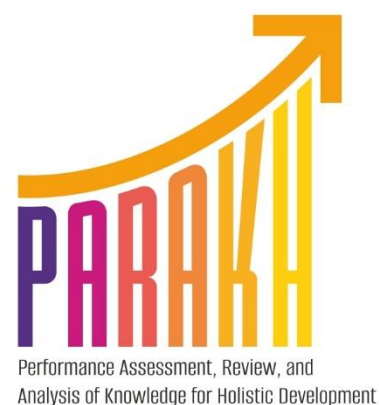
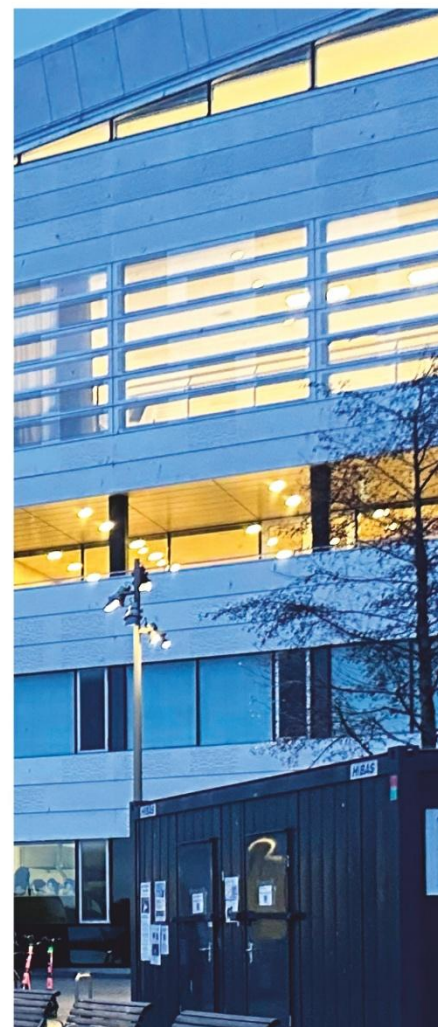




REPORT ON THE VISIT TO OSLO, NORWAY: THE SCHOOL EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

FROM 17th TO 21st NOVEMBER 2025

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1. Background

Reference is invited to the OM no. 6-4/2022-ICC dated 03rd November 2025 received from Department of Higher Education (DoHE), Government of India (Annexure I) seeking nomination of representative for the 7th Joint Working Group (JWG) to be held in Oslo, Norway from 17th till 21st November 2025. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the field of education between India and Norway was signed in 2014 and renewed in April 2022. Six rounds of JWG meetings have been completed so far, under the provisions of the said MoU. It was further conveyed that Competent Authority at DoHE has approved to hold the 7th meeting of the JWG during 17th – 21st November 2025 at Oslo, Norway. The delegation approved for the visit is as follows:

1. Joint Secretary (ICC), DoHE
2. Additional Secretary / Joint Secretary / Deputy Secretary, DoSEL (to be nominated by Secretary, DoSEL)
3. One representative each from UGC, CBSE, NEIPA, NCERT (to be nominated by the respective Heads of the Organizations)
4. Director/Deputy Secretary from the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)

In persuasion of the above, the undersigned was nominated as a representative from Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Govt. of India to join the delegation for attending the 7th round of the JWG meeting at Oslo, Norway from 17th till 21st November 2025 (Annexure II).



2. Executive Summary

This report synthesizes observations and actionable lessons following the visit of the undersigned to Norway in respect of Vocational Education and Training (VET). Norway's VET system is distinguished by a strong apprenticeship culture, a national competency-based curriculum, well-defined pathways linking upper-secondary vocational education to higher education, active employer (industry) participation in workplace training, and institutional mechanisms that align skills development with local labour-market needs. The system is delivered largely through public institutions, supported by strong cooperation among Ministries, employers, and education providers.

In this study, Norwegian VET models were studied and identified their core features and implementation approaches. The report highlights how these models can be replicated by Government of India to strengthen its own vocational education system and enhance its relevance, quality, and responsiveness to industry needs.

