

School development in the county of Sogn og Fjordane



How we worked between 1995 and 2009

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Director in the county from 1992 to 2009

Facts about Norway

- 5 mill inhabitants
- 19 counties
- 428 municipalities

The county of Sogn og
Fjordane at the western
Coast 100 kms north of
Bergen



Facts about Sogn og Fjordane

- 109 000 inhabitants – most of them quite healthy and hard working
- 26 municipalities (from 800 to 13 000 inhabitants)
- Much nature - mountains, glaciers and fjords, **some** green spots – a lot of tourists
- A lot of export – fish, electricity, aluminium, ...
- Sogn og Fjordane University College – 3 800 students

**Fjord landscape on UNESCO World Heritage List 10 years ago.
Geiranger fjord in the county of Møre og Romsdal (picture) and
Nørøyfjorden in Sogn og Fjordane (first page)**



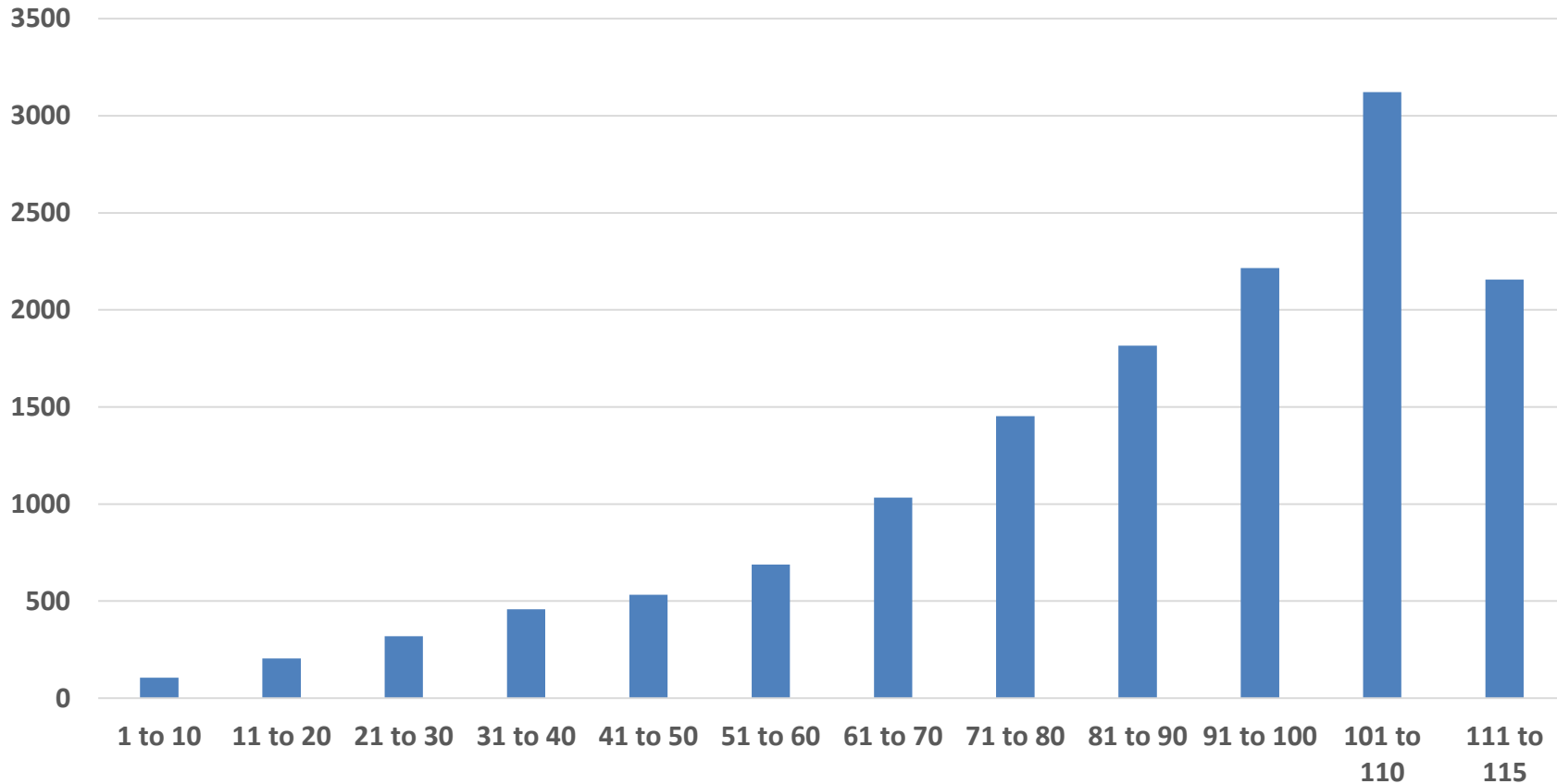
Important educational events since 1990

- New law (1992): The municipalities could choose how to administer the schools
- 1997 New curriculum. From 7 to 6 years old. The curriculum organized in topics and key elements. Etc
- 2004: National tests
- 2006: New curriculum. Change of paradigm. **From input:** What shall the pupils do, **To output:** What shall the pupils learn. Also Back to basics

