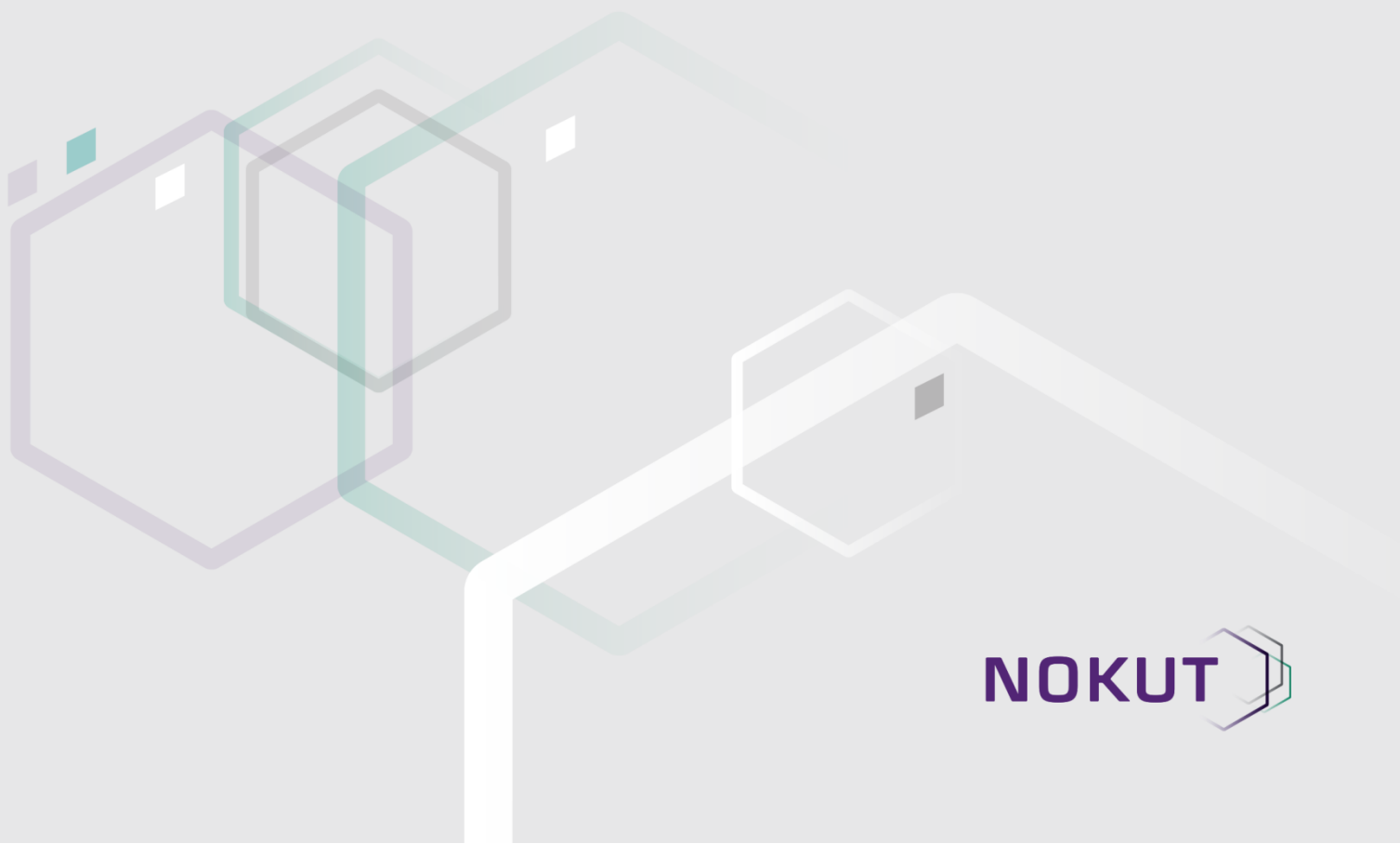


Studiebarometeret: Rapport 4-2016

Adding a year - explaining satisfaction in teacher education in a time of reforms

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NOKUT 

Adding a year

- explaining satisfaction in teacher education in a time of reforms

Paper presented in track 5 at the

EAIR 38th Annual Forum in Birmingham, United Kingdom

31 August - 3 September 2016

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Abstract

Norwegian teacher education programs have gone through several reforms since the early 1990's. The latest reform entails a further expansion from 4-year programs to integrated five-year master's programs.

Our paper explores three related questions:

1) What are the levels of satisfaction among students at different types of teacher education provisions, and what explains potential differences?

2) From the students' perspective, what are the advantages and disadvantages of expanding the teacher educational degree from a 4-year to a 5-year master's programme?

3) Could cooperation between teacher education institutions provide new opportunities and increase student satisfaction in a 5-year master degree program?

To answer these questions we use the Norwegian National Student Survey, in-depth interviews, a follow-up questionnaire and literary reviews.