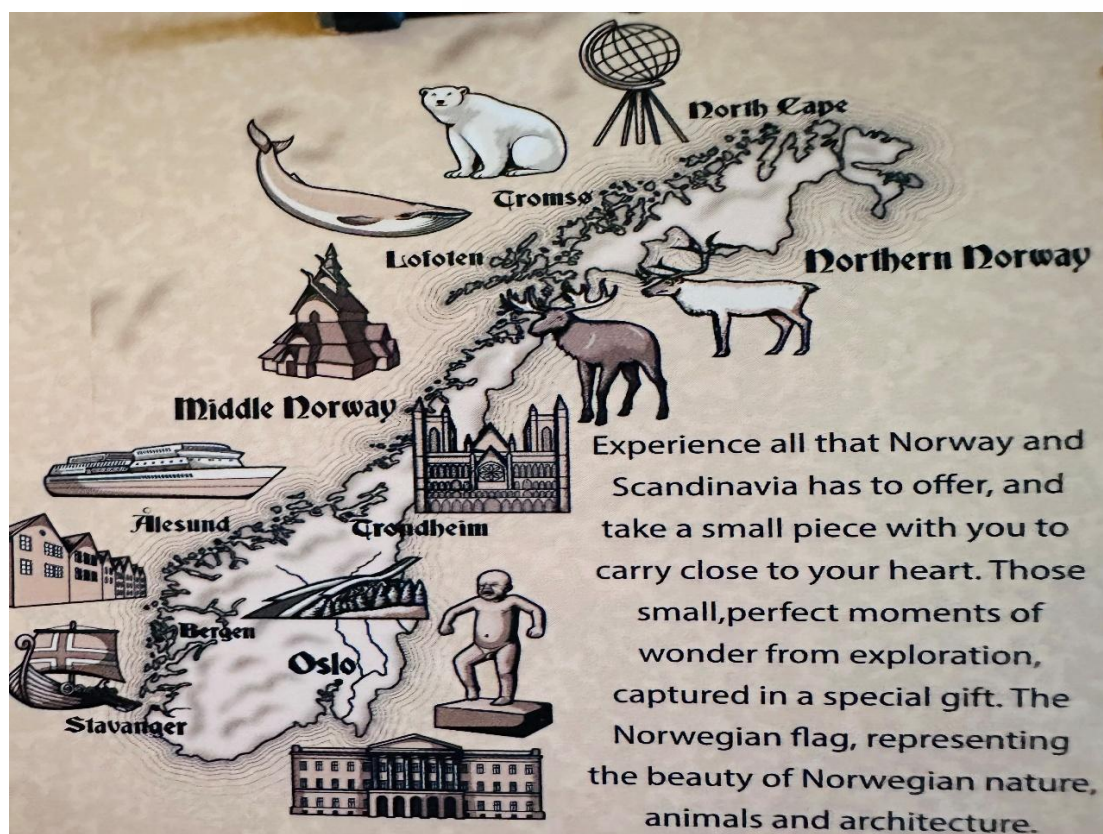


3. About Norway

Norway, officially the Kingdom of Norway, is a Nordic country situated on the western and northern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula in northern Europe. It shares land borders with Sweden, Finland, and Russia, and has an extensive coastline along the North Atlantic Ocean, marked by deep fjords and rugged islands. The country spans roughly 384,000 square kilometers and has a population of around 56 lakh.

Historically, Norway was a land of seafaring people: its Viking-age explorers established trade routes and settlements across Europe, Iceland, Greenland, and even North America. For centuries, Norway was ruled in personal unions with Denmark and Sweden, eventually gaining full independence in 1905. Today, it is a constitutional monarchy with a unicameral parliament, combining democratic governance with a comprehensive welfare state

Economically, Norway is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, thanks in large part to its abundant natural resources. It is a leading exporter of oil and natural gas and has leveraged this wealth to build the world's largest sovereign wealth fund. Wikipedia Alongside its petroleum sector, the Norwegian economy also relies on industries like fishing, maritime transport, and hydropower.



4. Higher Education System in Norway

Norway's higher education system is primarily public and overseen by the Ministry of Education and Research, with quality assurance handled by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT). Higher education institutions fall into four main categories: universities, specialized universities, accredited university colleges, and university colleges with program-level accreditation. Universities in Norway typically have the right to offer study programs at all levels (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral), while other institutions may need external accreditation for certain programs.

