



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Strategi for Lower secondary Education in Norway

Motivation and Mastery for better Learning

Joint effort to improve classroom management, numeracy, reading and writing



Preface

This is the first time in 40 years that a Norwegian government has presented a White Paper on the lower secondary school¹. The Storting (Norwegian Parliament) endorsed the White Paper in January 2012. With the measures described in the White Paper, we aim to create a lower secondary school which bolsters student motivation and mastery and provides better learning through more practical and varied teaching. We started introducing elective subjects in the autumn 2012, but this is not enough. All subjects should be approached in a practical and varied manner.

We have a good basis for reaching our goals. Through a modern school for everyone, we want to safeguard and strengthen key values in Norwegian society, such as small social differences, an inclusive community, a well-functioning democracy and a high degree of gender equality. The school has a central role in preparing the pupils for a future that is yet unknown, but which is certain to place great demands on professional, social and cultural skills. As the national education authority, we must therefore acknowledge and support the important job that teachers, school administrators and owners do every day.

This strategy document describes the Government's goals, the main elements in the priority campaigns and the roles and responsibilities of the different players. Organisations participating in the Gnist partnership² have provided important input for this document. The Gnist partnership, nationally and regionally, is hereby invited to participate in the further formulation and implementation of the measures in the strategy.

Change cannot take place through governance from the national level alone. Whether we will succeed in the development of the lower secondary school depends on good cooperation, trust and communication - across and between the levels and players in the education sector.

Over the next five years, our goal is for the measures to reach every municipality and school with lower secondary level. The strategy must take effect right into the classrooms. The first municipalities will start working with the strategy as early as in the autumn 2012. At the same time, municipalities and schools with lower secondary level will gain access to educational online resources. These can inspire and support the schools to provide sound, practical and varied education in the subjects. From the 2013/2014 school year, school-based professional training will be offered throughout Norway.

¹ Compulsory education in Norway is divided into two main stages: Primary school (grades 1-7) and lower secondary school (grades 8-10). Pupils enter lower secondary at the age of 12 or 13.

² Partnership for a coherent and comprehensive effort for teachers

This strategy aims to help and support teachers, school administrators and owners to achieve optimal learning and motivation for the pupils.

Information concerning the measures in the strategy and what they entail for the individual municipality, school and teacher will be continuously updated at Udir.no/ungdomstrinnet.

Oslo, 15 May 2012



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Introduction

The Storting discussed White Paper 22 (2010 – 2011) *Motivation – Mastery – Opportunities* in January 2012, cf. Recommendation to the Storting 145 S. The White Paper signalled further development of a diverse and inclusive school for everyone. The key message is that a more practical, varied, relevant and challenging lower secondary school will raise student motivation and learning. The Government is taking three main steps to promote this:

- introduction of elective subjects
- increased flexibility through changes in allocation³ of lessons and subjects
- the measures within the framework of this strategy

Statistics and research show that pupils' motivation for learning is at its lowest in lower secondary school. Many pupils find school dull and monotonous,⁴ resulting in some pupils falling behind in the learning process and some of them never completing upper secondary school.

To find out why motivation is so low, the Ministry of Education and Research has been engaged in dialogue with a large number of pupils, teachers and parents in lower secondary school. They have voiced their opinions on how the lower secondary school should be renewed. There has been close cooperation with the various organisations engaged in making the lower secondary school better. The conversations with and feedback from pupils, teachers, parents and others communicated a clear and strong desire to see more practical and varied working methods in the lower secondary school. At the same time, it is important that the education is perceived to be both relevant and challenging. This can be an important contribution to raising pupils' motivation and commitment.