Responses from the National Student Survey showed that fifth year students on five-year programs were less satisfied than second year students. This could question the benefits of expanding the primary school teacher education from four years to a five-year master's program. In this paper, we show that this might be a hasty conclusion. Some of the difference in satisfaction could be explained by the way the questions were asked. We also found evidence that indicates that at least some students at most five- or six-year programs eventually get tired of being enrolled at the same study program for so long. In the teacher education we argue that this could be solved through cooperation between the institutions. The institutions should make it possible for students to swap institutions between the third and fourth year. However, there is still one concern. The entrance competence among the primary teacher education students is lower compared to students in other subject fields with mainly five or six year integrated educational provisions. We also found that the satisfaction from the second to the fifth year of study decreased at a higher rate among students with a low entrance competence level. For the reform to be a success, we believe that the entrance competence has to improve among the teacher education students.

Introduction

This paper is a follow-up from a review of data from the Norwegian national student survey “Studiebarometeret”¹, specifically the data on teacher education. As the Norwegian government decided to implement a new reform – adding a year to the present four years of teacher education – NOKUT (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) did a small-scale study of teacher education programs. The study focused on student satisfaction and revealed some interesting differences between teacher education and other subject fields, but also interesting differences between five year integrated programs and programs split between bachelor and masters programs. The preliminary study led us to three related research questions:

- 1) What are the levels of satisfaction among students at different types of teacher education provisions, and what explains potential differences?*
- 2) From the students’ perspective, what are the advantages and disadvantages of expanding teacher education from 4 years to a 5-year master’s programme?*
- 3) Could cooperation between teacher education institutions provide new opportunities and increase student satisfaction in a 5-year master degree program?*

We aim to use data from the national student survey in Norway and interviews with students, to explore whether there are systematic differences between teacher education programs and if there are potential policy advice to be gathered from our inquiries.

Background

The teacher education in Norway has been divided between teacher education for secondary school teachers, a five-year degree program provided by the large universities, and teacher educations for primary school teachers, which was traditionally provided by many small and local teacher education schools around Norway. In 1994, the small teacher education colleges were merged with other small colleges (e.g. nursing colleges, engineering colleges) to larger regional colleges. At about the same time (1992), the length of the teacher education was expanded from three to four years, and included a shift towards more detailed governmental control through national frameworks for teacher education. This shift was solidified and expanded throughout the 90’s, including a clearer structure for teacher education, which limited the possible choices for students by focusing on math, Norwegian and Christian and religious studies.²

After the implementation of the Bologna system in 2003, the five-year secondary school teacher education was converted to a master’s degree provision, while the four-year primary school teacher education was converted to a bachelor’s degree provision (though retaining its four-year structure). At the same time, the regional colleges were given the opportunity to apply for the right to provide education at the master and doctoral levels, which has led to accreditation of several two-year master’s degree programs for teacher education graduates.

1 For more information on Studiebarometeret, see: <http://www.nokut.no/en/About-Studiebarometeret/>

2 Karlsen, Gustav E. (2005), «Styring av norsk lærerutdanning i et historisk perspektiv» i Norsk pedagogisk tidsskrift. Årg. 89, nr 6: 402-416.

As noted above, national frameworks regulate the teacher education provisions in Norway. The national framework for primary school teacher education has been revised three times (1998, 2003 and 2010) since the introduction of a four-year provision in 1992. The revision in 2010 divided the primary school teacher education in two, one for teaching grades 1-7 and one for grades 5-10 (both referred to as TEP4 below, unless otherwise specified). At the same time, the Ministry gave the University of Tromsø permission to provide five-year master's degree primary school teacher education programs (all integrated five year master programmes for primary teachers is referred to as 5YMP below). University of Tromsø produced their first graduates from these pilot programmes in 2015.

In the political platform of the government formed by the Conservative Party and the Progress Party after the election in 2013, the new government stated that they promised to increase the primary school teacher education with one year and convert it to a five-year master's degree (Government of Norway 2013, p. 53-54). In a press release on 3 June 2014, the Ministry of Education and Research informed that the government would introduce the new teacher education from the autumn of 2017. In its consultation letter on the implementation of the five-year teacher education, the Norwegian government highlighted the importance of an increase in "læringstrykk" (loosely translated into "the expected student work load") in addition to the central premise that the study programmes would be integrated in a five year programme, not split up into bachelors and masters programmes.

One of the main arguments for the change is to increase the education's prestige and thus attract students with higher abilities and ambitions. In addition, a master's degree will give the students a better understanding of research-based methods and knowledge, and thus be better equipped to improve their own teaching methods (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2014).