School structure in Sogn og Fjordane 2014

- 115 primary and lower secondary schools (or combined)
- 14 100 pupils all together
- From 4 to 530 pupils in the schools. Average school size is 123. (Norway 212)
- The 23 biggest schools have more than 50% of the pupils
- The 23 smallest schools have 2,8%
- Most of the schools are small, but most of the pupils and teachers are in big schools

The 115 schools in Sogn og Fj 2014 arranged by size and collected in groups of 10. The total number of pupils in each group. The group of schools with the largest number of pupils consists of 5 schools



The presentation

Three chapters, all about development and implementation of 1997 and 2006 curriculum in schools at the primary and lower secondary level

- Ch. 1: Platform – the infrastructure for cooperation
- Ch. 2: Strategies and success factors
- Ch. 3: Co-acting and co-creating

Ch. 1 Platform – the infrastructure for cooperation

- Developing the meetings for municipal school chief officers
- Project leader
- The 26 municipalities grouped in 4 regions
- Coordination of annual cycles
- Establishing a partnership - FORUM

Ch 1 Developing the meetings for municipal school chief officers

There had been a more than one hundred year long tradition where the State Director of education “owned” the meetings

Because of the new municipality law in 1992 it was logical to change this to a cooperation about the program. The needs of School chief officers were taken into account to a greater extent

Ch 1 Project leader

Knut Roald was hired as project leader in 60% position.

He was an employee at the college, now senior lecturer, and has a background as teacher, headmaster, school responsible in a municipality, etc

Working with his Ph.D he has applied theories from The Learning organization field – very useful in this context

Ch 1 The 26 municipalities grouped in 4 regions

Three of the reasons for this was:

- Most of the municipalities are small and have between a half and two persons administrating the school system
- Almost all the big schools have to cross municipality border to find a similar school for cooperation, and
- It would be much more effectively if the regions arranged courses, projects etc for everyone, instead of many small municipalities doing this separately
- So the four regions were born and four Primus Inter Pares were elected

Ch 1 Coordination of annual cycles

The schools, the municipalities, the college and the Ministry of Education don't have the same annual wheel. And they make their decisions at different times. Good coordination of planning and moving money and people was important, but it's difficult.

An example: If you ask the college in February to allocate a special person in the staff to be responsible for a project, you are 1 month late and you will probably lose one year.

Ch 1 Partnership - FORUM for the development of schools and kindergartens

No written agreement. Members:

- The state director of education (Chairman in the start)
- The four regional municipalities
- The college
- Teacher unions
- Local authorities organization (KS) (Chairman from 2004)
- County council administration (organizing upper secondary level)

Knut Roald - Project manager secretary

Ch. 2 Strategies and success factors

- Strategies for school development
- Success factors for FORUM

Ch 2 Strategies for school development (1)

Forum became well aware about learning organizations theories.
Forum often used strategies like:

- Systemic and not linear approach
- Learning loops
- Top Down, Bottom Up but also very often - Middle Out – that is the importance of addressing the headmasters

FORUM could not always decide alone. In many cases the conclusions from meetings in the FORUM were discussed and approved, disapproved or adjusted in the meetings among the 26 school chief officers.

Also the Board of the College had to approve some times.

Ch 2 Strategies for school development (2)

- Once FORUM decided to set the goal that all schools should have entrepreneurship activity. That is in the broad meaning of the word used in schools.
- For several years we were able to collect quite a lot of money. Money was given to municipalities which came up with an entrepreneurship plan - an application was not required
- Also the schools were asked to make entrepreneurship plans – almost 100% did so
- The college was asked to offer courses for teachers how to teach entrepreneurship
- We arranged entrepreneurship conferences, established a home-page, the regions and some of the municipalities had arrangements etc

Ch 2 Success factors for FORUM (1)

General characteristic of some meetings

- Little preparation beyond reading the received documents
- The participants are mostly concerned about their own organization and problems
- The participants are quite eager to avoid the responsibility for following up
- A place to give and receive information and to discuss. Few conclusions about **what to do**

Ch 2 Success factors for FORUM (2)

Characteristics of FORUM

- In the documents – only what should be discussed, no proposed conclusions
- Everyone was expected to consider the issues before the meeting
- Avoid limited mandate
- The principle of consensus
- Mutual trust, creativity, honesty, eagerness to conclude and willingness to act
- New insight was born when we added the contributions

If the conclusions are made up with this design the participants will feel a stronger ownership and they will usually be able to find time following up

Ch. 3 Co-acting and Co-creating

- Resource persons 1997 Curriculum
- Annual conference for head masters and other school leaders
- Continuing education
- Competence Catalogue I
- Competence Catalogue II
- Other initiatives

Ch 3 Resource persons 1997

Curriculum

Each of the 26 municipalities appointed an experienced pedagogue

The project leader organized meetings several times each year for this group. To each meeting the participants should prepare a document on a certain issue and bring copies for everyone. This was effective for the discussion and for sharing ideas.