Classroom management, numeracy, reading and writing are priority commitment areas to vary the working methods in the lower secondary school. The key measures are:

- school-based professional training in classroom management, numeracy, reading and writing for teachers and school administrators
- development of descriptions of good classroom management and good teaching in numeracy, writing and reading
- assistance in and facilitation of local development work
- network for exchanging experience and establishing a professional community

National education authorities have received a challenge from international experts in the OECD and from national researchers: We must communicate priority measures in education policy more clearly to all levels in the education system, and explain better how the schools can reach the goals. The expectations to the different partners and which tasks shall be handled by which stakeholders must also be clear to everyone.

³ The Ministry will send a proposal out for consultation in regard to changing the allocation of lessons and subjects to allow more local flexibility in the classroom schedule.

⁴ Topland, B. og E.M. Skaalvik (2010): *Meninger fra klasserommet. Analyse av Elevundersøkelsen 2010*. Kristiansand, Oxford Research

In order to succeed we must have trust and good communication across and between the management levels and the stakeholders in the school sector.

This strategy shall contribute to...

...**higher pupil** motivation and learning outcome in the lower secondary school – enhancing the desire to learn in general, and raising skill levels in numeracy, reading and writing in particular

... **teachers** making teaching more practical and varied – through better class management and developing a culture for sharing, reflection and cooperation at all schools with lower secondary school classes

...**school administrators** giving priority to educational leadership and contributing to developing the school as a learning organisation

...**school owners** giving priority to the selected areas in their planning and development work, and actively supporting the schools' work of raising the quality of education

...**regional/local networks** coordinating and facilitating the priority efforts and contributing to exchanging experience and dialogue

...**the university and university college sector (HE)** contributing to school-based skills development and to developing the knowledge basis and the pupils' ability to provide practical and varied teaching

...**national authorities** preparing support and guidance material, facilitating school-based skills development and more cooperation

The strategy applies for the five years from the start of the 2012/2013 school year to 2016/2017. The measures in the campaigns will be developed and subject to pilot tests in the period leading up to the 2013/2014 school year. The strategy measures will be fully in force as of the 2013/2014 school year. The objective is to reach all schools with lower secondary level during the strategy period.

Objectives and indicators

Objectives

The purpose of primary and secondary education in Norway, as defined in Section 1-1 of the Education Act, emphasises that the education shall provide all children and young people with the knowledge, attitudes and values that enable them to master their own lives and participate in society and in working life. To follow up the lower secondary school, the Government has emphasised the following paramount goals for primary and secondary education:

- Everyone shall be included and experience mastery.
- Everyone shall master basic skills.
- Everyone shall complete upper secondary school.

By making education in the lower secondary school more practical and varied and strengthening the teaching of numeracy, reading and writing, pupils will achieve more experiences of mastery, higher motivation and, in general, learn more. Strengthening classroom management and the focus on numeracy, reading and writing will benefit all pupils, also those who do well in school. The efforts must involve all subjects.

Motivation and mastery for better learning through more practical and varied education

Teachers who are proficient in and use multiple teaching methods, and who are open to cooperation and involving the pupils, have pupils who achieve better results.⁵ The teacher's ability to choose methods in accordance with the class room situation, to make the content relevant for the pupils and to adapt the complexity to the pupil group and the individual pupil has great impact on whether the pupils learn what they should and experience mastery. The teacher has a duty to lead the learning and development activities according to the mandate given in the Education Act with regulations. Some methods may be better than others in certain situations and with some pupils, but how pupils learn varies, as must the choice of method. Teachers must apply and trust their professional judgment in this work. Teachers and school administrators are responsible for keeping professionally up to date and staying informed of research developments. This knowledge, combined with own practical experience and knowledge of the pupils, must form the basis for the teachers' and individual schools' choice of education methods.

Use of more varied methods, practical assignments and other teaching arenas place considerable demands on the teachers' ability to lead the class through the different learning activities and to establish good relationships with the pupils. Good classroom management is therefore particularly important in order to make the learning experience more practical and varied.