Primary school teacher education in Norway

Today, the primary school teacher education (TEP4) in Norway is a four-year professional degree. In addition to the regular quality assurance regulations, this provision is also regulated by a framework plan passed by the Ministry of Education. There are different ways of obtaining a master's degree in primary teacher education. Students could finish the four-year provision and take a standalone two-year master's degree (2YMP) program on top of this. These study programs are often specialisation programs, and let the students choose their specialisation topic such as didactics within a school subject, digital literacy in the classroom, diversity in the classroom or special needs education. Some of these programs are designed in a way that let students skip the last year of the professional degree by including the content of the fourth year, specified in the framework plan, within the two-year master program. Lastly, some institutions have already introduced a five-year integrated master's degree (5YMP). The first was established at University of Tromsø in 2010. Both University of Agder and Nord University have since established their own 5YMP. The different paths to a master's degree are schematically presented in figure 1.

About this paper - methods and research questions

In this paper, we will analyse potential outcomes from a four-year to a five-year primary teacher education, with a main focus on the students' perspective. In the Norwegian National Student Survey

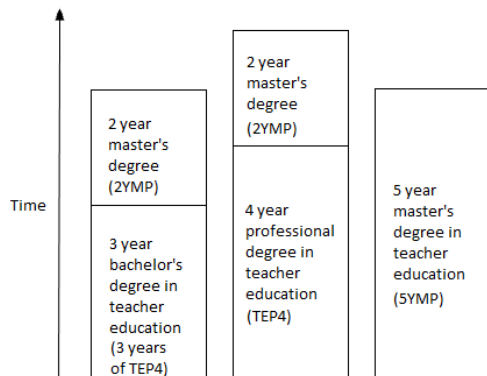


Figure 1: Teacher education in Norway

(“Studiebarometeret”) we collect answers from second-year students attending both the TEP4 and 2YMP, designed for students who has finished a bachelor’s degree in teacher education. In addition, answers are also collected from both second and fifth-year students attending the 5YMP programs at University of Tromsø and University of Agder. In this paper, we will compare the two tracks towards a master’s degree in primary school teacher education and look at differences in student satisfaction between them. In addition, we have conducted focus group interviews with teacher education students at the integrated programs at University of Tromsø, and sent out a follow-up questionnaire to students at the two-year master’s degree programs for teacher education students³.

Methodology

Our primary research questions where three-fold:

- 1) *What are the levels of satisfaction among students at different types of teacher education provisions, and what explains potential differences?*
- 2) *From the students’ perspective, what are the advantages and disadvantages of expanding teacher education from 4 years to a 5-year master’s programme?*
- 3) *Could cooperation between teacher education institutions provide new opportunities and increase student satisfaction in a 5-year master degree program?*

Initially, we used the data from the Norwegian National Student Survey to map differences between teacher education and other subject fields, and between the different types of teacher education (and their respective differences from selected subject fields). The population included in the survey is approximately 61,000 with a response rate of 47 % (24,666 respondents). Of the respondents, 1,541 were students at the various primary teacher education programmes (response rate about 67 %).⁴

From our initial findings in the original survey we found some results (elaborated below) that merited further investigation. Our primary source for this investigation was in depth interviews with students

³ This survey was sent to students who said yes to participate in additional survey questionnaires in the National Student Survey

⁴ These numbers all refer to the 2015 survey.

already participating in five year teacher programs. This limited the available subjects for interviews, but was deemed to be the most appropriate subjects, as our initial inquiry was to investigate the effects of the introduction of a five-year program.

The interviews were semi-structured with an interview guide developed to test the hypotheses explained below (see: “What could explain the different trends in satisfaction”). We interviewed two sets of students at the University of Tromsø (the only HEI where students that had completed a full five-year course); 5 students in their fifth year and 6 students in their second year.

In addition, we use literary reviews and did a short follow up questionnaire to teacher education students attending the 2YMP (60 respondents, 48 % response rate).

Satisfaction: Are teacher education students satisfied with their studies?

The simple answer is yes, most of them are. However, this is true for all subject fields. Figure 2 shows the average score, on a likert scale from 1 to 5 in overall satisfaction⁵ in the fall of 2015 in all subject fields. All fields score 3.8 or higher, and the difference between the fields are therefore small. This is not surprising considering the fact that students are answering questions about their study program. There is a larger variation between programs within the subject fields than between the subject fields. Naturally, the average at the subject levels will tend to regress towards the overall mean when more and more study programs are grouped together. Although small, the results show some differences between the subject fields.

