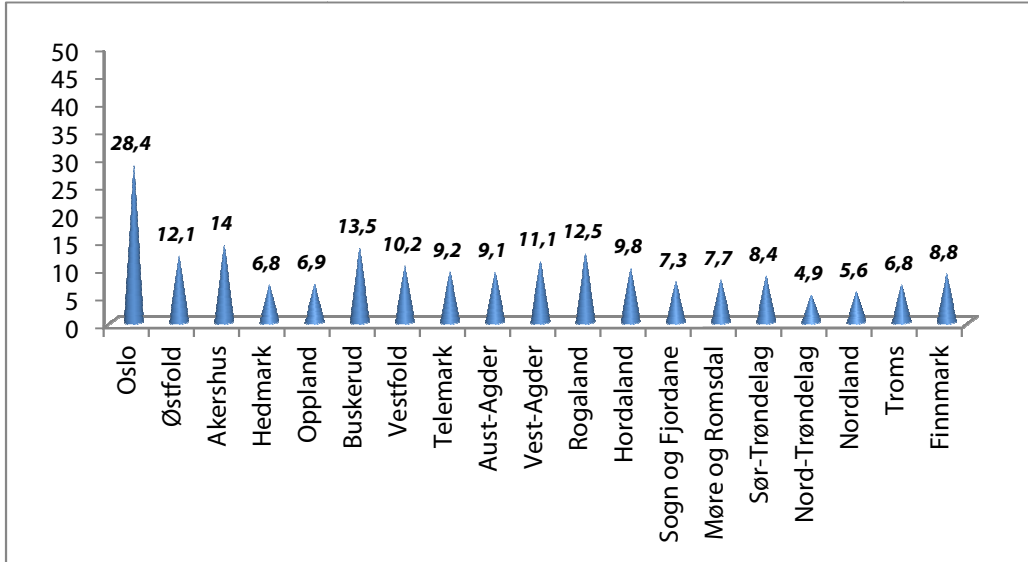
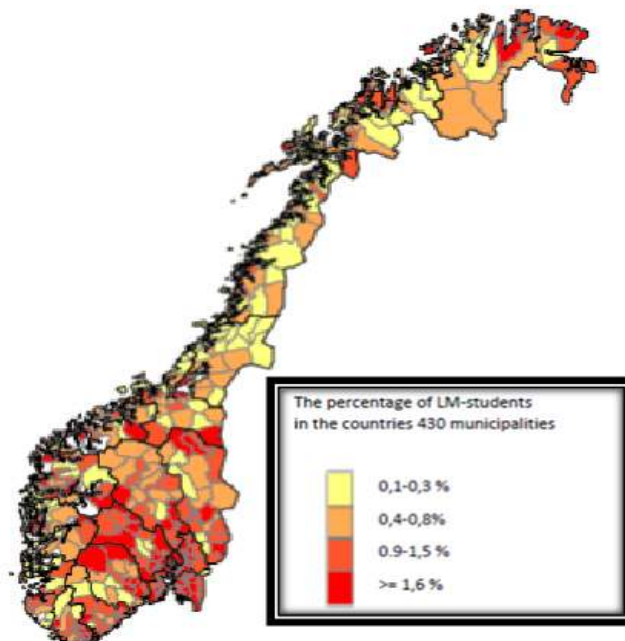


Figure 1. Immigrant Population by County in Norway

It is difficult to find data about the number of students at compulsory education (6-16 years of age) and secondary high schools (for those at 16-19 years of age) who have another first language than Norwegian. For unknown reasons, the Norwegian Statistic Burå stopped gathering data about this group of students. The last figures from 2004 show that there are linguistic minority students in all the 430 municipalities in the country. But in most counties, the percentages are very small. The following figure illustrates the linguistic minority student (LM-student) demography in the compulsory education in Norway:



In the school year of 2010-2011, about 43,900 students with another first language than Norwegian were provided what is called “supportive language teaching.”

In upper secondary high schools (for those at 16-19 years of age) language minority students are also concentrated in Oslo, as the following figure shows. Only three counties have more than 1,000 such students.

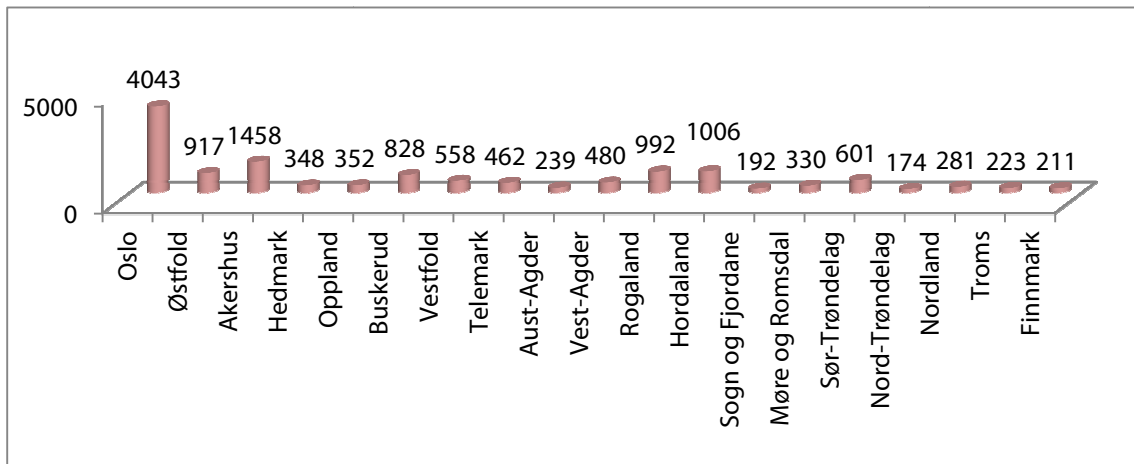


Figure 2. Language Minority Students in Upper Secondary High Schools in Norway

Immigration and the Oslo schools

Oslo is the capital city and is both a municipality and a county. As a municipality it has the responsibility for compulsory education for those at 6-16 years of education. As a county it has the responsibility for secondary high schools for those of 16-19 years of age.

The capital city of Oslo has the largest population of immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents, both in relative and absolute figures. Of Oslo’s 587,000 inhabitants, 170,206 have an immigrant background. They represent 29 percent of the city’s population. There were also high proportions of people with immigrant background in neighboring cities and counties: the municipalities of Drammen (22 per cent), Lørenskog (19 percent), and Skedsmo (18 percent). Oslo, is administratively divided into 15 townships that fall into sections of the city; the East End that has an immigrant population of 34.7 percent and West End with an immigrant population of 18.5 percent.

