**STV4447 – Education policies in theory and practice - Policymaking in Norway and around the world**

## Course content

Education policies are very important for modern societies, because institutions such as kindergartens, schools or universities are supposed to educate people to help them become good citizens, prepare them for the labour market, or find answers to societal challenges like climate change. However, education policies show a large variance in many countries and the political dynamics that shape them play out differently depending on national or regional contexts. This opens interesting questions like:

* Why do pupils in Norway go through a unified secondary school system, while in Germany they are separated after the fourth grade based on their grades?
* Why do you have to pay high tuition fees in the U.S., while in Norway universities are mostly tuition-free?
* Why do countries like Norway or Denmark provide extensive student support and others do not?
* What is the impact of these policy differences for educational trajectories or societal inequality in countries around the world?

These are just some of the questions that will be discussed during this course. The lectures and the literature will not only introduce students to the differences between education systems around the world, but also analyze and discuss factors that can explain their variation. This includes aspects such as path-dependence of national education systems, party politics, Europeanization, or reforms that are promoted by international organizations like the World Bank or the OECD.

The course provides theoretical insights from the academic literature on education policies in Norway and around the world with concrete case studies from “real” education policymaking. In cooperation with the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (Kunnskapsdepartementet), students will be given policy problems which they will have to address by writing a policy brief outlining their solutions to a given problem. The policy briefs are then presented at a meeting at the ministry. This meeting will also be attended by ministerial bureaucrats who will give the students feedback and share insights into their day-to-day work.

## Learning outcome

#### **Knowledge**

Having completed this course, students:

* Have detailed knowledge of different education systems, relevant actors, and international processes in the policy field as well as the state of the art of research
* Have in-depth knowledge on the most important conceptual approaches used to study education policies, including party politics, neo-institutional approaches, or policy diffusion
* Are familiar with recent international reform processes, such as the Europeanization of higher education or the role of the PISA studies for the policy field; in addition, they are able to assess their consequences for national reforms
* Understand the interaction of education policies among one another and with other policy fields
* Have knowledge about the daily work at the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (Kunnskapsdepartementet)

#### **Skills**

Having completed this course, students can:

* conduct independent empirical studies on education policies
* contribute to policy debates in the area of education through their knowledge of the policy field as well as international reform trends
* assess strengths and weaknesses of specific reforms as well as their consequences
* present research results to both academic and practitioner audiences and write academic as well as policy texts

#### **Competence**

Having completed this course, students can:

* analyse policies and policy-making processes and reflect critically about central arguments for specific policies or reforms
* recognize and critically assess the relations between different actors in the policy field
* use academic research to inform actors in the policy field about strengths and weaknesses of specific reforms

## Teaching

Ten lectures

**Obligatory activities:**

* Present an outline of the term paper and provide comments to the other students’ outlines.

Policy brief

* Students prepare a policy brief.
* The policy brief is presented and discussed in the last lecture of the course.
* The policy brief must have a limit of 1000-1500 words.
* The policy brief and its presentation will be assessed together using a pass / fail scheme.
* Students have to pass the policy brief to be able to pass the term paper, and both have to be delivered in the same semester.

## Examination

The term paper:

* must be between 3500-5000 words
* must have a topic that reflects the course readings and curriculum but selected by the student
* the topic must be cleared with the course’s main lecturer
* is prepared by writing an outline of the paper of 1000-1500 words which is presented in the seminars
* must meet the formal requirements for submission of written assignments