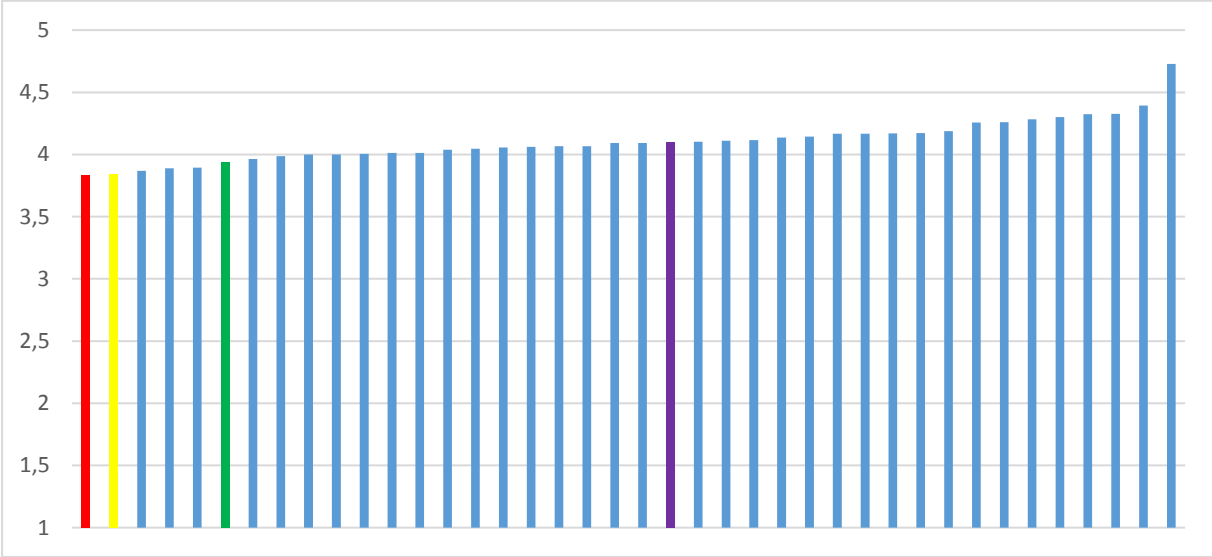


Figure 2: Overall satisfaction – subject fields

The teacher education programs are highlighted with red (TEP4), yellow (5YMP secondary) and green (5YMP) bars. The average satisfaction among students at 2YMP students is highlighted in purple. On average, teacher education students are less satisfied than students in other fields. The results also show that among all the primary school teacher education students (both master and bachelor), the

⁵ «I am, all things considered, satisfied with the program I am currently attending». The figure shows scores for all subject fields and includes both undergraduate and graduate students. The overall findings concerning the teacher education provisions are the same also when we look at these to level separately.

five-year students are slightly more satisfied than the four-year students. Due to the low number of five-year programs and a low total number of students on these programs, we only have 139 five-year students answering the survey (71 % response rate), compared to 1402 answers from four-year students. The small difference in satisfaction between these two students groups is therefore not statistically significant. The 2014 results are consistent with the results from 2015.

The 2YMP students, on the other hand, score higher than the other teacher education provisions and also higher than the overall average satisfaction score among all students. The differences between 2YMP and the other teacher education provisions are statistically significant.

Differences between second- and fifth-year students in integrated master's degree programs

As shown in figure 1, the fifth year students at the 5YMP are approximately at the same point in their study progression as the second-year students attending the 2YMP. When we consider the abovementioned difference in overall satisfaction between the students at the second year of the TEP4 and the second year master's degree students, it leads us to believe that fifth-year students in the 5YMP are more likely to be satisfied with their study program than the second-year students.

When we look at the data (see table 1) however, we find the opposite. Students in their fifth year are noticeably less satisfied than their second-year counterparts. This is true both in the 2014 and 2015 surveys. Table 1 also shows the results for the 5YMP (secondary), and although the difference is smaller, we also find a drop in satisfaction from the second to fifth year in these provisions. We wondered if this was a common trend in integrated study programs of five or six years. In figure 3a (2015) and 3b (2014) the changes in satisfaction scores between second and fifth-year students are displayed for the integrated five to six year study programs⁶ that exist in Norway. The results indicate a consistent downward trend in satisfaction from the second to the fifth year. The only rise in satisfaction is among architecture students in 2015. The primary school teacher education has the most negative trend in both years.

Type of teacher education provision	2014	2015
TEP4	3,7 (1063)	3,8 (1382)
2YMP	4,1 (199)	4,2 (225)
5YMP 2nd year	3,9 (46)	4,3 (80)
5YMP 5th year	3,4 (37)	3,4 (48)
5YMP (secondary) 2nd year	3,8 (234)	4,0 (279)
5YMP (secondary) 5th year	3,7 (149)	3,7 (181)

Table 1: Overall satisfaction in teacher education programmes, comparing 2nd and 5th year students.

⁶ In addition, there are five or six years study programs in veterinary medicine, theology, social economics and economics as well, but there are too few respondents in these study programs for them to be shown here. In economics and social economics, most students attend three-year bachelor and two-year master programs.