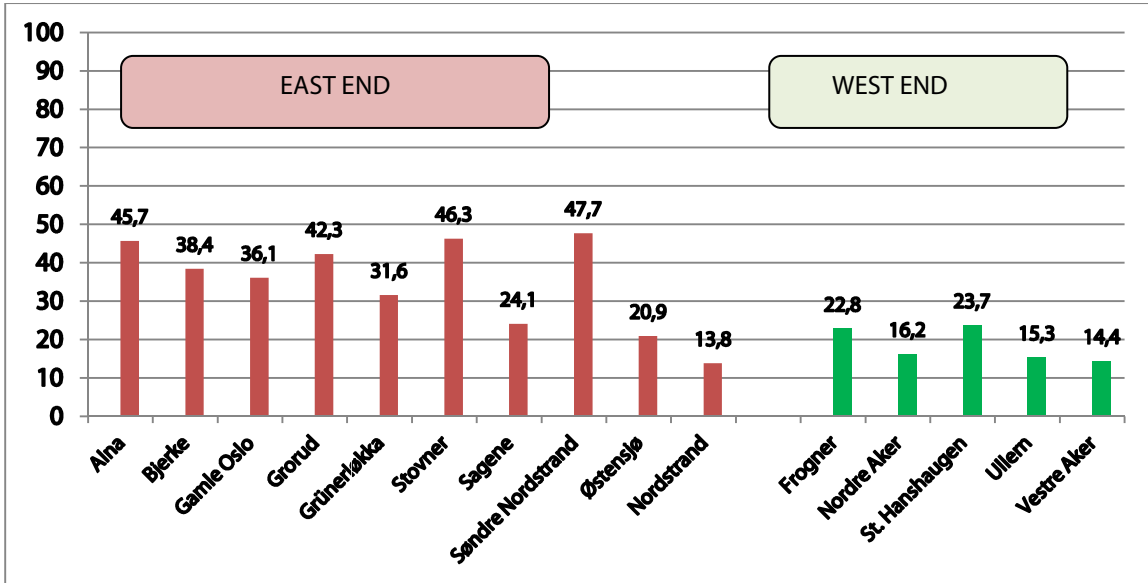


Figure 3. The percentage of Language Minority Students in different townships in Oslo

According to 2010 statistics (SSB, 2010), immigrants in Oslo comprise 33.5 percent in the age group 6-15 (primary) and 31.5 percent in the age group 16-19 (upper secondary school) (SSB 2011). Figure 3 shows the distribution of these children in different townships in Oslo. These figures indicate that there higher percentage of linguistic minority children in the East End schools than the West End schools.

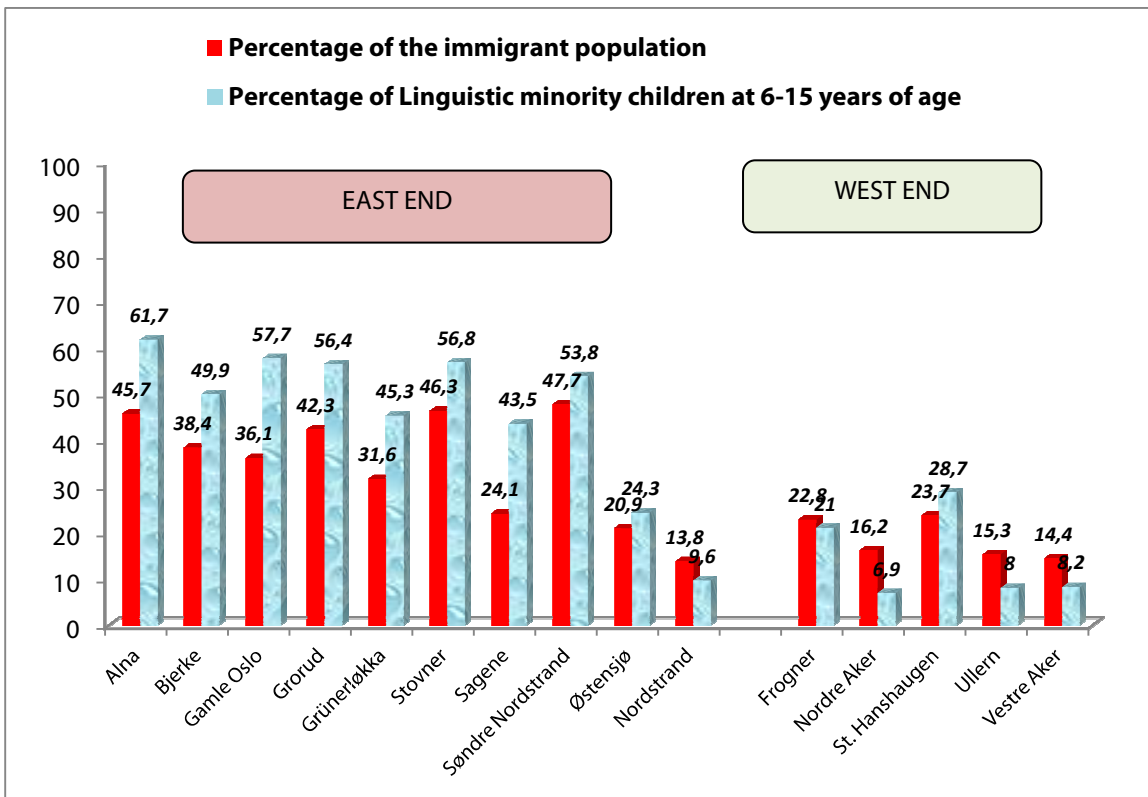


Figure 4. Distribution of Immigrants and Language Minority Students in Oslo

As one can see in Figure 4, except for Nordstrand in East End (Nordstrand is usually being considered as West End-township in the East End), the percentage of the 6-15 years of age with linguistic minority background is higher than the percentage of the immigrant population in the respective township. When it comes to the West End, except St. Hanshaugen, the percentage of the linguistic minority children at 6-15 years of age lower than the percentage of the immigrant population in the respective township.

The East and West parts of Oslo also differ economically. Immigrant populations are concentrated in those townships with lowest income per capita income (Özerk 2003). Several studies show that the 10 percent of the population with highest income in some West End townships earns 50 times more than 10 percent of the lowest income in the some East End townships. Table 2 illustrates the discrepancies in income per family income in the 15 townships in 2007.

Table 2. *The discrepancies in income per family income in the 15 townships in 2007*

All figures in thousands of NOK

	Gross income 2007, average	Gross income 2007, median	Taxable gross possessions 2007, average	Taxable gross possessions 2007, median
EAST END				
Alna	292	279	382	221
Bjerke	310	287	420	211
Gamle Oslo	297	280	292	113
Grorud	281	270	364	202
Grünerløkka	308	291	292	106
Sagene	316	306	319	127
Stovner	290	268	401	229
Søndre Nordstrand	294	272	362	199
Østensjø	331	272	477	255
Nordstrand	418	324	876	304
WEST END				
Frogner	465	323	1592	186
Nordre Aker	406	338	796	301
St. Hanshaugen	353	311	437	129
Ullern	575	376	2858	469
Vestre Aker	599	365	3050	478

Source: [Marjan Nadim and Roy A. Nielsen: Barnefattigdom i Norge. Omfang, utvikling og geografisk variasjon. Oslo, Fafo, 2009.](#) Fafo report 2009:38. The EU definition of child poverty has been used: Households with less than 60 percent of the median income, adjusted for households with more than 50,000 NOK in possessions.

Of 85,000 children in poor families in Norway 2006, 15,900 lived in Oslo, which comprises 14.7 percent of all children in Oslo compared to 7.9 percent in the country. 78 percent of the children in poor families are children of immigrant families in the East End. The high rate of child poverty in Oslo is mostly an effect of the large immigration to the city and the immigrants' problems to establish themselves in the job market and receive enough income to support large family (Nadim & Nielsen 2009).

Apartment prices in the West End rose more than the prices in the East End in the 21st century. From 2003 to 2006 prices in the districts of Stovner, Grorud and Søndre Nordstrand rose by less than 25%, and the prices in Frogner, St. Hanshaugen and Ullern rose by around 40%. All five West End townships had higher price increases than the highest increase in the

East End. The price per square metre for apartments varied in November 2008 in the East End from 21,000 in Søndre Nordstrand to 33,000 in Sagene, and in the West End from 36,200 in Nordre Aker to 43,200 in Frogner (Norwegian Apartment Market Foundation 2009).

