

## **REFINE – ACTIVITIES OF THE NORWEGIAN SUB-PROJECT**

### **Basic aim of the project:**

*To examine the existing practices regarding exemptions into degree programs of higher education institutions based on Realkompetanse (≈ APEL), and to test one or more existing tools for documentation as a possible description of non-formal background.*

### **Background for and goals of the project:**

According to the Law on Universities and Colleges the institutions are obliged to accept non-formal/informal background (“Realkompetanse”) as a basis for admission and Realkompetanse should also provide grounds for exemptions into study programs. The law itself does not stipulate any limits to the volume of exemptions into a degree. However the law also opens for exceptions to the general regulations, based on the nature of the institution, the need for regulations of admission etc.

On a general level the concept “Realkompetanse” has been accepted (more or less) by the institutions as a basis for admission into study programs, on the grounds of documentation of a background comparable to the general admission criterion (Generell Studiekompetanse). However, this is generally valid for open programs with little or no competition with regard to admission, and there are huge differences between the institutions with regard to the way this principle is practised.

For programs with limited number of study places there are considerable problems regarding how to rank this kind of background against applicants with a background based on formal education. In addition very little has been done so far with regard to using Realkompetanse as a basis for exemption into a degree program.

At the moment there is no clear picture as to the extent of any such practices. But we do know that some higher education institutions have made attempts at exemptions. We would like to find out what has been done and any problems encountered.

A new survey made by NIFU - Norwegian Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education - , in print at the moment, has asked some of these questions and we hope to be able to base some of our work on the results of this project.

There is also an on-going project concerning the problems of accrediting refugees who lack documentation of their education. The case of the refugees is somewhat different, because this concerns people who actually do have the formal education, but are unable to document it. In addition there may be problems connected to the contents and level of the degrees claimed, due to differences in programs in various countries. But we believe that the way of thinking here will be beneficial to the creation of a system on a more general level.

Exemptions at the secondary school level is well established and even though there are many differences between secondary school and higher education we think this should give important lessons for the description of a system or at least a systematic approach to the question in the higher education sector as well.

In addition there are experiences from other countries that should also present possible solutions.

The aim of the project is to test out on a limited number of real persons, preferably using some of the standard tools that have been developed (EuroCV, EuroPass etc) the options for exemptions into concrete study programs of their choice. Initially we want to have 10 persons and 5 institutions. Each candidate will only be evaluated in one institution.

### **Expected outcomes:**

Overall view of the present situation with regard to admission and exemptions based on Realkompetanse

Comprehensive case studies of 10 candidates using standard tools for description of qualifications

Possible suggestions for further developments of the tools in question.

### **Crude action plan:**

1. Conduct a survey of existing practices with regard to exemptions in HEIs and in adjacent areas of education.
2. Interviewed candidates with regard to their goals and background and their profile described in terms of one or more tools.
3. Test exemption cases based on a number of real persons in various institutions.
4. Write report

As in Transfine UoB will be coordinating the work, while VOX (The National Institute for Adult Learning) who has much competence in the field will be asked to do most of the concrete work, as well as write the report.

### **Work plan:**

1. Meeting of involved parties (UoB, VOX, UFD, NOKUT, NIFU). Preliminary decision on tools. End of April.
2. Produce a report describing existing systems and practises through
  - a. Examining existing documentation and reports
  - b. Sending questionnaire to all HEIs
  - c. Follow up interviews of "interesting cases", i e institutions that have tried or indicate willingness to do so. May/June
3. Synthesis of existing practices, May/June
4. Meeting of reference group – ask for candidates. End of June
5. Picking candidates for the project. August/September
6. Proposing an evaluation structure. September
7. Making arrangements with institutions. September
8. Evaluating candidates in institutions. Follow-up interview with institution, if possible with candidate present. October
9. Summarising. November
10. Writing report. November

**Bergen 31.03.04**

**Frank Moe**