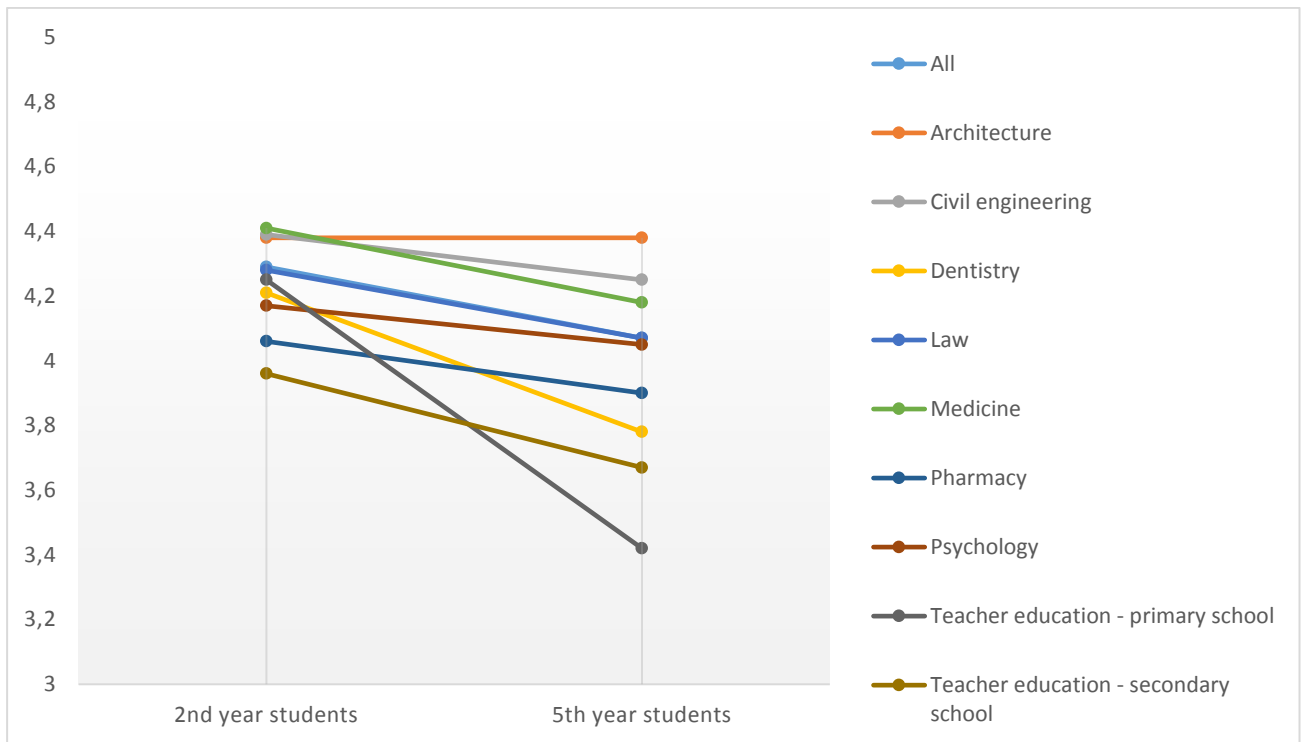


Figure 3a: Satisfaction of 2nd year and 5th year students in integrated programs (five or six years) 2015