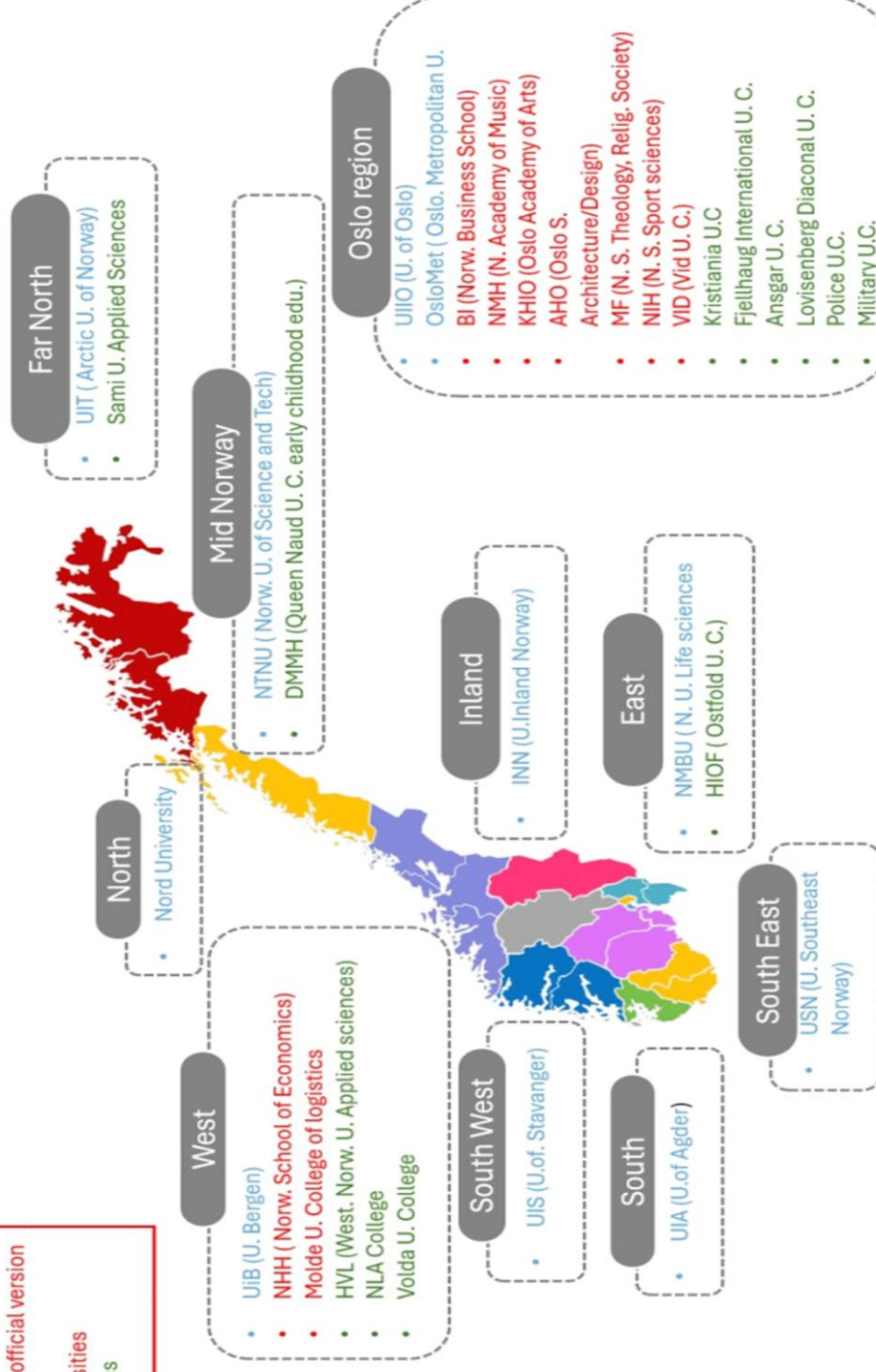


Since 2003, Norway has followed the Bologna Process, meaning its degree structure is divided into bachelor's (usually 3 years), master's (2 years), and doctoral programs. The country uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), with a full academic year equating to 60 ECTS credits.

A distinctive feature of the system is financial support for students: the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (Lånekassen) provides loans and grants, which significantly helps student welfare and access. NOKUT periodically reviews institutions and programs to ensure and improve quality, making Norway's system both inclusive and academically rigorous.

Higher Education Institutions in Norway

- a simplified and unofficial version
- 11 Universities
- 9 Specialized Universities
- 12 University Colleges



5. Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Norway: Humanistic Foundations and Community Partnership

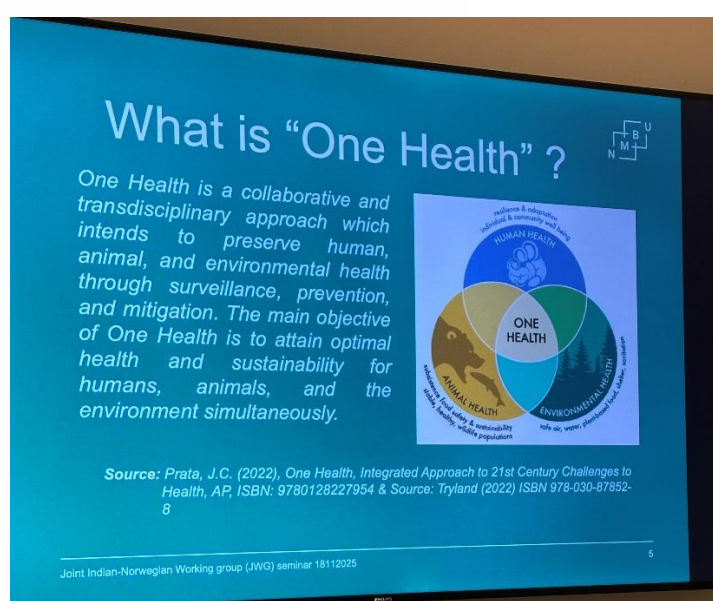
1. The Philosophy of Norwegian ECE

Norway's early childhood education system (barnehage) is internationally recognised for its deeply humanistic, egalitarian, and community-rooted values. Grounded in the Kindergarten Act and the Framework Plan for Kindergartens, Norwegian ECE emphasises:

- Democracy, dignity, and participation of every child
- Play-based and nature-led learning
- Holistic development (intellectual, emotional, social, physical, creative)
- Equality and inclusion, supported by the welfare state's commitment to high-quality public services.

The system is influenced by Rousseau, Froebel, and Waldorf (Steiner) traditions:

- Rousseau: natural learning, freedom, experience over instruction.
- Froebel: structured play, songs, self-activity, gifts and occupations.
- Waldorf: imagination, rhythm, storytelling, arts, and whole-child development.



2. **Norwegian universities**, both which the delegation visited, University of South-East Norway (USN) and OsloMet, embed these philosophical foundations in their teacher preparation.

USN delivers one of Norway's most practice-oriented ECE teacher education programmes, focusing on:

- Nature-based and outdoor pedagogy (forest schooling, nature walks).
- Child well-being and emotional security as foundational learning conditions.
- Multicultural, multilingual early childhood environments.
- Play theory, participatory learning, and children's agency.
- Community partnership, wherein teachers learn to build strong relationships with parents, municipalities, health agencies, and local cultural organisations.

OsloMet, the largest teacher education hub in Norway, adds particular expertise in:

- Urban and multicultural ECE pedagogies
- Research-based early language development
- Arts, drama, and music integration
- Child rights and children's participation in decisions
- ECE leadership and quality assurance in collaboration with Oslo municipality



3. Community Participation as a Systemic Pillar

One of Norway's greatest strengths and one that India can learn from, is its systemic embedding of community participation:

- Every kindergarten has a parent council and cooperation committee.
- Communities co-organise festivals, cultural walks, nature activities.
- Municipal governments regularly engage with families to improve services.
- Families collaborate with teachers on learning plans and well-being indicators.

Community is seen as a co-educator, not merely an observer, an ethos that resonates powerfully with India's NEP 2020 vision of "learning outside school walls."