⁵ Nordenbo, Sven Erik, Michael Søgaard Larsen, Neriman Tiftikçi, Rikke Eline Wendt and Susan Østergaard (2008): *Lærerkompetanser og elevers læring i førskole og skole*, Et systematisk review utført for Kunnskapsdepartementet, Oslo, Teknisk Rapport, Dansk Clearinghouse for Uddannelsesforskning, København.

Pupils need to be motivated to make the effort required in lower secondary school and to complete an education. Varied working methods are important for motivation and will in many cases also involve practical working methods. The pupils' participation and a positive attitude to learning are important for the pupils' motivation. Schools and parents both have a significant impact on the pupils' attitudes. Pupils want challenges and they also want to see the relevance of what they learn in their own lives. In order for pupils to understand why they must make an effort in their school work, they must perceive the education as relevant and meaningful.

Reading and writing skills are important for the pupils' learning in all subjects, and to cope with working life and life in general, as well as for developing their own identity and cultural knowledge. The objective is for pupils who graduate from lower secondary school to be able to read quickly and efficiently and to understand different types of texts, in all subjects and on both paper and screens. Pupils must be able to use writing as a tool to develop their own thinking and learning, and be able to formulate texts that are adapted to the content and purpose of the writing. Numeracy skills are necessary to succeed in later education, in working life and to master their own lives and personal economy. The goal for pupils who graduate from lower secondary school is to be able to solve complex mathematical problems based on all subjects.⁶ Both numeracy skills and reading and writing skills are necessary to understand current development in society and to play an active part in society. This is why numeracy, reading and writing have been emphasised as priority commitment areas in the strategy.

Development of indicators

The formulation of clear objectives that can be followed up is a key precondition for successful implementation. Everyone who works on the implementation of the measures has a need for information about the degree to which the objectives have been reached in their own area of responsibility. The indicators will form the basis for following up the degree to which the objectives have been reached at all institutional levels that work with the strategy: schools and municipalities, regional and national level.

The indicators for the strategy will be discussed with the Gnist partners. In accordance with White Paper 19 (2009-2010) *Tid til læring (Time for Learning)*, cf. Recommendation to the Storting 219 S (2010-2011), it is assumed that the indicators will be based on available statistics and that the burden of reporting on teachers and school administrators will not increase. The indicators will provide information on the pupils' motivation and learning outcome.⁷ In addition, new indicators must be developed to provide some indication whether the schools have been successful in making the education both practical and varied. There will also be a need for information on the implementation of the various measures in the strategy, to adjust the content and design as the process proceeds.

⁶ For a more detailed description of basic reading, arithmetic and writing skills, see *Rammeverk for grunnleggende ferdigheter, (Basic skills framework)*, stipulated by the Ministry of Education and Research on 11 January 2012

⁷ There is currently no suitable basis for writing indicators

The indicators must provide information on...

- whether pupils' motivation increases
- whether the number of pupils with low basic skills in reading and numeracy decreases
- whether the number of pupils with high basic skills in reading and numeracy increases
- whether boys' reading skills improve
- whether education becomes more practical and varied, challenging and relevant
- implementation of the measures in the strategy

Municipalities and county municipalities prepare an annual situation report for discussion in the municipal councils and county councils. The report on the state of education must cover learning results, drop-out issues and learning environment.⁸ The situation report can be used by the municipalities in following up the objectives of the strategy.

⁸ Section 13-10, second subsection, third and fourth sentence of the Education Act. There is a similar rule in Section 5-2, third subsection of the Private Schools Act relating to private schools.

National support measures

Introduction

The national measures are meant to be a supplement and support for the work performed in the schools and the municipalities. The measures must support and stimulate the use of varied and practical working methods, which should also be challenging and of relevance for the pupils. The measures have a long-term perspective and allow room for local adaptations and local initiative. National measures do not replace local development work, but aim to contribute to knowledge, skills and guidance where needed. This means that the measures must be flexible in order to be adapted to the priorities of the schools and school owners.

