

### ***Early School Leavers in Norway, Denmark and the UK.***

A wide range of metrics may be used to compare the performance of the education systems across the three countries. These could include: achievement, attendance, equity for minority or special needs groups, prevalence and severity of exclusions, prevalence and severity of bullying, prevalence and severity of low wellbeing. This project is focussed primarily on young people who leave education at an earlier stage than expected. These students are collectively referred to as ESL but this does not imply any homogeneity of characteristics or experience. Data on these ESL are only collected in each nation from secondary education onwards, but that is not to say that younger children are not ESL, only that there is no data to evidence the phenomena. Some differences between the education systems in the three countries are presented below to start to build a comparative contextual picture.

In Norway compulsory schooling starts at age six with primary school and continues to lower secondary school (starting at age 13) and ends at age 15/16. Upper secondary school is not compulsory in Norway, but young people are entitled to schooling from age 16 to 21. However, they must compete for a place in the study programme of their choice, based on their academic achievements from lower secondary school. The total number of available study programmes is 15: three in a general programme leading to higher education and 12 in the vocational study programme. The latter is known as the '2+2 model', comprising two years in school and two years of apprenticeship (Bunting and Moshuus, 2017b). Students can also go from the apprenticeship system to complete a general academic course, extending their schooling to a third year and enabling them to access higher education upon completion (Markussen, Frøseth, & Sandberg, 2011). According to national statistics, 73% of young people in Norway complete upper secondary school; this includes 86% of those from the general programmes but only 59% of those from the vocational strand (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2016). This implies that there is a 27% drop out rate with ESL's mostly coming from vocational routes.

Compulsory schooling in Denmark starts at age six when children enter grade 0 in the Danish Folkeskole. The compulsory education comes to an end when children reach the age of 15-16 years and leave primary school after 9th grade (The Danish Ministry of Education, 2017). Upper secondary education is then available for students, followed by Higher Education. Six percent of all children in Denmark leave primary school without completing their final examinations (Wittrup, 2017) and 20.9% have not completed any upper secondary education seven years after they leave the Folkeskole (Arbejderbevægelsens Erhvervsråd, 2017). The European Union (2016) cites a 7.8% ESL rate in Danish education. Between a 9% and 50% drop out from vocational education has been reported in Denmark (European Union, 2015; and Eriksson and Vetvik, 2012). The dropout rate in higher education within the first year of studying is approximately 16%, but about half of the students who drop out are attending another education the following year (Styrelsen for Forskning og Uddannelse, 2018).

In the United Kingdom children are in compulsory education from 5 to 18 years of age. Primary school spans from 5 to 11 years of age, followed by secondary education from 11-18. The last two years of this may be vocational rather than academic in nature. Further or higher education is then available to students on a non-compulsory basis. Data is not collected on the number of students missing from school in primary school in the UK and the term ESL is rarely used or measured. Instead data is collected on young people described as NEET aged 15 - 18 year olds. 11.2% of this age group are classed as NEET (The House of Commons, 2018). The European Union (2016) statistics on Early School Leavers indicate the UK has a 13% ESL rate. Students also leave Higher Education at a rate of 6.2% overall, or 11.8% for mature students (Universities UK, 2018).

A summary of the drop out from school is shown in table one below, although the differences in age of various stages of schooling make it difficult to compare like for like.

Norway		Denmark		United Kingdom	
<b>Primary school 5-12 Compulsory</b>	Not known	<b>Folkeskole 6-16 Compulsory</b>	6% ESL	<b>Primary 5-11 Compulsory</b>	Not known
<b>Lower secondary school 12-15/16 Compulsory</b>	Not known	<b>Not applicable</b>	-	<b>Not applicable</b>	-
<b>Upper secondary school 16-21 Voluntary</b>	23% ESL (14% from general programmes and 27% from vocational programmes )	<b>Upper secondary 16-21 Voluntary</b>	20.9% ESL	<b>Secondary 11-16 Compulsory</b>	11.2% ESL
		<b>Higher Education / vocational education 16-21 voluntary</b>	9%-50% ESL from vocational 16% ESL from HE	<b>Vocational / Further Education 16-18 Compulsory</b>	11.2% ESL

				<b>Higher Education 18 and above, selective and fee paying</b>	6.2% all students ESL 11.8% mature students ESL
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*Table 1: A summary of young people not in education in the UK, Norway and Denmark (Bunting & Moshuus, 2017).*

Despite the variations of years of schooling, structure of schooling, and ethos of education, there are young people missing school in all three countries.

Given the causality between attendance and attainment (OECD, 2014) this may have a significant impact on the future prospects of these young people. This is an unacceptable inequality that the research project proposes to expose and address.

## References

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