4. Way Forward: Norway offers practical demonstrations for India's Balvatika design and Anganwadi school integration, ECE teacher professionalisation, which NEP emphasises as low-cost, high-value nature pedagogy applicable even in resource-constrained areas. Community-led ECE, directly supporting NEP's School Complex/Cluster approach. Implementation of PARAKH's Holistic Progress Cards, which incorporates Norwegian-style indicators such as: play competencies, socio-emotional development, language and early literacy behaviours, nature engagement, collaboration and empathy.

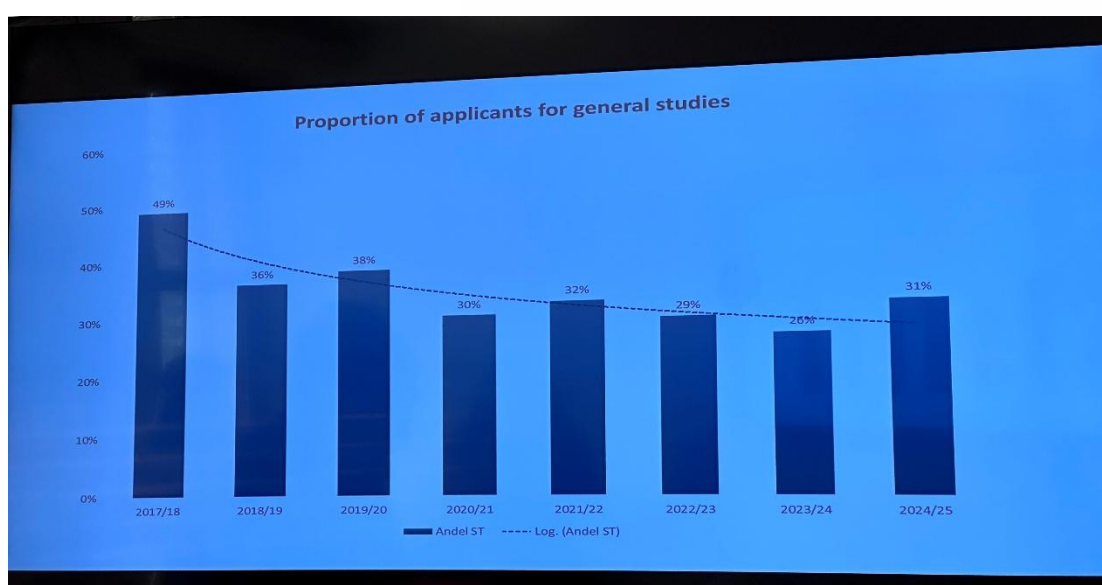
6. Lower Secondary Education in Norway: Humanism, Democracy, and Early Vocational Exposure

1. Philosophy of Lower Secondary (Grades 8-10)

Norwegian lower secondary education (ungdomsskole) is characterised by:

- Humanistic principles: equality, dialogue, compassion, mutual respect
- Mixed-ability classrooms (no rigid ability tracking)
- Interdisciplinary learning through national curriculum renewal (Fagfornyelsen)
- Strong emphasis on critical thinking
- Student participation in school governance, councils, and decision-making
- Continuous formative assessment instead of high-stakes exams

Teachers to operate as reflective practitioners capable of facilitating such learning environments



2. **Norwegian universities**, both which the delegation visited, University of South-East Norway (USN) and OsloMet train.

Norway introduces vocational exposure not as a separate track but as an integral part of holistic education, through:

- Work-life exploration weeks
- Visits to local industries, farms, service organisations
- Career counselling embedded in the curriculum
- Project-based learning connected with community needs

This **neutralises** the stigma attached to vocational pathways and prepares students for informed choices in upper secondary.

3. Community Participation as a Systemic Pillar

Communities play multiple roles:

- Local employers collaborate with schools for projects and introductory training.
- Parents participate in career discussions, school governance, and project exhibitions.
- Municipalities act as active partners in shaping school improvement.

4. **Way Forward:** NEP 2020's vision of the Preparatory and Middle Stages aligns strongly with Norwegian practices. Art-integrated, inquiry-led learning, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative projects. Early vocational exposure, and Formative assessments built into PARAKH's Holistic Progress Cards (HPCs). Indian schools can adopt the practices like, community-led "work exposure weeks", project exhibitions involving Panchayats, local businesses, SHGs and non-stigmatised introduction to vocational experiences.

7. Upper Secondary Education in Norway: Flexibility, Vocational Excellence, and Second Chances

1. Norwegian Upper Secondary (Grades 11–13)

Norway offers two pathways:

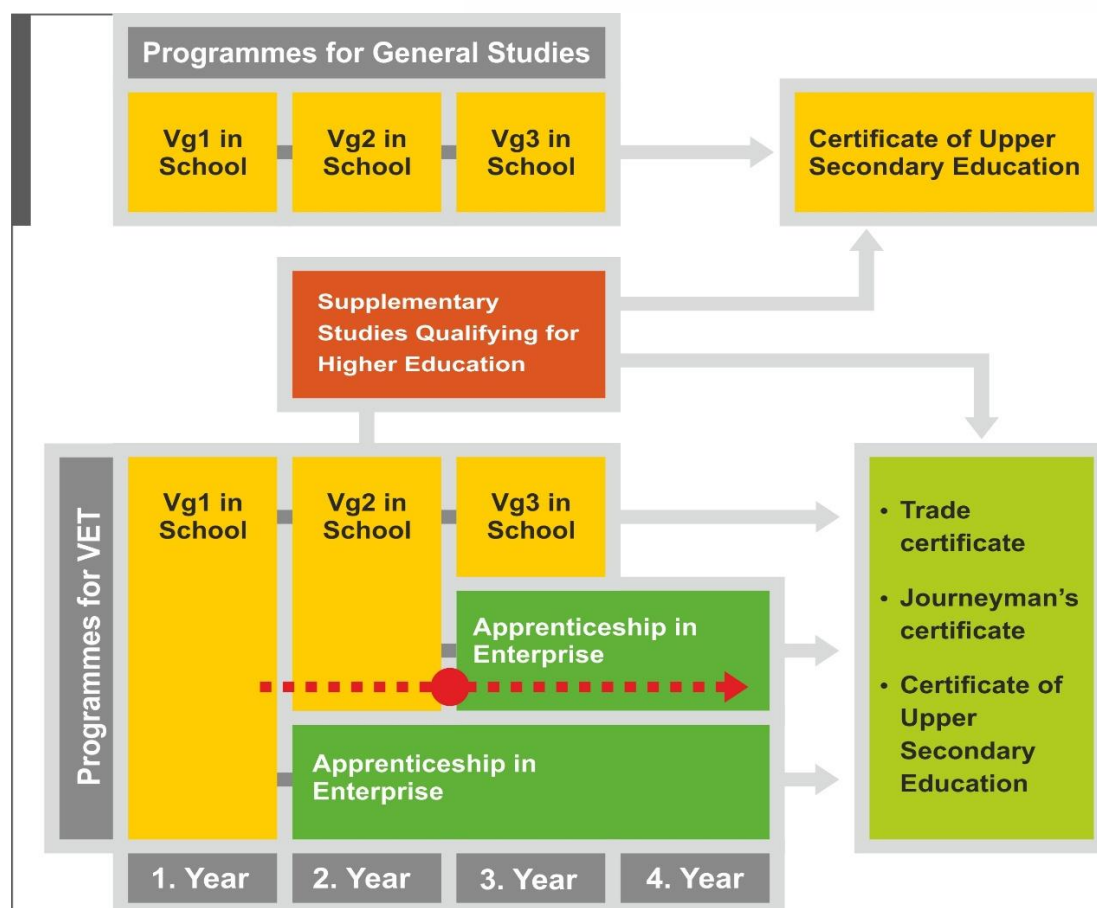
- General Studies
- Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Norway is all about giving life a second chance

But what sets the system apart is its built-in flexibility and reversibility.

2. The System That Allows Students to Come Back to the Mainstream

Norway is one of the few countries where vocational students can transfer credits to general education. They can complete bridging courses to qualify for higher education. Adults can return later through public-funded supplementary studies. All learners, regardless of earlier choices can re-enter the education system at any point. This “return pathway” reflects Norway’s welfare-state principles of second chances, lifelong learning, equity and emphasis on Norway’s inclusive welfare and education infrastructure.



3. Community-Industry Partnerships for VET

Upper secondary vocational education includes:

- Apprenticeships in real workplaces
- Partnerships with municipalities, unions, industry bodies
- Employers co-developing curriculum and assessments
- Competency-based portfolios, not just exams

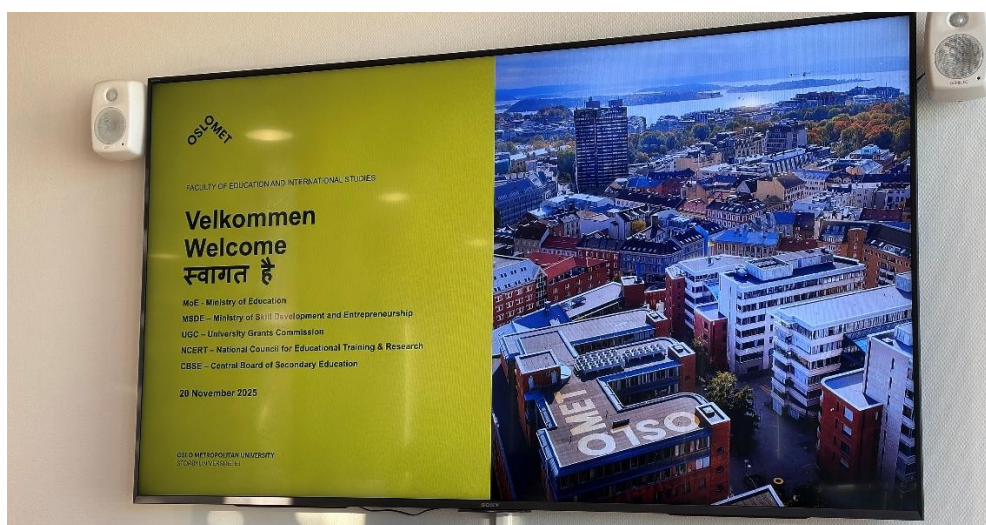
4. Relevance for India's Skilling Agenda

India has already articulated similar goals in NEP 2020:

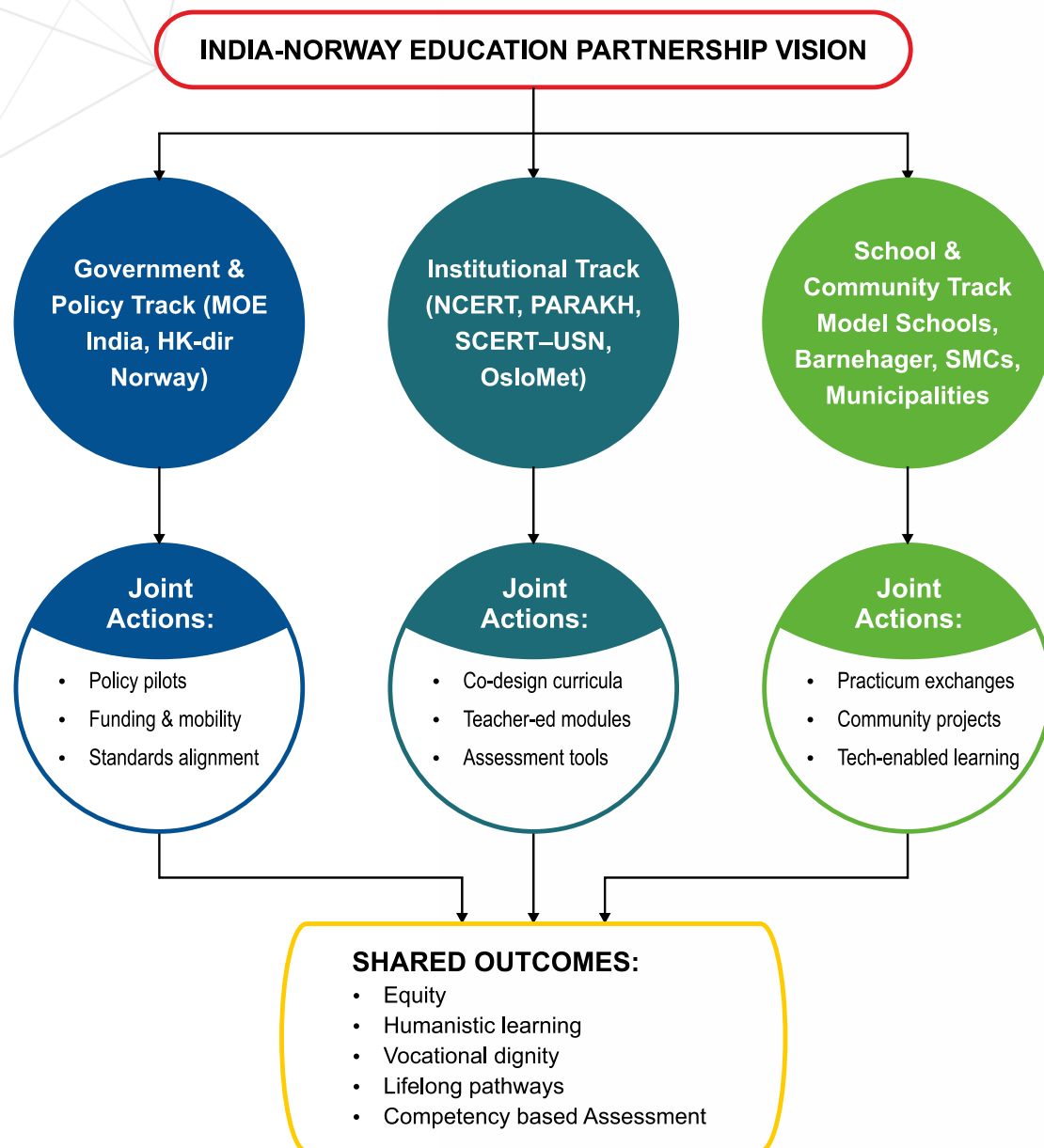
- Academic-Vocational mobility
- Skill integration from Grade 6 onwards
- Academic Bank of Credits
- Flexible entry/exit pathways

Learning from Norway, India can develop:

- District-level apprenticeship networks
- School-industry partnerships, especially in aspirational districts
- Vocational-general equivalence frameworks through PARAKH
- Secondary-level Holistic Progress Cards capturing internships and skill demonstrations portfolios
- Community projects



Way Forward for India–Norway Collaboration



India and Norway are unusually well-matched partners in education reform. Norway brings a mature, welfare-anchored, humanistic school system with strong teacher professionalism, community participation, and flexible vocational routes; India brings scale, multilingual realities, deep community diversity, and a reform window opened by NEP 2020 and PARAKH. India and Norway's commitment to high-quality education, democratic values, and international cooperation as a strategic tool, providing a strong policy basis for bilateral work.

The way forward should therefore move beyond symbolic exchanges to jointly designed pilots, shared standards, and institution-to-institution capacity building.

Establish a formal India–Norway Teacher Education & Schooling Partnership Platform

A dedicated platform co-led by MoE (India) and HK-directorate/Ministry of Education (Norway) should act as a single “collaboration spine.” It can align efforts across university partners and school systems. This platform should approve priorities, fund pilots, and create annual workplans. A joint secretariat can coordinate mobility, review evidence, and publish yearly “practice notes” for both systems.



Co-create Early Childhood Education (ECE) excellence pilots

Norway's barnehage system demonstrates how play, nature, well-being, and child agency can be system norms rather than boutique practices. This can be translated into Indian ECCE with joint ECCE pedagogy labs, can co-design Balvatika and Anganwadi modules that weave natural learning, play structures, and imagination/arts rhythms into India's cultural contexts (songs, stories, local crafts, indigenous play).

Nature-based learning pilots: A set of "ECE nature classrooms" in tribal/rural and urban-low-income settings can test low-cost outdoor pedagogy (kitchen gardens, forest walks, exploration corners).

Parent partnership toolkits: Norway's parent councils and co-governance can inspire Indian SMC-supported parent circles for ECCE with monthly meetings, home-play guides, local language story banks, and community festivals around children's learning.