The measures are developed in cooperation with researchers in classroom management, Norwegian Centre for Mathematics Education,

The Reading Centre, the Writing Centre, NAFO⁹, universities and university colleges. The Directorate for Education and Training has established resource groups for the different priority areas to assist the national centres and researchers in the development of the measures. The resource groups will contribute to important experiences from the practical implementation. The Gnist partners have proposed participants for these resource groups.

Below is an overall description of the national support measures under the strategy.

Support for school owners

The school owners are responsible for the quality of the training and for assessing and following up compliance with the requirements in the Education Act and the associated regulations.¹⁰ The school owner's own initiative is important to ensure that the commitment areas have an effect in the classroom. The measures in the strategy will contribute to support the school owners in their local development work.

Everyone can benefit from an external perspective on their own activities. The work on the strategy aims for teachers, school administrators and representatives of school owners to network, both in and between schools and municipalities. This can take place through existing networks or by establishing new networks. Regional Gnist partnerships can contribute to support school owners, directly or through networks, and will be an arena for coordination and development of the measures in the individual county/region.

Support for teachers and school administrators

The most comprehensive measure to support teachers and school administrators is the offer of school-based skills and competence development in classroom management, numeracy, reading and writing. The development of skills will also provide room for working on assessment for learning. The skills and competence development must:

- be school-based
- be directed towards the education of all pupils at lower secondary level
- be offered to all schools with lower secondary school level

⁹ National centre for multi-cultural education

¹⁰ Cf. Section 13-10, second subsection of the Education Act, and Section 2-1 of the Regulations to the Education Act.

- consist of varied subject programmes with different content and duration adapted to local needs
- include online resources available to all schools with lower secondary school level

The measures must be based on experience and research on good practice. The national centres and the research group for classroom management will prepare specific descriptions of good classroom management and good teaching of numeracy, reading and writing, and provide examples of how to make teaching more practical and varied. The resource groups, where the partners are represented, will participate in this work. The descriptions and support material included in the school-based development of skills will serve as inspiration and practical support in the work to improve the lower secondary school.

Schools with a well-functioning professional community seem to be more able to achieve good education for the pupils than schools where teachers work more individually.¹¹ It is important that school owners and school administrators facilitate room for teachers to reflect, assess and discuss with colleagues, pupils and others on how the training can become more practical and varied, while remaining relevant and challenging for the pupils. The development of skills will therefore include all personnel in the schools. School-based skills and competence development includes teachers working together and with external staff, observing each other in practice, cooperating to test new practices and considering whether this results in desired changes.

In order to implement skills and competence development in their own school, school administrators must have the expertise to lead and implement development and change processes. School administrators will participate in the school-based development of skills and competence. They will also be offered training in educational and in organisational development work.

It is a prerequisite that the school owners will play an active role in the strategy work, and that they both support and hold school administrators accountable for their management of the school's quality development work and the teachers' educational practices.

Relationship to other priority measures

The Ny Giv (*New Possibilities*) effort (2010-2013) is directed at reducing the number of drop-outs from upper secondary school. Ny Giv (*New Possibilities*) correlates well with the objectives of this strategy. Elements from the *Transition Project* in Ny Giv (*New Possibilities*) will be continued in the school-based skills and competence development within this strategy, but will target all age groups and all pupils at the lower secondary level. The expertise development in the transition project will continue as planned up to and including 2013.

The campaigns "Bedre læringsmiljø" (*Better Learning Environment*) (2009-2014) and "Vurdering for læring" (*Assessment for Learning*) (2010-2014) will be implemented as planned. Elements from the campaigns will be integrated in the school-based skills

¹¹ Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M. and Thomas, S. (2006): "Professional learning communities: a review of the literature" *Journal of Educational Change*, 7 (4): 221-258'

development in the lower secondary school. The skills and competence development in this strategy will be coordinated with the strategy *Competence for Quality – Strategy of Continuing Education and Training*¹² (2012–2015).