Norwegian Language Learners in Oslo

As mentioned earlier, Oslo has the largest immigrant population in Norway.

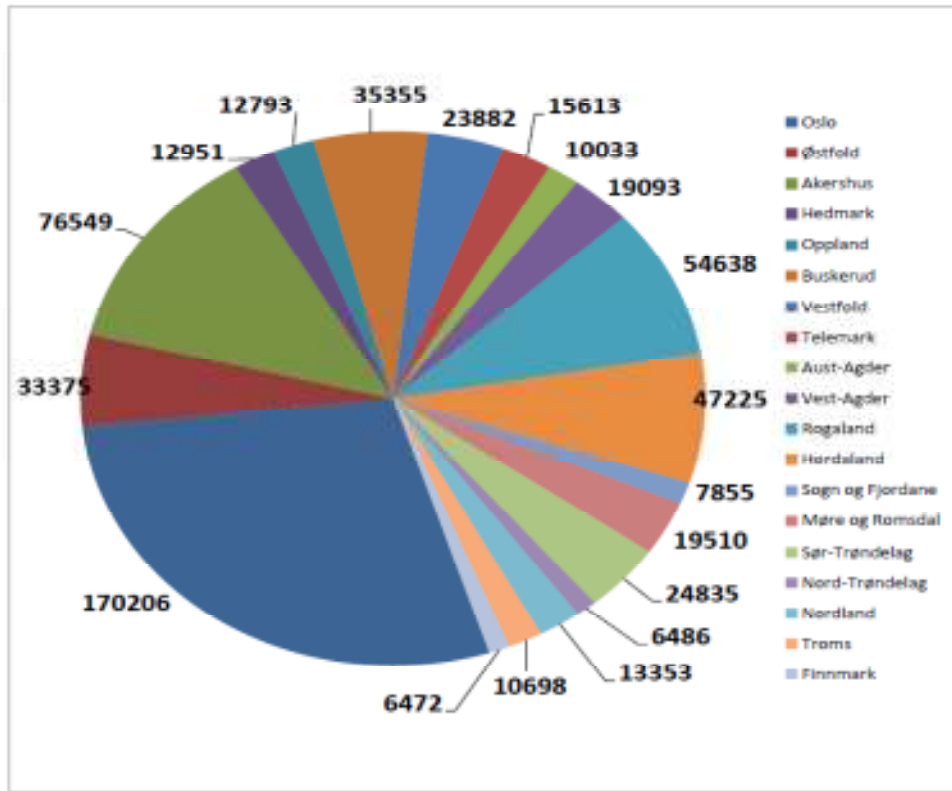


Figure 5. The distribution of immigrant population in 19 counties in Norway

About 33.5 percent of the children in the city’s 135 schools have a mother tongue other than Norwegian, about 120 languages total. But there is great imbalance among the schools. For example, the following table shows the percentage of the linguistic minority children in the school (Grunnskolen) for basic education for 6-16 years of age:

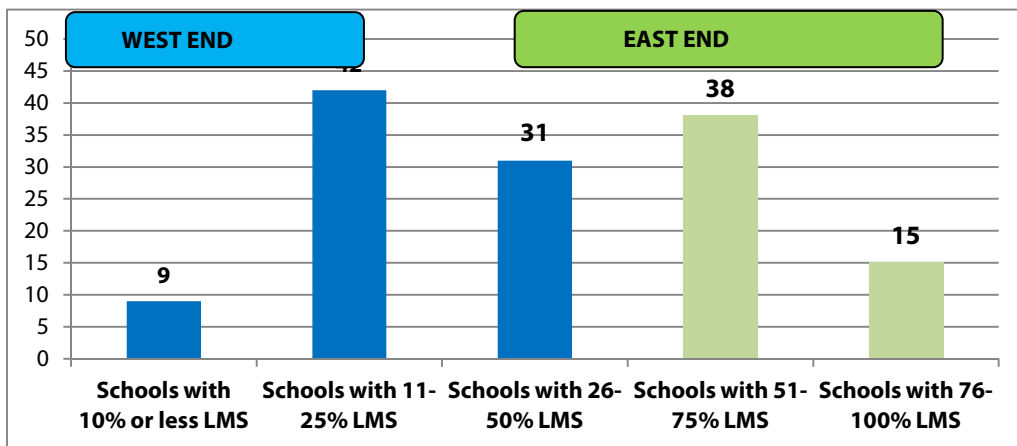


Figure 6. Norwegian Language Learners by Percentage in West End and East End Oslo Schools

As one can see in the figure, there are 53 schools, 39 percent of the schools, in which LMS comprises more than 50 percent of the school population. All of these schools are located in the East End townships.

In order to illustrate the linguistic diversity in these schools, consider three East End basic schools in Oslo. One is elementary school with 1-7th grade students, the other is junior high school with 8-10th grade students, and the third one is a combined basic school with 1-10th grade students. Figure 7 shows the linguistic diversity at Ammerud School, an East End elementary school which serves 556 students at 1-7th grade.