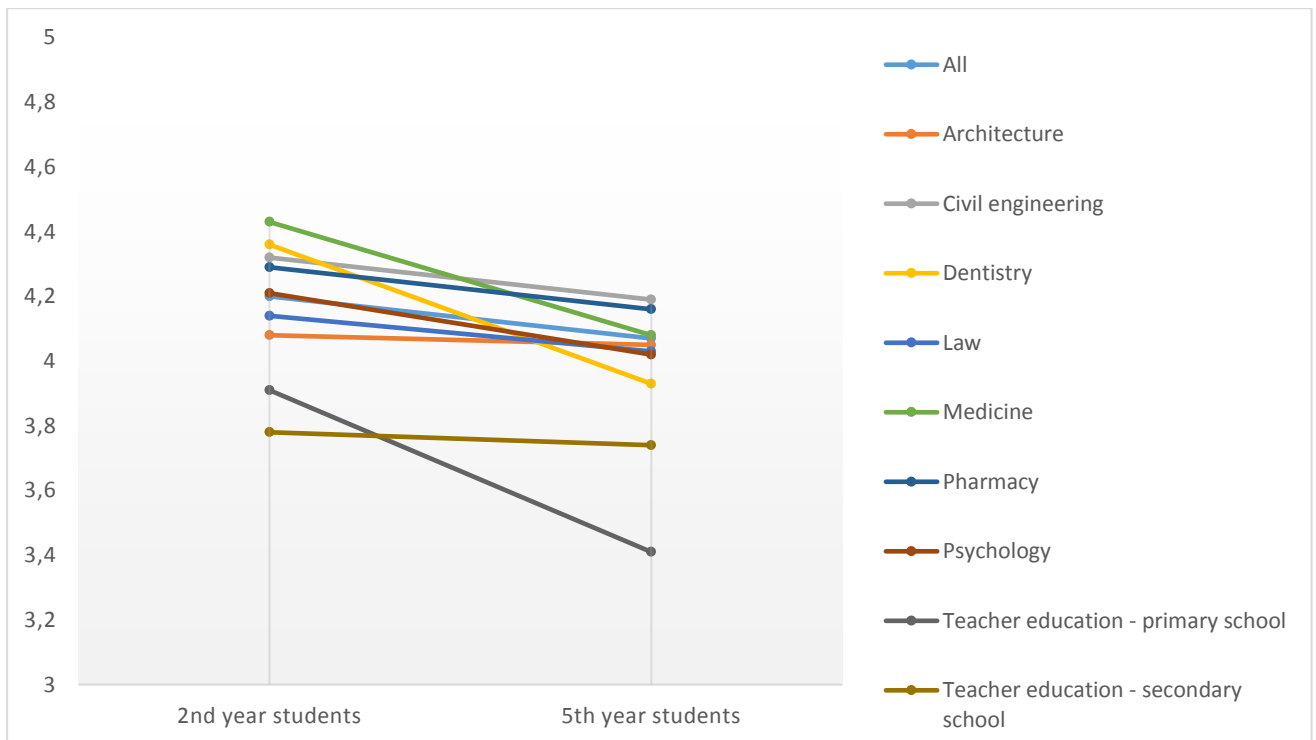


Figure 3b: Satisfaction of 2nd year and 5th year students in integrated programs (five or six years) 2014

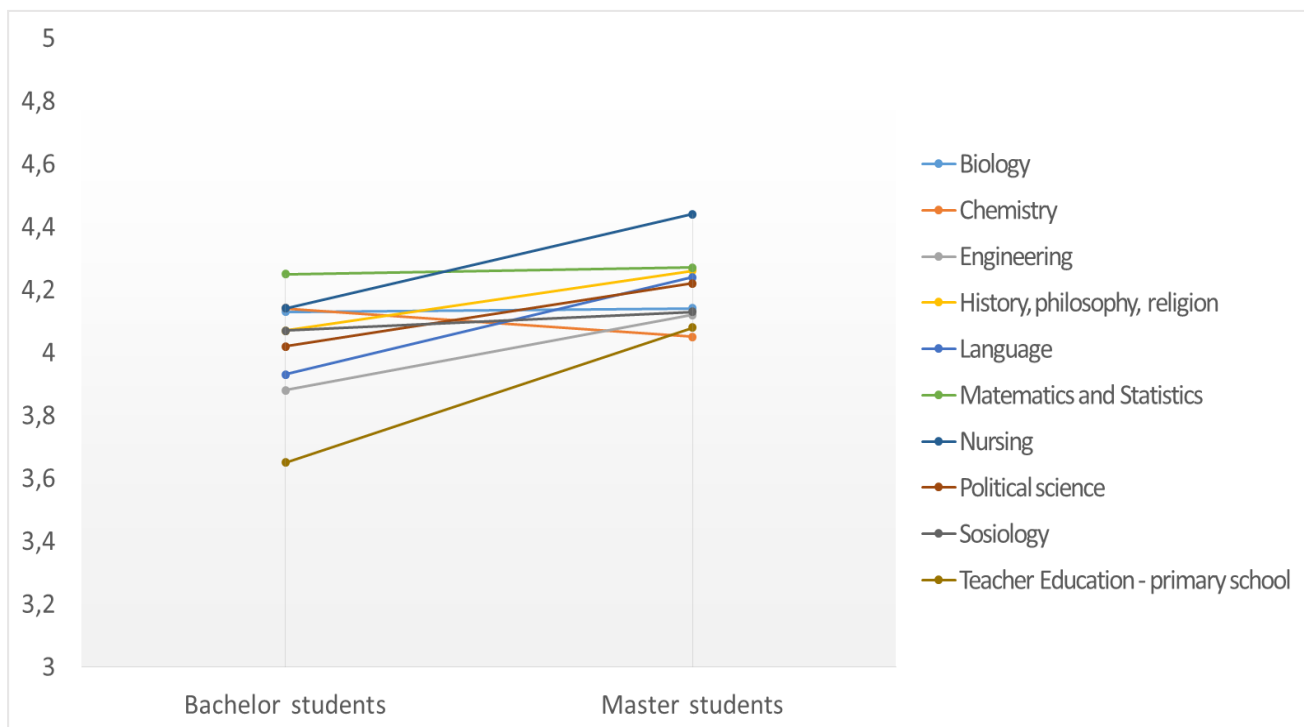


Figure 4a: Satisfaction of 2nd year (bachelor) and 2nd year (master) students in split programs 2015