The work on classroom management, numeracy, reading and writing will be organised to enable schools to build on earlier efforts. Most schools with lower secondary school classes have in recent years been involved in various national campaigns to raise the quality of the pupils' learning environment and numeracy, reading and writing skills.

Many schools work actively to enhance quality and analyse the challenges they are facing, for example through use of "Ståstedsanalysen" (*the Situation Analysis*) and "Organisasjons-analysen" (*the Organisation Analysis*). Some schools have received support from the national "Veilederkorpset" (Guidance Corps) in their development processes, or have participated in the school development programme (*the Knowledge Promotion Reform from words to action*) (2005-2009)¹³, or the four-year campaign "Vurdering for læring" (*Assessment for Learning*) or have participated in "SKUP - skole and kommuneutviklingsprosjektet" (*the School and Municipality Development Project*). The experiences from these change processes will be useful in the further strategy work.

The measures will be based on relevant resources and methodology from *Ny Giv (New Possibilities)* and The guidance corps¹⁴. The guidance corps can, in cooperation with local support resources, assist in identifying development needs and available resources, and support the local development work.

¹² Kompetanse for kvalitet – strategi for etter- og videreutdanning

¹³ "Kunnskapsløftet fra ord til handling"

¹⁴ The guidance corps gives support to school owners and schools to in their work on quality improvement

The roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders

In order to achieve the goals, classroom practices must improve. There are many stakeholders that are responsible and must contribute in different ways to achieving a common objective of enhanced motivation and learning outcome for the pupils. One important precondition for success is clarity as regards roles and responsibilities, as well as a good dialogue between players at different levels in the sector. Expectations for and responsibilities of key players are described below.

Pupils

The pupils are a resource enhancing quality in the lower secondary school. As they grow older, pupils are gradually expected to take more responsibility for their own learning.

The pupils are expected to:

- use the opportunity to participate in the governance of the school and communicate their expectations for the school
- contribute to achieving the objectives through committed work and participation
- contribute to the learning community

Elevorganisasjonen (*School Student Union of Norway*) **will**

- contribute in the design of materials targeting pupils
- communicate the strategy in their own organisation

Parents

The parents' positive attitude to education and learning and good cooperation between the school and the home is a benefit to the learning environment, the pupils' motivation and the learning results.

The parents are expected to:

- set requirements, encourage and motivate their children to continued efforts in the lower secondary school
- actively participate in the cooperation between the school and the home

FUG (*National Parents Committee for Primary and Secondary Education*) **will**

- contribute in the design of information material targeting parents
- communicate the strategy in their own organisation

Teachers

The teacher is responsible for the pupils' educational and social development and for making the education practical, varied and adapted to the pupils' preconditions. They must design the education so that it is perceived as being relevant, and so that the pupils experience a sense of enhanced mastery and motivation.

Teachers are expected to:

- plan, organise, implement and evaluate the education on the basis of professional judgment, experience and research from good practices
- participate actively in the school-based skills and competence development
- cooperate with colleagues and share experiences to raise their own and their colleagues' skills
- facilitate pupil participation
- cooperate with parents to raise pupil motivation and learning outcome

School administrators

The school's management is responsible for learning results, learning environment and education practice in the school. School administrators are also responsible for developing a collectively oriented culture at the school, by facilitating a stronger professional community through cooperation, reflection and sharing of experience.

School administrators are expected to:

- develop the school as a learning organisation
- initiate and supervise educational development work in their own school, including school-based skills and competence development
- establish good arenas for sharing of expertise and experience in the individual school and between schools
- facilitate utilisation of available support and guidance material
- participate in local networks for school administrators to share experiences and raise their own expertise

The employees' organisations will

- contribute to the development of sound classroom and education practices
- communicate the strategy in their own organisations
- contribute to disseminating support and guidance materials as well as support participation in the measures to develop the skills of their own members
- contribute to identifying and promoting various management tools for follow-up of teachers
- participate in regional Gnist

Students' organisations will

- participate in the process to formulate definitions and find good examples
- emphasize the development of guidance expertise in the education programmes, in order to make this relevant for the teacher profession
- contribute by being a driving force for good teacher training, in order to develop more practical and varied teaching

School owners

Active school owners constitute an important precondition for the development work in schools, and to ensure that the development supports local needs and national objectives. Municipalities are responsible for fulfilling the pupils' right to primary and secondary education, cf. Section 13-1 of the Education Act, and will play a key role in the strategy work.