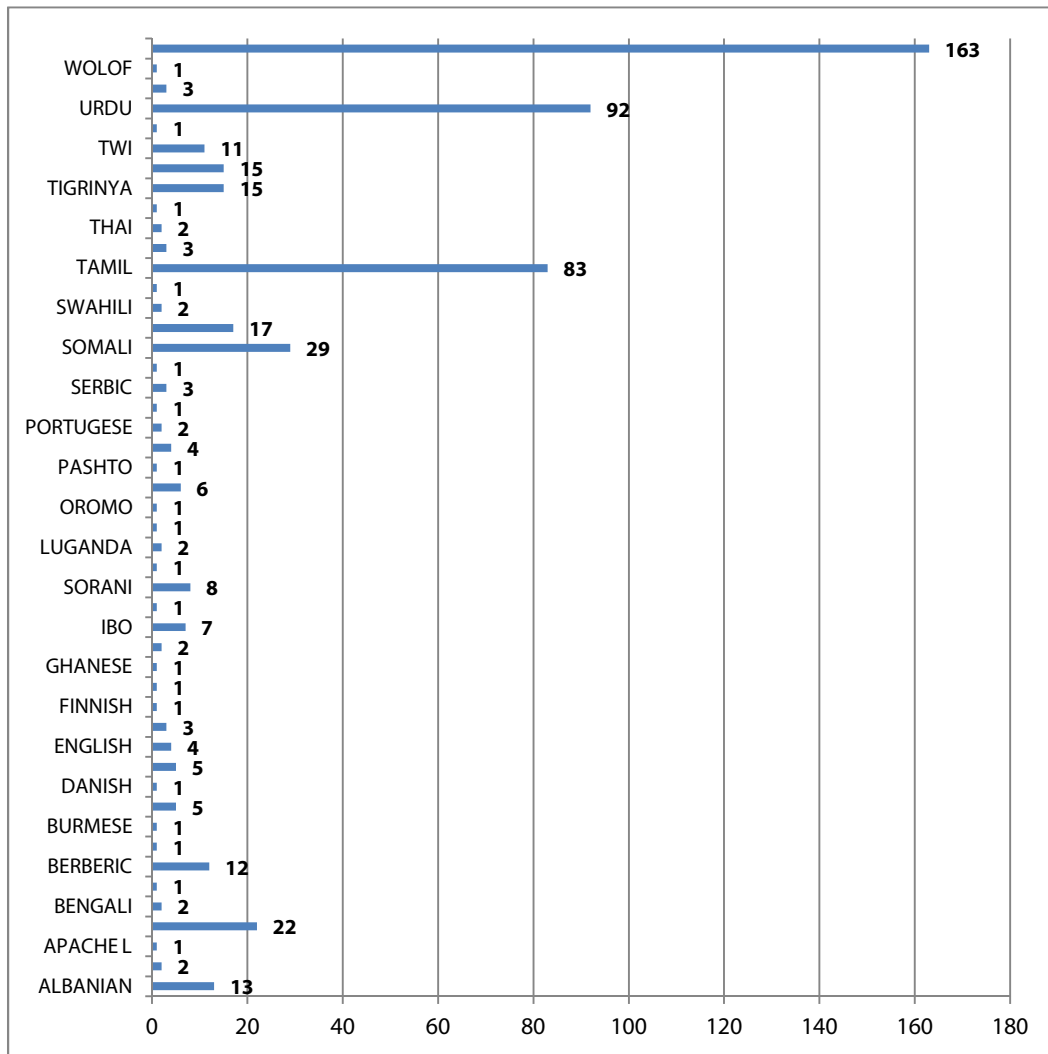


Figure 7. Linguistic Diversity at Ammerud School, Oslo

As one can see, 393 of 556 students, ie 71 percent of them, are LMS speaking 47 different native languages. 240 of 393 LMS, ie 61 percent of LMS, are defined as Norwegian Language Learners (NLL) and they are provided *additional* supportive Norwegian language teaching.

Figure 8 shows the linguistic diversity at Apalokka School, an East End junior high school that serves 405 students at 8-10th grade.

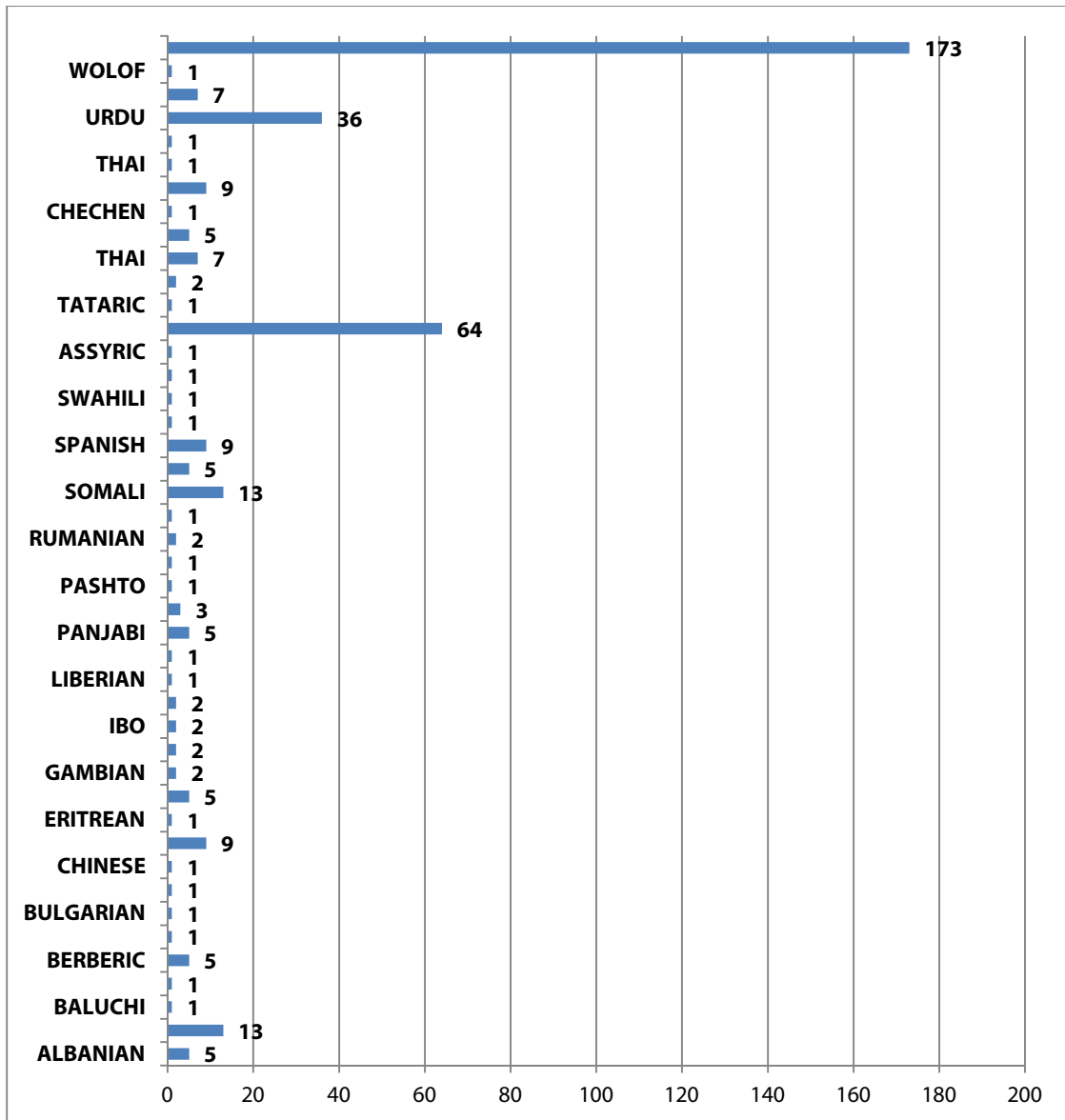


Figure 8. Linguistic Diversity at Apolokka School, Oslo

232 of the 405 students at Apalokka are LMS. They represent 43 different native tongues. They comprise 57 percent of the student population at the school. 81 of 232, ie 35 percent of them, are defined as Norwegian Language Learners (NLL) and receive additional supportive Norwegian language teaching.

The third example is Rommen School, a combined basic school that serves 1-10th grade students.

