



Research on
Alternative Dispute Resolution

by Narviksenteret
Norway





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#firstADRkit

I. Introduction

The goal of this research is to give a general overview of the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Norway. As of 1.1.2008, there is a particular law in place for mediation and procedure in civil disputes (The Dispute Act). The law has a significant focus on mediation both in and outside of court. This law is based on an older and now replaced law of 1915. However, mediation as a means of conflict resolution has a much older history in Norway, going back to the Middle Ages or earlier.

With regards to consumer complaints, the Consumer Council was established in 1953 to provide a low-threshold offer of assistance to consumers. Complaints were handled by this body by gathering information and views from the involved parties, and providing an opinion on how to proceed. This strategy proved to be a success, as the parties of such disputes often heeded the advice given and disputes could be solved without the involvement of courts [1].

In 1978 the Consumer Disputes Commission was established – a public run body. This was followed by, and complemented by, the sector specific complaint boards, which are voluntary complaint boards meaning that that they are outside of the courts and non-binding [2]. All voluntary ADR bodies, along with the Consumer Disputes Commission, comply with the EU recommendations on ADR bodies.

As of 2012, Norway has notified the EU Commission about a total of 19 ADR institutions in Norway. These include [3]:

- Consumer Disputes Commission
- Board on Disputes concerning services of real estate agents
- Norwegian Financial Services Complaints Board
- Board for disputes concerning erection and purchase of new dwellings
- Board for disputes concerning the supply of electricity
- Board for disputes concerning photography works
- Board for disputes concerning burial services
- Board for disputes concerning package tours
- Board for disputes relating to laundry and cleaning services
- Board for disputes concerning the valuation of dwellings
- Board for disputes relating to scheduled planes
- Board for disputes relating to electronic communication services
- Board for disputes relating to lawyers' services
- Board for disputes relating to car rental
- Board for disputes relating to car parking
- Board for disputes relating to debt collection



II. ADR at schools

The webpage of the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, www.udir.no, contains curricula from Primary School at age 6 till completing Upper Secondary School at age 19. Here, some of the subjects include conflict resolution in various forms.

Social Studies is a common core subject taught from 1st grade in Primary School (90 minutes/week) through 8th to 10th grade in Lower Secondary School (135 minutes/week), and 11th grade in Upper Secondary School General Studies or 12th Grade Upper Secondary School Vocational Studies (135 minutes/week). From 1st grade to 4th grade, one of the aims of Social Studies is to cover international cooperation, terrorism, conflicts, conflict resolution and peace work. After 4th grade, the pupils should be able to “give examples of how humans have different opinions, that the meeting between different peoples can be rewarding and conflictive and converse about empathy and human dignity” [4], as one of 28 goals of competence. However, it does not have a curriculum that includes how to mediate or resolve conflicts between people, and conflict resolution is not specified in the goals of competence after completing the subject.


Religion and ethics is a common core subject taught in 13th grade in Upper Secondary School General Studies (135 minutes/week). One of the aims of the subject is to show how and why “religious, ethical and philosophical questions are important for each individual, and for society as a whole, both as the basis for who we are and as a source of conflict” [5]. However, it does not have a curriculum that includes how to mediate or resolve conflicts tied to religion or views on life, and conflict resolution is not specified in the goals of competence after completing the subject.

In the following, all the subjects are programme subjects within the programme for specialisation within Upper Secondary School General Studies. This means that they are not mandatory or common core subjects, but are chosen by what specialisation the pupil wishes to have in their 12th or 13th year of studies.

Law 1 is a programme subject within the programme for specialisation in General Studies (225 minutes/week). One of the aims of the subject is to “put the pupil in a better position to assess and resolve legal problems and conflicts” [6] with the use of legal methods. One of the goals of competence after completing the subject is to enable pupils to “resolve conflicts related to employment, discharge and redundancy” [7]. Another goal of competence is to enable pupils to “give an account of the court system, the independent position of the courts and the role of the Mediation Board” [8]. These are two of 28 goals of competence after completing the subject. The subject Law 1 thus has a curriculum that includes how to mediate or resolve conflicts within labour law, and conflict resolution and knowledge of the role of the Mediation Board is specified in the goals of competence after completing the subject.

Marketing and Management 2 is a programme subject within the programme for specialisation in General Studies (225 minutes/week). One of the goals of competence after completing the subject is to enable pupils to “discuss the possible consequences of personnel conflicts, and how such conflicts can be handled” [9], as one of 31 goals of competence after completing the subject. Hence, the subject Marketing and Management 2 has a curriculum that includes how to handle personnel conflicts specified in the goals of competence after completing the subject.





Social Sciences is a programme subject within the programme for specialisation in General Studies (225 minutes/week). One of the goals of competence after completing the subject is to enable pupils to “give an account of theories concerning the choice of spouse; analyse the causes of marital problems, and elaborate on and discuss how problems can be prevented and resolved” [10], as one of 24 goals of competence after completing the subject. The subject Social Sciences has a curriculum that includes preventing and resolving conflicts between spouses specified in the goals of competence after completing the subject.