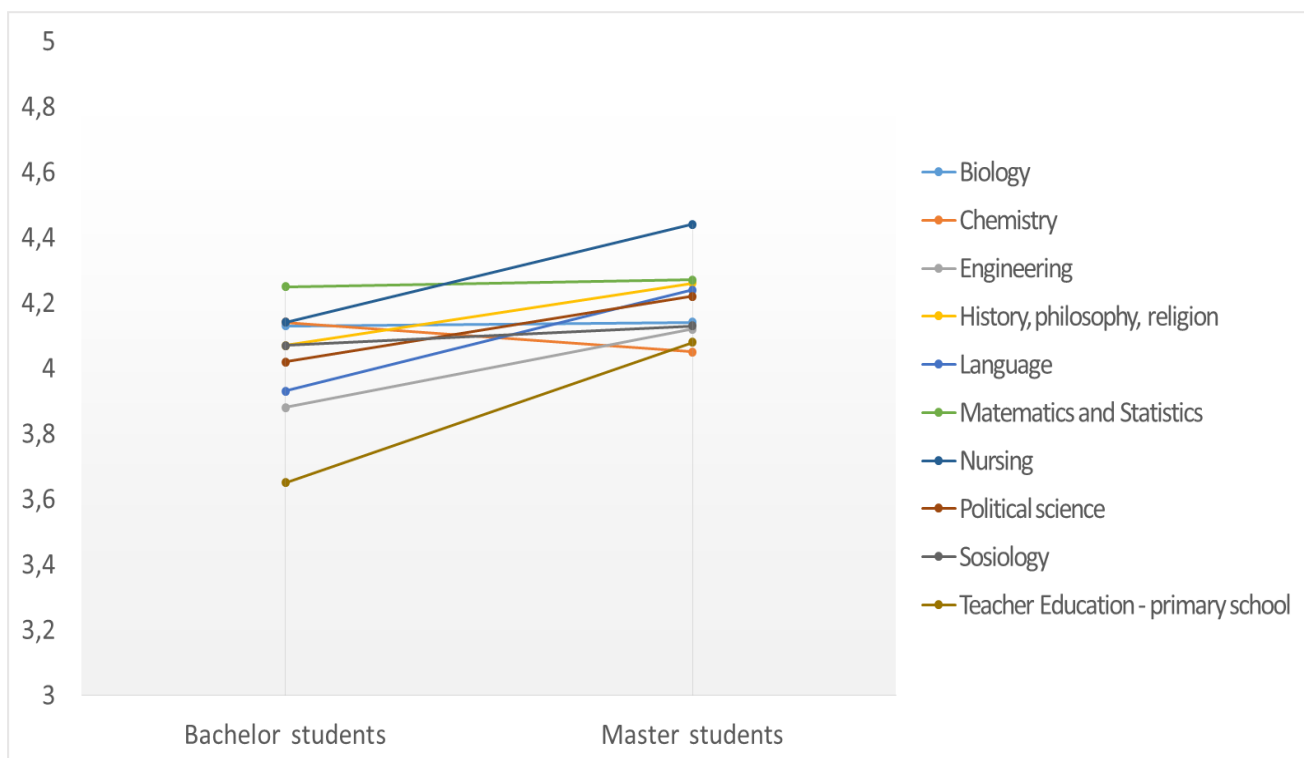


Figure 4b: Satisfaction of 2nd year (bachelor) and 2nd year (master) students in split programs (five or six years) 2014

Although the different trends in student satisfaction between the integrated and split versions of primary school teacher education are noteworthy, there is, however, still a question of whether the positive trend in the split version is specific for teacher education. In figure 4a (2015) and 4b (2014) we plot the changes in satisfaction scores between bachelor (second year) and master students (second year master equals fifth year total) among selected subject fields. Although the trends vary between subject fields, especially in 2015, there seems to be a more positive trend for the split version compared to the trend in the integrated study programmes. Again though, the primary school teacher education seems to be the extreme, this time with the largest increase in satisfaction. To be able to answer our three research questions, we also need to look for answers to two new questions. Why do we see the difference in trends between the integrated and split tracks, and why are the trends stronger in primary school teacher education?

What could explain the different trends in satisfaction

As shown above, there seems to be a clear difference between integrated and split tracks to a master's degree, especially within primary school teacher education provision.

Our possible explanations are threefold:

- 1) One type of explanations has to do with the survey methodology. Fifth year students were asked to evaluate all four years of their program while second year students at two-year master programs were only evaluating their last year of study. This distinction could potentially disrupt our interpretations in the prior section.
- 2) Explanations based on the study track, that is, whether differences in satisfaction is due to differences between a split track and a five-year integrated programme. This would constitute a mix between a methodological and a more "qualitative" and subject specific explanation.
- 3) A third explanation is differences in student satisfaction between subject fields. We believe that there is something inherent in the teacher education that helps explain the difference, especially considering the fact that 5YMP has the strongest tendency of change between 2nd and 5th year students. Explanations of this sort would include differences in the student population in teacher education (age, gender, grade averages from secondary school) and differences with regards to their professional ethos.

We attempted to explore these three explanations through literary reviews, interviews with students in the five-year teacher education programmes and a follow-up questionnaire to teacher education students at 2YMP.