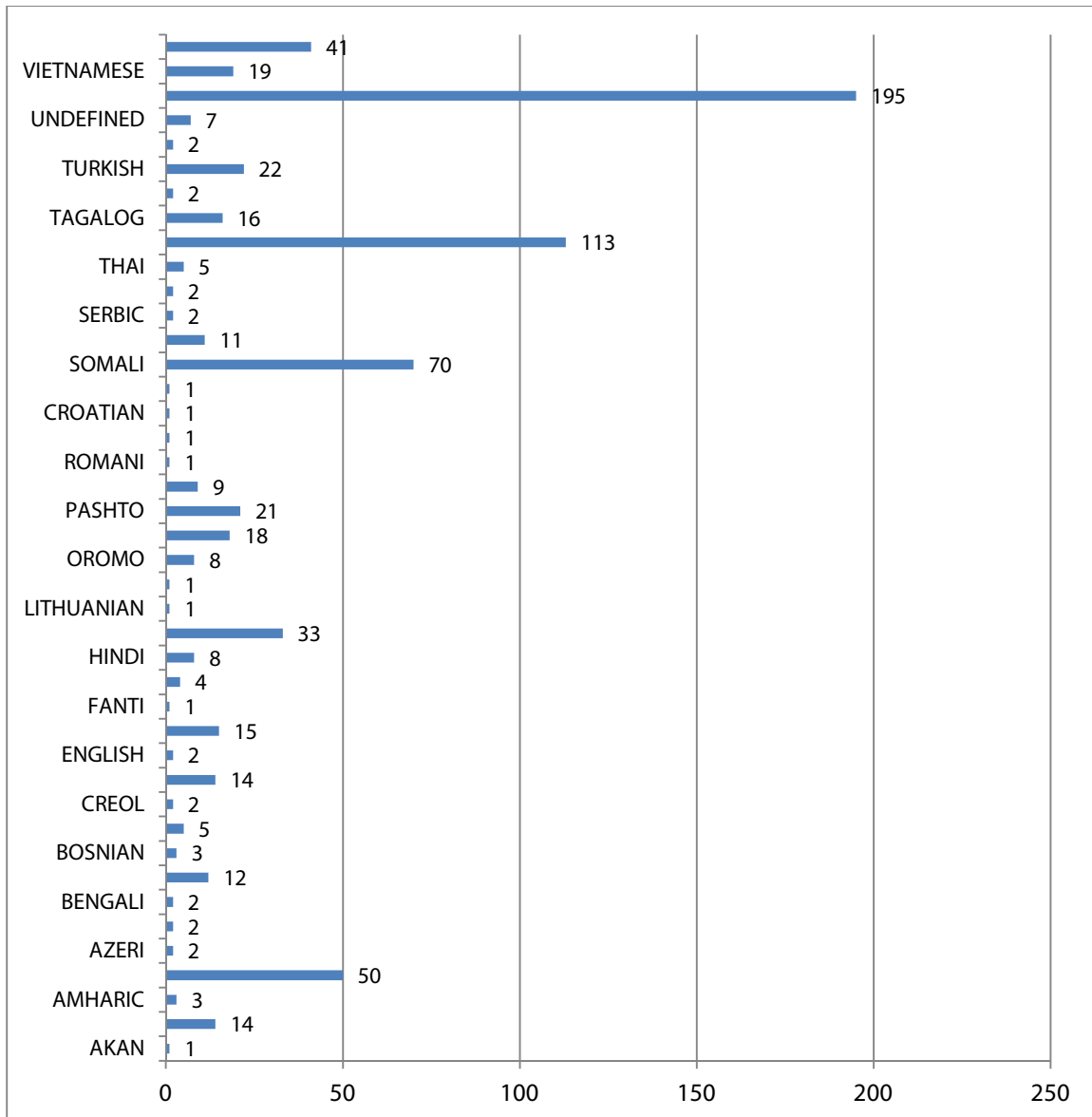


Figure 9. Linguistic Diversity at Rommen School, Oslo

There are 742 students at the school; 701 of them are LMS. In other words 94 percent of the school's student population is LMS. They represent 41 different native tongues. 412 of 701 LMS are defined as LMS with limited Norwegian language proficiency and therefore they are provided additional Norwegian language teaching.

As one can see in the figures above, there is what we can call 'super linguistic diversity' in many of Oslo schools.¹

One of the characteristics of the linguistic super diversity in the Oslo schools is that no single LM student group dominates the school population in many schools, but the total number of students with different languages does. This may be one of the differences between Los Angeles and Oslo schools. In L.A., children whose first language is Spanish are the dominant LM group in most schools.

¹ Vertovec, S. (2007): 'Super-diversity and its implications'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29(6): 1024-54.

Education Policies Since the 1960s

In 1975 Norway introduced a new immigration act aimed at strengthening regulation of immigrant labor, but the law became known as one that stopped immigration. However the number of immigrants and immigrant students increased because of what are known as family-reunion refugees—family members joining someone who had previously immigrated—and an agreement with the European Union that gives EU citizens the right to immigrate to Norway.

In 1975 there were only about 2,500 linguistic minority (LM) students in the country, including those who spoke Sami—the language of the northern natives—Swedish, and Danish. Local schools arranged language courses for them, and the responsible municipalities and counties covered the costs. That year the Ministry of Education began economic support to cover extra expenses for Norwegian language programs. There were no bilingual or mother tongue classes at that time. The main educational programs for LM students were introductory classes for newcomers and supportive Norwegian language courses. In 1978, the Ministry began to support 2-4 hours of mother tongue instruction for groups of 12 students with the same native language, a policy that continued until 1987. In addition, by 1984 Norway introduced an opportunity for LM students to get exam credit for a mother tongue course.

From 1987 to 1997

By 1987 there were 11,639 LM students in Norway.² A new National Curriculum (NC) was introduced giving LM students the right to get 2-5 hours a week of mother tongue instruction in addition to other school subjects and Norwegian as a second language instruction was formally introduced. *Functional bilingualism* became a goal and thousands of LM students received mother tongue instruction, as many groups of students were offered transitional bilingual education during their initial three

The majority of LM students lived in Oslo, and there were 96 bilingual classes involving LM children with 11 different mother tongues. Many of them were based on team teaching, one Norwegian teacher and one bilingual teacher in the same classroom that mixed students whose native language was Norwegian with those having a different mother tongue.

However, in the early 1990s the political climate began to change. A small far right-wing party, which garnered only about 4 percent of the votes nationally, began to criticize bilingual education and mother tongue teaching. In local Oslo elections, the party gained 15 percent of the votes and became a coalition partner to the Conservative Party. The conservative coalition began to challenge the Labor Party's social policy nationally. The political climate at the time favored right-wing perspectives at a time when increasing joblessness combined with an increasing number of refugees from Iran, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Somalia, and the far right-wing party, Progress Party (*Fremskritspartiet*), increased its votes in the following elections through the entire country.

In response, the Labor Party changed its policies. Beginning in 1993 new National Curriculum measures were introduced, and by 1997, 33,307 LM students lost provisions for mother tongue teaching and transitional bilingual education.³ In Oslo the extent of special services for LM students changed dramatically. The new policy provided *supportive Norwegian language teaching* for only those students who could not benefit from subject-based classes in which Norwegian was the only language of instruction. (Subject matter

² SSB Aktuell statistikk nr 3/98.