Sociology and Social Anthropology is a programme subject within the programme for specialisation in General Studies (225 minutes/week). One of the goals of competence after completing the subject is to enable pupils to “explain the difference between the terms egocentric and ethnocentric, use these terms to analyse the causes of conflicts between individuals and among groups, and discuss possible solutions to these conflicts” [11], as one of 27 goals of competence after completing the subject. The subject Sociology and Social Anthropony, therefore, has a curriculum that includes analysing and discussing reasons for and solutions to conflicts between individuals and among groups specified in the goals of competence after completing the subject.

Psychology 2 is a programme subject within the programme for specialisation in General Studies (225 minutes/week). One of the goals of competence after completing the subject is to enable pupils to “give an account of how interpersonal conflicts arise and give examples of how these can be resolved” [12]. This is one of 24 goals of competence after completing the subject. Thus, the subject Psychology 2 has a curriculum that includes how to resolve interpersonal conflicts specified in the goals of competence after completing the subject.


Communication and interaction is a mandatory core subject within the field of child care and youth work in Upper Secondary School Vocational Studies (225 minutes/week) in their 13th year of studies or two years of in-service training at a training establishment. One of the goals of competence after completing the subject is to enable the pupil or apprentice to “use strategies to handle conflicts and guide children and adolescents in handling conflicts” [13], as one of seven goals of competence after completing the subject. This shows that the subject Communication and interaction has a curriculum that includes being taught and teaching others about handling conflicts specified in the goals of competence after completing the subject.

III. ADR at universities

We have looked, albeit briefly, into three universities in Norway: UiT –The Arctic University of Norway, The University of Oslo (UiO), and Nord University. UiT and Nord are located in Northern Norway, and are partners of Narviksenteret at various levels. We saw fit to look into their curricula more than any other institution of higher education in Norway. UiO has been selected as a means of comparison, being the biggest university in Norway.

Our findings are that there are elements of ADR incorporated particularly into law studies in these institutions. At UiT, for example, the course JUR-3609 has elements of ADR incorporated, as it focuses quite heavily on options of mediation and alternative solutions to the courtroom. This is based on the reading list for the course [14]. At UiO, the master course JUS5504 teaches theory of conflict and conflict management, including Alternative Dispute Resolution, as part of knowledge





about judicial and other forms of process. The subject aims to equip the student with, among other things, skills to analyse concrete conflicts and plan interventions and strategies relevant thereof [15]. The bachelor course JUR1504 aims to teach the student about theory of conflict, including their development and conflict management. Knowledge about process, thereunder mediation and third party intervention are part of this course too [16].

Nord University does not offer law as a degree. For all other studies, we have not managed to find course syllabi that directly listed key words linked to ADR. We reiterate, however, that this does not necessarily mean that it is not touched upon in any other studies in these institutions, but that the concrete information is hard to come by, and with little relevance for our research objectives.

IV. ADR for youth

There are around 600 conflict mediators in Norway, linked to the Conflict Council (Konfliktrådet). These mediators are connected to their home municipality, and undergo a training offered by the Conflict Council. No formal education is required of a potential mediator. In our region, Midtre Hålogaland, there are four mediators available as part of the Conflict Council, including one youth coordinator.

The youth coordinator will meet regularly with young transgressors who have been penalised for some punishable act by having to follow a programme set up by the Conflict Council. This programme entails that the young person accepts responsibility for his/her act, and expresses a will to change behaviour. Each police district also has a steering group with regular members from police, prosecution and child protective services [17].

There are good online sources available for young people on how conflicts can be solved using dialogue and mediation, particularly the portal www.ung.no and their page on conflict management [18].

Some municipalities offer training for young people in mediation and conflict resolution. Further, there are some organisations that offer training directed at young people who spend a lot of their time on the streets. One example – and probably the most far-reaching one – is the Norwegian Red Cross, which trains youth as street mediators [19]. The young people are trained in managing their own conflicts, how to use non-violent communication, mediating in other people's conflicts, and more, before they are certified by the Red Cross as street mediators. In 2014 they had 1547 participants. This kind of street mediation now takes place in 25 locations in eight districts of Norway [20].

V. Conclusions

The only mandatory and common core subject within the Norwegian school system that is likely to teach pupils or students about conflict resolution to some degree is Social Studies in 1st to 4th grade (the ages 6 to 10 years old). After that, there are no mandatory common core subjects that teaches conflict resolution. However, pupils or students themselves have the option of choosing



subjects in Upper Secondary School or at university that include conflict resolution and to some degree mediation.

The methods, time spent on each goal of competence and evaluations used within the Norwegian school system is to a large degree decided by each individual teacher or professor. This makes it difficult to actually know what knowledge Norwegian youth, as a whole, have in the field of conflict resolution and mediation, but if one is to estimate based on the findings in this study, their formal knowledge in the field of conflict resolution and mediation is slim, at best.

ADR as a service or training course provided by NGOs in Norway is generally not aimed at young people, it is aimed at companies, businesses, company law and family law, and is provided by lawyers and therapists. However, the free mediation service, the Conflict Council, covers nearly all of Norway. This council provides help in solving both criminal cases that the prosecution has found to be suited to the mediation service and civilian cases, including conflicts where youth are involved. They facilitate meetings between the parties with the aim of reaching an agreement and solution through dialogue.

The most directly relevant training of mediation skills and conflict resolution we can find for young people, is the street mediator training offered by the Norwegian Red Cross. This is a partner with whom Narviksenteret already works closely, and would like to draw experience from.

VI. References

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