The participants tried the ideas out in their own municipality or school between the meetings

This construction was a basis for linking all municipalities to one overall development strategy.

I think this network was active for 3 or 4 years

Ch 3 Annual conference for head masters and other school leaders

For 12 years now there has been an annual 2 days meeting for school leaders, including upper secondary. “Everyone” try to come and that means about 200 persons. We have had a lot of skilled and famous capacities to give lectures. As you know - events like this also have a social side.

Ch 3 Continuing education

Up to 2001 the college offered continuing education courses in various subjects and topics mostly based on which persons in the staff were interested in this type of work.

Very often the offer didn't match the needs among the teachers and the schools very well and a lot of the courses could not start because of lack of interest.

From 2001 the four regions started to ask the schools what were their needs. With this information they made agreements with the college and with each other, like - region 1 will have math next year and region 2 will have science. The following year we do opposite.

Almost all of the continuing education takes place, not at campus, but around in the regions. The courses are part time and in many cases the students gather once a month or so. Between the gatherings they practice the new ideas in their own school.

In average about 300 teachers have signed up each year. Practically all announced courses start because the regions, municipalities and headmasters feel an obligation toward the college to fill up the classes.

Ch 3 Competence Catalogue I

Each year the partnership produced a competence catalogue in two parts. Part 1 gave an overview of courses, conferences, research going on, project money and so on – all of this on the county level.

In addition to events on the county level each of the four regions arrange courses and other types of activities that will increase the competence.

Two of the regions have a long history organizing professional networks.

In another region a lot of the schools stand up and announce in the catalogue: We think we have high quality in our English teaching/in our organizing special education/ etc. Other schools are welcome to visit us.

Ch 3 Competence Catalogue I and II

8 of 10 years on internet - 1998/99 to 2005/06

html.hisf.no/alu/fag/gr97

Ch 3 Competence Catalogue II (1)

- Plans for development of each school and kindergarten
- Plans for some of the subjects and plans for other school related themes/areas, like
 - Social competence
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Pupil participation
 - School – parent collaboration
 - Special education etc

Ch 3 Competence Catalogue II (2)

- Each plan shows goals, acts, participants, recourses, evaluation, responsibilities etc.
- The 2001/2002 catalogue had 464 pages
- The schools: Get ideas, be inspired, find collaborating schools. Development regularly on the agenda
- Useful for the municipality, the college, the regional state office etc
- Useful for FORUM

Ch 3 Other initiatives

Initiatives that were not ordered by the Ministry or others, but born in the partnership

- Special education
- Entrepreneurship
- Assessment
- School leadership for women, etc

Surprising Success



Pupils and municipalities in Sogn og Fjordane have good results

- Exam, national tests and drop out from upper secondary – the pupils have for many years performed among the three best counties
- KS «Municipality Barometer» 2014; ranking the municipalities from 1 to 428 in the education field – 14 indicators (pupils' achievements are some of them)
- Førde municipality number 2
- 6 of the upper 9 from S & F
- 21 of the 26 in upper 100

Surprising success

There has been a national curiosity how to explain the good results in Sogn og Fjordane. That is despite the facts that higher education is less common than average for Norway and despite the fact that the municipalities are small. (S& Fj: 4,4% have more than 4 years higher education. The average for Norway is 7,7%)

Research Council of Norway has allocated some millions N kr to a big comprehensive research project named “Learning regions”. Sogn og Fjordane is compared with three other counties. 12 research groups are working

There has been, and still is, a lot of development and improvement activities going on in the municipalities and in the schools – projects, continuing education, a culture of sharing ideas and knowledge etc. *Will the researchers conclude that this has played a role?*

Class 5, 6 and 7 in a home for children in Tanzania, 9 o'clock in the evening



Tanzania

I have the privilege to visit a primary school and a home for children situated at the foot of Kilimanjaro, once a year. Here we can see children in the three upper classes work together with teachers between 8 and 9 in the evening. Each class has one bulb. When the electricity falls out they start the generator.

Class 7 work until 10 o'clock before they go to bed. They are enthusiastic and motivated also at the end of the day. All of the children are awakened 5 o'clock in the morning.

These visits give inspiration for reflection and for making a Norwegian person impressed and touched but also angry and frustrated on their behalf. Many kinds of feelings and reactions will come to the surface.

Last year I established a blog to tell people that are interested about the work of Neema and Godbless Mamkwe. The blog (Norwegian language, but many pictures and some videos) address is:

<http://smallandbigintanzania.blogspot.no/>

Thank you

This presentation is based on a 22 pages memo (in Norwegian) from 2013, that gives more detailed information than the presentation. The memo is available for those who are interested and I can mail it.

Thank you for your attention!

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