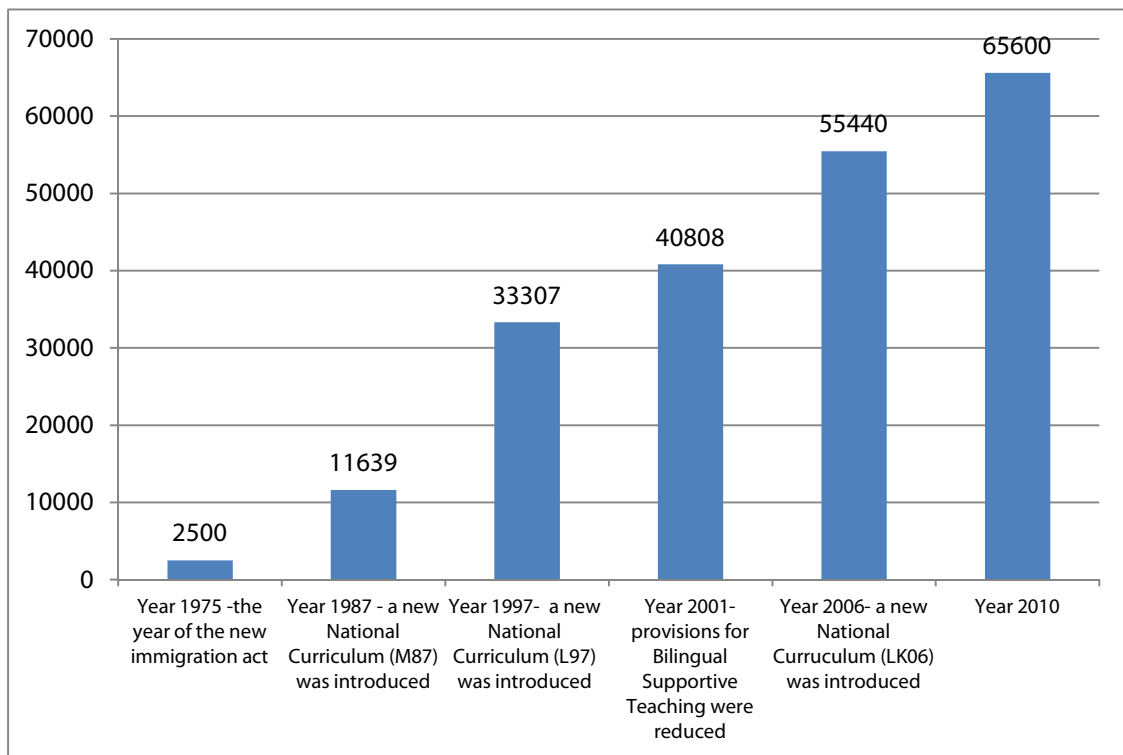
³ GSI, 1997.

teaching in a mother tongue was allowed only for a limited period.) Functional bilingualism was no longer to be an educational goal.

This policy caused huge debates in the country and in education research circles. Subsequently, several proposals were introduced from research circles and the Socialist Party to reintroduce mother tongue teaching for all students who were interested in it and to reintroduce bilingual education in schools with high numbers of LM students. These were rejected by Parliament. Meanwhile, the number of LM students continued to increase; by 2001 there were 40,808.⁴ By 2010 there were 65600 LMS in the basic schools of Norway⁵

2003-2011: New Political Voices and Test-Driven Policy

In 2003, a Conservative-Centrum coalition took power in Norway. A new national curriculum reform process was started, partly in response to was perceived as poor showings on international tests: PIRLS, PISA, and TIMSS. By 2006, the reform process produced the current National Curriculum document that was given the name Knowledge Promotion (Knowledge Promotion 2006/Kunnskapsløftet 2006). And as figure below shows, the number of LM students continued to increase.



Source: Özerk, K. (2003) *Sampedagogikk*. Valsett: Oplandske Bokforlag.

Nygaard, G. (2010): *Innvandring og Innvandrere*. Oslo: SSB

Figure 10. *Changing Educational Policies while the number of Language Minority Population was increasing in the schools*

⁴ Statistisk sentralbyrå 2002.

⁵ Nygaard, G. (2010): *Innvandring og innvandrere*. Oslo: SSB.

As the number of LM students increased over the last three decades, governments of all political stripe—right, center, or left wing—were concerned with that these students gain sufficient proficiency in Norwegian to be able to benefit from conventional schooling. The core question, was how? Even as the country reformed its national curriculum several times, it did not have a detailed insight about the academic situation of LM students in Oslo or the country, but a few studies began to create a picture of these students.

Heesch, Storaker and Lie (1998) analyzed the national data from TIMSS (The Third International Mathematics and Science Study) and found that 9 year-old children with LM background in Norway scored 10 percent lower than native speakers in natural science and math. Among 13-year olds, the discrepancy was 11 percent in math and 14 percent in natural science.⁶

In a study of 131 LM students Özerk (2005) found polarization tendencies among LM students: about half of them scored very well, and half very poorly. Almost none were at the middle level.⁷

Hvistendahl and Roe (2003) studied the achievement level of 218 LM 15-year old students who participated in PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) in reading, math, and natural sciences. They found that the average results of LM-students from Norway were significantly (about 50-60 points) lower than their Norwegian counterparts.⁸

Wagner (2004) analyzed data from PIRLS-2001 (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study 2001). She found that among the countries studied, the biggest difference between native speakers and LM students was in Norway.⁹

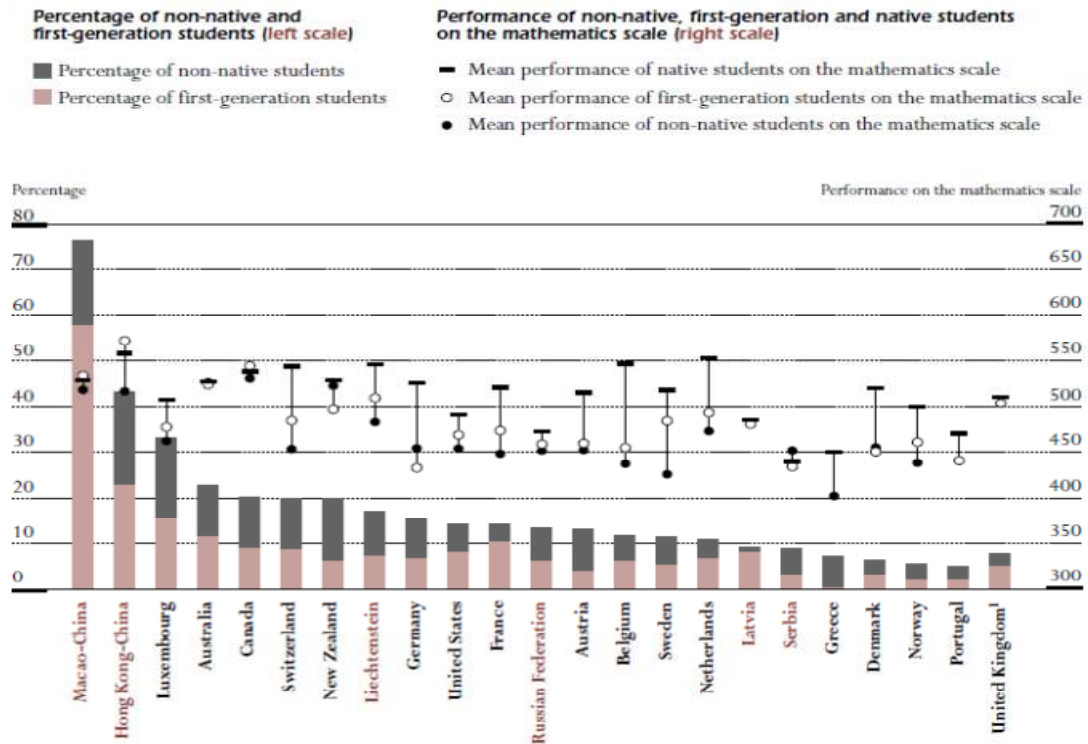
When the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development released the math test results of PISA 2003, the results obtained by Norwegian students were interpreted as unsatisfactory overall, and the results obtained by LM students were worse. As one can see in Figure 11, there are three categories of students: native Norwegian speaking students, Norwegian born LM students and non-Norwegian born LM students. The performance gap between native speakers and LM students is about 70 points, a larger gap than that recorded for the United States but smaller than for many northern European countries.

⁶ Heesch, E.J., Storaker, T. & Lie, S. (1998): Språklige minoriteters prestasjoner i matematikk og naturfag. En komparativ studie av TIMSS-resultatene i matematikk og naturfag til språklige minoriteter og barn av norske foreldre. Oslo: Institutt for lærerutdanning og skoleutvikling. Universitetet i Oslo.