These pilots should be mapped to NEP 2020's ECCE goals and then scaled through DIKSHA and NIPUN Bharat training ecosystems.

Rebuild lower secondary as a humanistic, community-linked stage

Norwegian lower secondary stands out for mixed-ability humanistic classrooms, student voice, critical thinking, and early work-life exposure. India's Preparatory/Middle/Secondary stages need the same shift from exam-centric to competency-centric schooling.

Interdisciplinary community projects: can co-develop "project banks" rooted in local problems like water, waste, local history, health, crafts, and entrepreneurship, for children to learn through authentic contexts.

Work-life exposure weeks: Borrow Norway's idea of structured work-life exploration and adapt it to India's World of Work framework. Panchayats, SHGs, MSMEs, museums, farms, health centres, and artisans become curricular partners.

Teacher practicum exchanges: Reciprocal short practicums where Norwegian teacher educators observe Indian classrooms (multilingual, high-diversity) and Indian teacher educators observe Norwegian democratic/humanistic classrooms. The focus is not just academic tourism but joint lesson design and reflection.

Create flexible vocational-academic pathways with “second chances”

One of Norway’s most powerful equity mechanisms is that vocational students can transfer credits, take bridging courses, and re-enter mainstream/higher education later. India has NEP2020 mandated flexibility and the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), but needs tighter school-level design.

Credit-mapped vocational modules from Grade 9: Jointly build a framework where each vocational module in Grades 9–12 carries credits that are recognised for lateral mobility. PARAKH can validate competencies, while boards operationalise credit reporting.

Bridging/supplementary studies model: Adapt Norway’s supplementary courses that enable VET students to qualify for higher education. In India, “bridge semesters” in Grades 11–12 or post-school community colleges could do this.

Dignity & parity messaging: Use parent and community communication (a la Norway’s stigma-free VET culture) so vocational choice is seen as a respected pathway, not a dead end. This is a high-impact arena for collaboration because it touches employability and social mobility.

Joint assessment transformation through PARAKH, NCERT-Norway alignment

Norway’s “assessment for learning” culture and portfolio-based vocational assessment **align** naturally with PARAKH’s competency agenda and Holistic Progress Cards (HPCs). teacher-education experts can co-create HPC indicators and rubrics for (a) play-based ECCE, (b) project-based middle school, (c) skill portfolios in secondary/senior secondary. Joint ventures can support building micro-credential courses for teachers.

Build a long-term research and evidence corridor

To avoid shallow borrowing, both countries should invest in a shared evidence pipeline. Joint longitudinal studies on ECCE outcomes, work-life exposure effects, and vocational re-entry success. Shared open resources in lesson exemplars, rubrics, portfolio samples, parent guides, and teacher reflections hosted on platforms.

Annual India–Norway Education Practice Forum rotating between countries to review data, publish briefs, and select next-phase pilots.

Anchor the partnership in capacity building and scalability

Finally, every pilot must be designed for scaling in India's context.

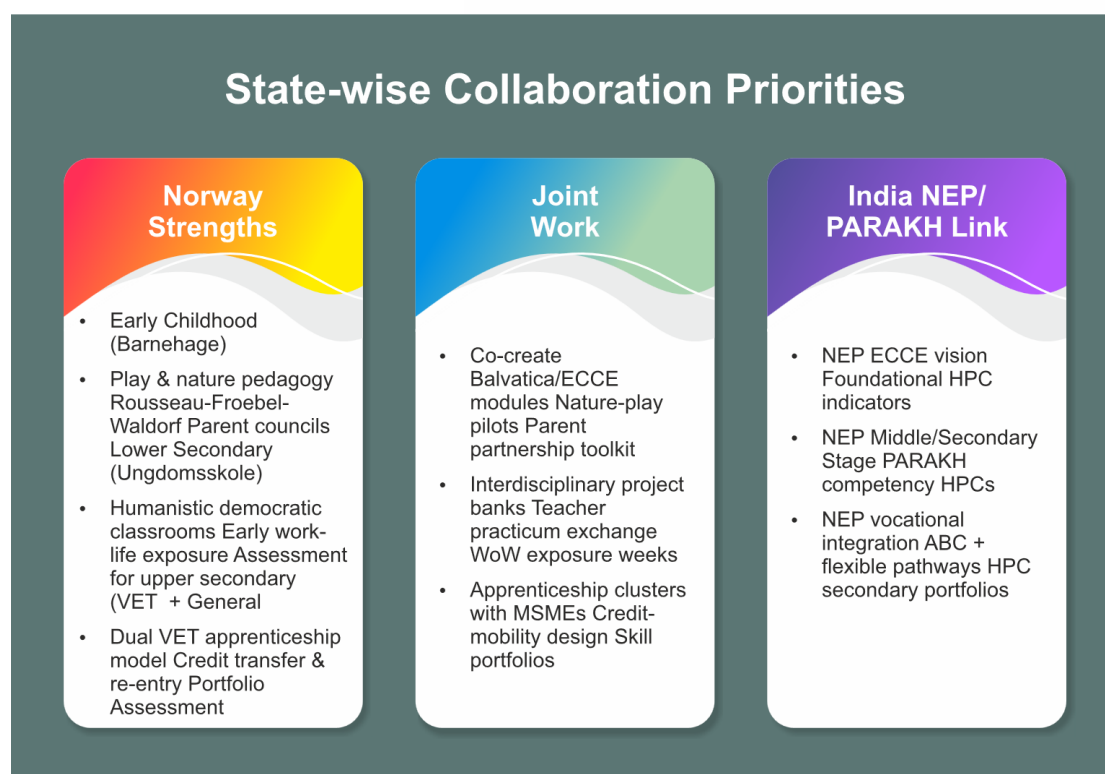
Train-the-trainer cohorts: Each collaboration strand should certify Indian master trainers via blended learning with Norwegian faculty.