It is expected that school owners:

- support the schools' work to achieve more practical and varied education at the lower secondary level
- analyse the schools' needs and facilitate the school-based skills and competence development
- cooperate with, follow up and facilitate school administrators and teachers having time to follow up the strategy work
- facilitate and participate in networks for expertise sharing for both teachers and school administrators
- participate actively in local and regional cooperation for the strategy

The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) will

- be a constructive dialogue partner in the implementation of the strategy, as a member of the Gnist partnership and within the framework of the quality agreement between the Ministry of Education and Research (*KD*) and KS
- use its networks and cooperation structures to promote the strategy to decision-makers and administrators in the municipal sector
- inform and motivate the municipalities to participate in the expertise development within the framework of the strategy
- participate in the cooperation on the strategy, locally and regionally

University and university college (HE) sector

The primary role of the teacher training in the strategy is as provider of school-based professional training in the priority areas. The HE sector also has a role to play in developing knowledge in subjects and subject didactics, documenting good practices and cooperating with the national centres. The teacher training must facilitate the teacher training students to bring perspectives from the HE sector into their practice in the schools.

The HE institutions are expected to:

- develop and offer school-based skills and competence development within the framework of the strategy
- contribute to developing and communicating knowledge concerning sound practices in classroom management, numeracy, reading and writing
- facilitate that pupils are being challenged to develop more practical and varied teaching
- participate in school development projects
- participate in regional Gnist

Nasjonalt råd for lærerutdanning (*National Committee for Teacher Training*)
(*NRLU*) will

- work on objectives and indicators for the HE sector within the framework of the strategy
- contribute to research-based knowledge forming the basis for the development of skills and competence for teachers and school administrators within the framework of the strategy
- contribute to ensure high quality in the HE sector's programmes within school-based development of skills and competence

Regional Gnist

Regional cooperation on implementation of the campaigns aimed at the lower secondary school should be based on already established networks and structures. Regional Gnist partnerships have been established in all counties, and have been encouraged to put the present strategy on the agenda. New positions for regional Gnist are established in accordance with the partnership model.

Regional Gnist is expected to:

- contribute to good regional coordination of the measures
- contribute to positive dialogue regarding the measures between the national and local levels
- cooperate in announcing and hiring people for the positions
- contribute to facilitating exchange of experience and use of networks