⁷ Özerk, K. (2005): Enten-Eller – Polariseringsrendenser blant språklige minoriteters læringsutbytte. Oslo: Spesialpedagogikk nr 5 p. 10-17.

⁸ Hvistendahl, R. & Roe, A. (2003): Språklige minoriteter i PISA-undersøkelsen. I: Aasen, J., Engen, T.O. og Nes, K. (red.): *Ved nåløyet. -Rapport fra konferansen Hvordan klarer minoritetslevener seg i skolen?* Hamar: Høgskolen i Hedmark, Rapport nr. 14 – 2003.

⁹ Wagner, Å.K.H. (2004). Hvordan leser minoritetsspråklige elever i Norge? En analyse av minoritetsspråklige og majoritetsspråklige 10-åringers leseresultater og bakgrunnsfaktorer i den norske delen av PIRLS 2001. Stavanger: Nasjonalt senter for leseopplæring og leseforskning.



Note: Only countries with at least 3 per cent of students in at least one of these categories.
 1. Response rate too low to ensure comparability (see Annex A3).
 Source: OECD PISA 2003 database, Table 4.2f.

Figure 11. International Comparison of Student Performance among Native and Non-Native Students, 2003

Not unexpectedly, these differences persist for students who speak a language other than Norwegian at home. Such differences occur across all countries, and on this measurement Norway and the United States exhibit similar gaps of about 50 points.

Differences in socioeconomic level account for part of the disparity in math test scores, but in Norway only about half of the test score gap between LM students and native speakers.¹⁰

“Equal Education in Practice” – Not Similar but Equal

The PISA results put pressure on the Conservative-Centrum coalition government. In addition to launching the National Curriculum reform mentioned earlier, in 2003 the minister of education and research, Mrs. Kristin Clemet, presented a comprehensive strategy plan called *“Equal education in practice! Not similar but equal.”* The document gained huge media attention from the. In the foreword of this official document the minister says:

Unfortunately we do not have equal education for all. There are great differences between minority language and majority language pupils and students. Those from language minorities – whether they were born and grew up in Norway or have come here later – consistently show poorer results than majority language students. This applies to both participation in and benefit from education. Why is this so?¹¹

¹⁰ OECD PISA 2003 database, Table 4.2h.

¹¹ Likeverdig utdanning i praxis 2003.

Significantly, the government recognized that the country had changed. "Norway has become a multicultural society, and now we have multicultural schools," the report said. And in a substantial shift the Education Act was amended in 2004 introducing what is known as Paragraph §2-8 that states:

Linguistic minority students have the right to get supportive Norwegian language teaching until they are able to benefit from the subject teaching/content area teaching in Norwegian. In case of need, LM students should also be offered bilingual teaching/mother tongue teaching until that can benefit from instruction in Norwegian.

But in order for schools to implement the new law and get economic support from the central government, education officials required LM students to be tested to determine their proficiency level in Norwegian. A strange situation followed in which schools were required to test students, but the country had no specified examination to specify whether a student would be declared *limited language proficient*. The schools could use any test they wanted, even observation notes by teachers.

The new law also made supportive additional language services and bilingual support subject to parental approval. To get services, the school principal and the LM child's parents are required to sign a document giving or denying permission to classify a student as limited language proficient. Without this designation a student attends ordinary classes without additional support.

If parents agree, and a LM student is classified as limited language proficient, the schools must document that funds allocated for a particular student are spent on that student. This practice continues until the school documents that a student "can follow ordinary teaching in Norwegian with academic benefit."

Özerk (2006) conducted a study of §2-8 using a sample of 25 Oslo schools, about 18 percent of the schools in the capital. These schools used 17 different tests; none of them had been designed to assess Norwegian language proficiency among LM students.¹² As the study showed, the law incentivizes labeling students as limited language proficient, and "once a LM student is defined as limited language proficient, it's most likely that he/she will always be limited language proficient."¹³

As a result, the number of students labeled as limited language proficient has ballooned. In the 2010-2011 school year there were 54,344 students ages 6-16 in Oslo public schools. Nearly 40 percent of them (21,626) were LM students. Over 60 percent of these students (13,701) are classified as limited language proficient and receive funding from the central government. In addition, 3,800 students receive additional support for bilingual instruction.

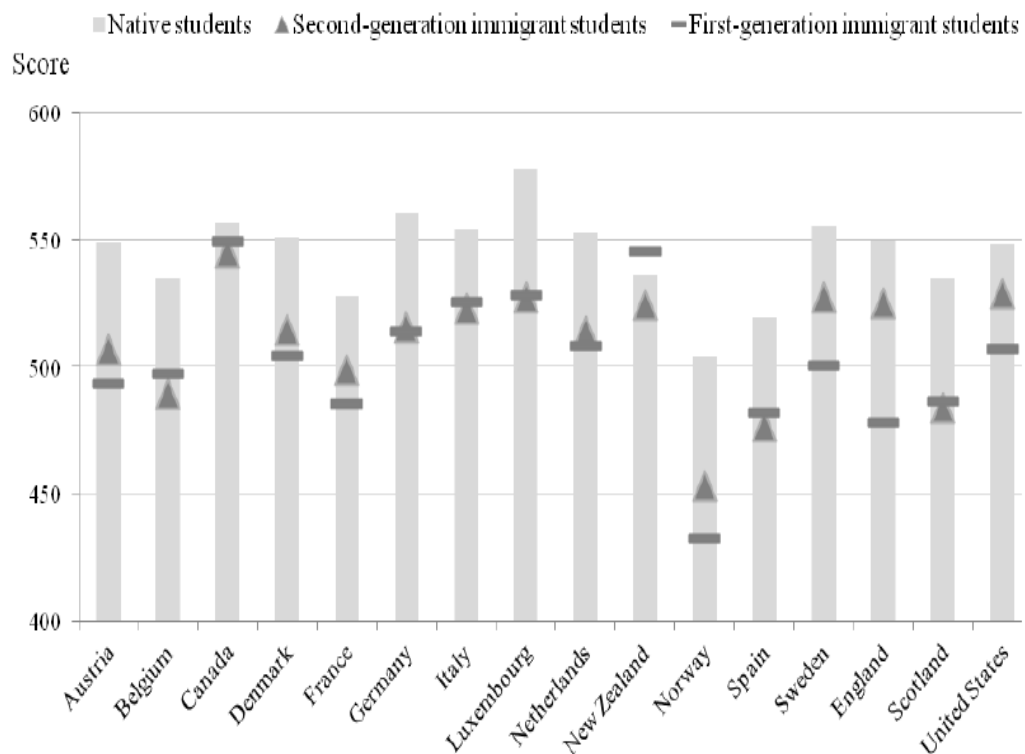
In Oslo, the LM students represent 120 languages. There are 246 bilingual teachers covering 26 languages. The funding allowed by §2-8 created 800 new positions in the city. Since many language groups are too small and their residences scattered, many students receive only supportive Norwegian language teaching and not bilingual instruction.

¹² Özerk, K. (2006): *Avvik og merknad*. Valset: Oplandke Bokforlag.

¹³ Özerk, K. (2012): *Minoritetsspråklige elever og opplæringslovens paragraf 2–8*. *Bedre Skole*. Nr 1. 90-92 p 92.