Cluster-based scaling: Use NEP's School Complexes to spread innovations through peer mentoring.

Localization first: All resources should be multilingual, and culturally grounded.

Bottom line

The most promising India-Norway collaboration is not a single programme, but a coherent, stage-wise reform partnership: humanistic, community-anchored ECCE; democratic, project-rich lower secondary; and vocational pathways with real mobility and second chances are assessed in a holistic manner, competency-based lens. With Indian and Norwegian teacher-education leaders co-designing, piloting, and scaling together, the partnership can become a model of how global best practices are neither adapted, and nor adopted rather co created.



8. Norway's Skilling Ecosystem



Norway treats vocational education as a core component of its national education system. The Ministry of Education and Research sets national competency standards, whereas Counties (regional authorities) manage the delivery of upper secondary VET programmes and monitor apprenticeships in partnership with industries. HK-dir serves as the national agency for higher education, vocational education, international cooperation, quality assurance, and recognition of foreign qualifications.

1. Structural features of the Norwegian VET Model

The structure is built around the 2+2 model:

- Two years of school-based VET with strong practical exposure
- Two years of apprenticeship training, where apprentices are salaried and formally employed by companies or public organisations
- Apprenticeship certification corresponds to EQF (European Qualifications Framework) Level 4

Norwegian employers, sector councils, and training committees actively participate in:

- Curriculum designing
- Defining occupational standards
- Assessments and Certifications
- Determining training needs based on labour market demand

2. Higher Education Linkages and Recognition Framework

Norway's higher education system, overseen by HK-dir, includes:

- 11 Universities
- 9 specialized universities
- 12 university colleges

HK-dir also functions as Norway's ENIC-NARIC [European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC)] centre, responsible for recognition of foreign qualifications. Recognition is based on:

- Authenticity of documents
- Accreditation status of the originating institution
- Academic level and scope
- Comparability to Norwegian degrees



Visit to Fabrication Workshop

9. Panorama Strategy of Norway

Norway's Panorama Strategy (2021–2027) is a comprehensive national framework designed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in higher education, research, and innovation with key non-EU countries, including India, Brazil, Canada, Japan, China, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, and the United States. The strategy seeks to elevate the quality and relevance of Norwegian education and research by deepening international partnerships that foster knowledge exchange, academic mobility, and collaboration on emerging global priorities. It reflects Norway's broader vision of preparing its education, skilling and research ecosystem for an increasingly interconnected and innovation-driven world.

At its core, the strategy aims to enhance cooperation between higher education institutions, research bodies, and industry. It promotes student and faculty mobility, long-term institutional partnerships, and cross-border engagement that supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals under Agenda 2030. A set of strategic principles namely quality, relevance, reciprocity, long-term collaboration, and accountability, guide this cooperation. Notably, the accountability pillar emphasises responsible international engagement by integrating academic values, national interests, ethical considerations, and security protocols into global partnerships.

To operationalise these goals, Norway uses dedicated funding and mobility programmes such as UTFORSK and International Partnerships for Excellent Education, Research and Innovation (INTPART), which support joint educational projects, research collaboration, innovation partnerships, and student exchanges between Norwegian institutions and Panorama partner countries. These efforts are aligned with Norway's Long-Term Plan for Research and Higher Education (2023–2032) and its ambition to ensure that at least half of all graduates gain international exposure during their studies. While primarily focused on higher education and research, the Panorama Strategy also contributes indirectly to developing advanced skills and industry-relevant competencies by fostering global collaboration and innovation ecosystems. While the Panorama Strategy is not a “skilling” project per se, it strongly emphasizes education, research and industry linkages, which can indirectly support skilling by promoting innovation, mobility, and cross-border academic partnerships.

10. Indo-Norwegian Cooperation Programme (INCP)

The Indo-Norwegian Cooperation Programme (INCP) in Higher Education and Research is a bilateral programme supporting collaboration between Norwegian and Indian Higher Education institutions. It is administered jointly by the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) and counterpart Indian agencies [Department of Higher Education (DoHE) / University Grants Commission (UGC)], providing joint grants for institutional partnerships, research collaboration, capacity building and staff / student mobility. Funding calls have been explicitly announced for multi-institutional partnerships with co-funding arrangements and substantive thematic priorities.

INCP projects commonly fund curriculum development, joint research, joint degree or course design, capacity building (including teacher training), and collaborative **exchanges**. While the programme traditionally focuses on higher education and research, it is relevant to vocational systems in several ways:

- Applied research on VET pedagogy and apprenticeship quality
- Joint technical teacher training programmes
- Pathways linking VET graduates into higher technical education
- Pilots that adapt Norwegian apprenticeship/employer engagement models in Indian contexts.

Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) documentation confirms eligibility for projects that strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration. Proposals for joint research projects for the duration from 2023-2027 (second cycle), were called under Indo-Norway Cooperation Programme (INCP2) as per the MoU signed in the year 2023 between UGC and Norwegian Directorate of Higher Education and Skill under the programme in the following areas:

- Democracy and a rules-based world order
- Education
- The Oceans

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- Arctic/ Polar Research
- Clean Energy
- Climate and Environment
- Urban Planning and Development
- Health, including global and public health, biotechnology, and the medical sciences Information Technology and security



Visit to the Wood workshop