National authorities

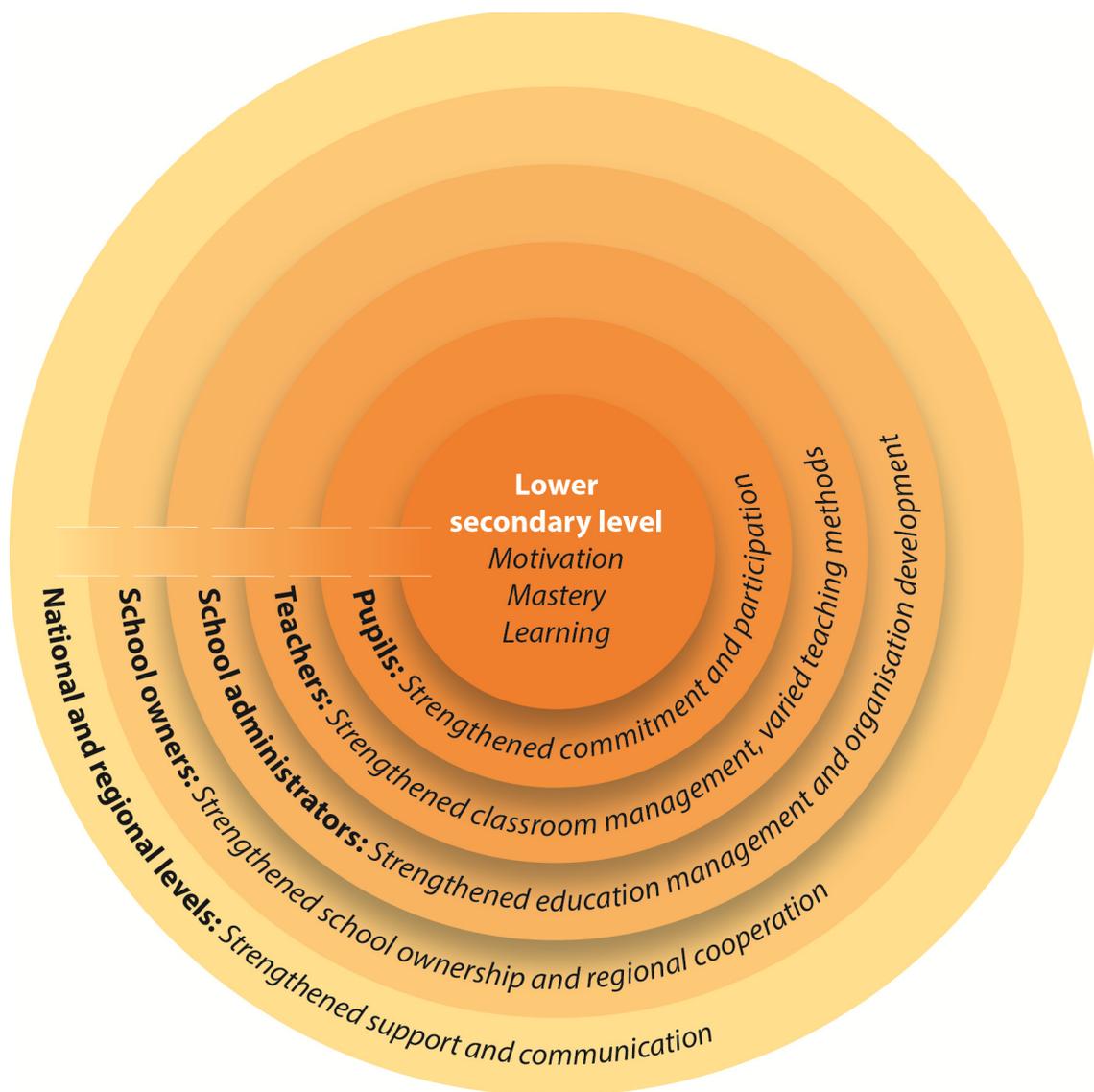
The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for developing the strategy in cooperation with the partners and for promoting the strategy to all of the involved players. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training and the National Centres will play a key role in designing and implementing the support measures in cooperation with the HE sector. The County Governor participates in the facilitation of the regional strategy work through regional Gnist. This work must also be coordinated with the County Governor's contact with the municipalities in general.

The national authorities are expected to:

- ensure dialogue and information, involve the partners and thoroughly embed the process in the sector e.g. through Gnist
- maintain commitment to priority areas over time
- ensure that policy instruments are based on reliable knowledge of what the schools need
- ensure good correlation and consistency in measures directed to schools with lower secondary level

The national education authorities will

- contribute with resources for support and guidance and skills and competence development within the framework of the strategy, based on annual state budgets
- contribute to regional cooperation and coordination between the partners involved in the strategy
- ensure development of descriptions of good skills and practices in a cooperation between researchers, front-line personnel and representatives of the Gnist partners
- establish and further develop skills and competence development measures for teachers, school administrators and school owners to facilitate better quality in the education in reading, writing and numeracy, and to improve class management
- further develop teacher education and the HE institutions' roles as competence arenas for development in schools



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