LM Underachievement Still Challenging

In 2006, the same year that the *Knowledge Promotion* national curriculum was introduced, results from the PIRLS 2006 assessment of reading were released. In many countries, first and second-generation immigrant students performed near average or slightly above in 4th grade reading. Norway lagged all other countries, falling behind France, Spain, England, and Scotland where immigrant students also scored lower than the 500-point mean on the test.

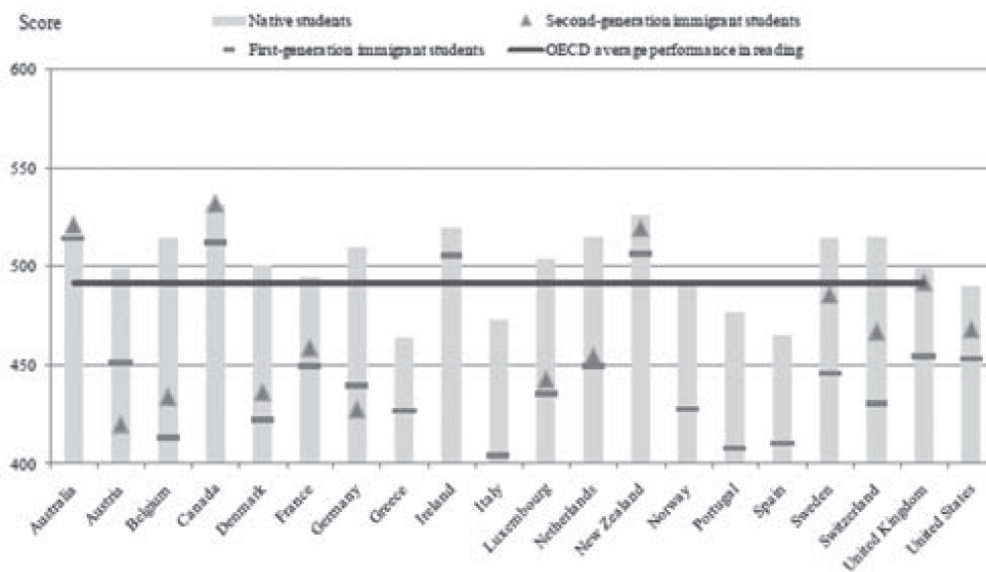


Source: IEA, PIRLS 2006 Database.

Figure 12. Results of Achievement by 4th Graders in Reading, PIRLS-2006

Norwegian LM students did no better on the PISA science results for 15-year old students. The difference between LM speaking students and native speakers was 87 points. A gap of 38 points equates to approximately one year of schooling. The differences were also very high in reading (71 points) and Mathematics (70 points). Astrid Roe and Wenche Vagle analyzed the results of PISA 2009 and found that LM students continued to score significantly lower than their Norwegian speaking peers.¹⁴

¹⁴ Roe, A. & Vagle, W (2010): Resultater i lesing. In Marit Kjærnsli & Astrid Roe (Eds.), *På rett spor - Norske elevers kompetanse i lesing, matematikk og naturfag i PISA 2009*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. 59 - 92



Note: A difference of 38 scores points is roughly equivalent to a year of schooling. Data for the United States are from PISA 2003.

Source : OECD PISA 2006 database; OECD PISA 2003 database.

Figure 13. Results of Achievement by 15-Year Olds in Science, PIRLS-2006

After *Knowledge Promotion* was introduced the Ministry of Education (formerly the Ministry of Education and Research) mandated national testing in reading, math, and English for 5th and 8th graders (10 and 13 years old). As one can see, the difference between native Norwegian speakers and LM students is the greatest in reading and that differences are minor in English and math.

Official statistics also reveal that dropping out of school is a problem in upper secondary schools in Norway particularly for LM students. As Table 5, shows the percentages of the upper secondary students who had enrolled upper secondary schools in 2004 and who did not completed after 5 years and were no longer enrolled:

Table 3. Dropouts in Upper Secondary Schools (17-19 Years Old) in 2009

	Total	Men	Women
Of total population in upper secondary schools	26%	30%	22%
Of LM-students with another country than Norway as their place of birth	41%	48%	34%
Of LM-students with Norway as the place of birth	28%	36%	21%

As mentioned earlier, the upper secondary education (age group: 16-19) is a right, free of charge, but not compulsory in Norway. Statistics show that LM-students participate in upper secondary education as much as others, but they spend more time to complete it. Also, as one can see in the table it is more common for LM students to drop out of upper secondary school than pupils without LM background.

Different Cities; Similar Issues

Surveys of practice, such as this one, are often most useful when they raise interesting questions and lines of investigation. Both the similarities and the differences between the two cities suggest deeper inquiry.

At the outset, we suggested that despite their obvious differences, Los Angeles and Oslo shared a common concern and the attendant public policy problems of educating language minority students, who represent a large percentage of their student population.

In both cities, language minority students lag in student performance, and they dropout before completing high school or upper secondary at unacceptable rates. In both cities achievement lags behind that of other students, although those students who achieve language proficiency achieve at much higher rates.

In both cities the pursuit of a solution to language learning issues has been hampered by political and policy instability. Ideology and partisan politics trumped pedagogy and research, often to the detriment of learning. Bilingualism, and bilingual teaching, which has a strong research base, became the object of nativist politics often aimed at the immigrants themselves. In Los Angeles this has resulted in an "English-only" approach to instruction that leaves many students behind and does not capitalize on the social and economic benefits of true bilingualism. In Oslo, bilingualism has ebbed and flowed with the tides of changes in political parties.

Instability itself, regardless of the underlying political ideology, is a detriment to the achievement. In the U.S. as well as in Scandinavia, jurisdictions that demonstrate long-term stability in instructional approaches demonstrate higher achievement.

Because both Oslo and Los Angeles have been negatively impacted by instability brought on by changes in governments and ideologically driven policies, a comparative study that matches stable and unstable environments would provide useful information. In the case of Norway, this might be accomplished by comparing practices and policies in that country with Finland, which has a much more stable educational regime. In the case of California, this might be accomplished by comparing practices and policies with another state, such as Massachusetts, known for long running educational reform policies.

There is also interest in the ways the schools diverge.

First, Norway as a country has a coherent immigration policy, and thus there are no students who are "illegal" or undocumented in school. This means that the life prospects of immigrant students in Norway are not clouded by immigration status as they are in the United States. There is substantial hope that the deadlock in about immigration policy will be broken following the 2012 presidential election, but as this is written there is more substantial hope than substantial substance.

Because Norway provides an example where there are no (or at least very few) immigrant children whose legal status in the country is uncertain, a comparison between schools—a pair of elementary schools, for example—would help Californians better understand the issues present when children are schooled under a legal cloud and where both parents and children live in fear of interaction with public authorities, including the schools.

Second, language learning faces largely different organizational and pedagogical issues. In Los Angeles, Spanish speakers make up the vast majority of English Language Learners, and second language issues are largely thought in that context. (This said, there are tens of thousands of students in the district whose native language is other than Spanish.) In Norway, many schools exhibit what is called super-language-diversity in which the school as

a whole is filled with new Norwegian language learners, but that there is no dominant mother tongue. The way one needs to organize a school when virtually the whole school is organized around the transition from Spanish to English is quite different from the way school is organized when there are seven or eight sizable language groups.

Because both systems have examples of super-language-diversity, a deeper examination of the practices, again through comparing individual schools in depth, would be interesting.



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