Methodological

When the students receive the national student survey, they are asked questions regarding the study program they are currently attending. The second-year students in integrated study programs and bachelor's degree programs have had the same amount of time, a little more than a year, to obtain experiences of the study program. The second-year students on two-year master's degrees and the fifth-year students at integrated study programs, have the same amount of experience, but while the two-year master's degree students have obtained experiences from two study programs, the integrated master's degree students have all their experience from one. Although not specifically

stressed in the questionnaire, the questions the students are answering are directed at the whole study program. A fifth-year master's student is therefore supposed to evaluate all four years of study, while a second-year master's student will only consider the last year when filling out the questionnaire. While there is reason to believe that students emphasize their latest experiences, it is likely that experiences in earlier years might influence the answers in the survey, especially if they are negative. While a two-year master's degree student is likely to put this aside since he or she is attending a new study program, the response from a student on a five-year integrated master's degree study program might be influenced by an earlier negative experience.

It is not necessarily surprising to see a shift in satisfaction over time. Säljö⁷ finds in a study that how people learn seems to change over time as they become more experienced learners. Drawing upon this study, Van Rossum, Deijkers and Hamer⁸ find similar differences in students' concept of learning, which is also reflected in their answers of what they consider "good teaching". An experienced student wants a teacher who gives the student independence, engages in a teacher-student dialogue and help the student develop a critical and argumentative attitude. A less experienced student wants a teacher that can easily explain texts or concepts so the student can more easily reproduce the content on an exam, similar to what the student is familiar with from secondary school (ibid. p. 636-640). Thus, it is possible that when a more experienced fifth-year student is about to answer the survey, he or she might think differently and be more critical of the quality of teaching during the first years of the study program and take this into consideration when answering the questions.

Study track specific

The next type of explanations lies somewhere in-between that of methodological and subject type specific explanations. The two-year master's degree students actively chose to commence with the study program they are attending just over a year before they answered the survey. This could result in a selection bias where the more satisfied students choose to continue to the master level. Dissatisfied students attending integrated study programs have to actively drop out to avoid being selected as a respondent in the survey. A deselection by actively dropping out seems more radical than not choosing to apply for another study program.

Another possible explanation of this type is that some students, who study for a long time in the same study program, eventually could get tired of it. These students will contemplate dropping out, but a few might finish their studies, especially if they have reached the last year of a five-year study program. In our interviews with students at the 5YMP at University of Tromsø, both the second-year and fifth-year students had experienced that some students clearly lacked motivation, but continued with their studies anyhow. We asked the same students if they thought that less satisfied and motivated students might get more motivated and satisfied if they were able to switch to a 5YMP at another institution. Both student groups agreed that this was a good idea, and not necessarily only as an option for demotivated students. Some of the students had experience working as substitute teachers in other parts of Norway before starting their teacher education studies. During their practice hours at schools in Tromsø, they noticed that the teaching culture in the schools in the area was different from schools

7 Säljö, Roger (1979): «Learning about Learning», *Higher Education* Vol. 8, No. 4.

8 Van Rossum, Erik Jan, Rien Deijkers and Rebecca Hamer (1985): «Students' Learning Conceptions and their Interpretation of Significant Educational Concepts», *Higher Education* Vol 14.

in other regions they had worked in. In this case, not only would a change in the learning environment be for the better for demotivated students. Many students would also benefit from having practice in different parts of the country. In our follow-up survey to students attending 2YMP, 52 out of 58 respondents either agreed or partly agreed with the following statement: “It should be possible to switch campus or institution at some point during the five-year teacher education provision”. In the proposed framework plan for the new primary school teacher education provision, there is a split between the third and fourth year. The third year ends with the students writing a “bachelor’s degree thesis”. The idea is to open up for students to change institutions after the third year. This design was mainly proposed because not all institutions will be able to offer specialisation in all school subjects. However, there seems to be a need for the institutions to facilitate opportunities to swap institutions also for students wanting to pursue a specialisation in a school subject the institution offers.

Subject field specific

As seen in figure 3a/b and 4a/b the primary school teacher education seems to be the most extreme case. It has the largest drop in satisfaction among the integrated provisions, and the largest increase in satisfaction among the subject fields where provisions are split between bachelor’s and master’s degrees. In the first part of this section we look at explanations for the large increase in the split track.

As mentioned above, one plausible reason for the different trends in satisfaction between the split and integrated type of provision is the selection bias that occurs to a larger degree in the split track. This selection bias is larger in subject fields that prepare students for a specific profession after their undergraduate studies. In these fields, the percentage of students choosing to commence graduate studies is lower than in other fields and thus lead to a higher rise in satisfaction within teacher education. However, if we look at nursing and engineering, two other subject fields where students are prepared for their profession during undergraduate studies, the rise in satisfaction is smaller.

	2015		2014	
	Age (mean)	Age (sd)	Age (mean)	Age (sd)
Biology	26.9	4.4	26.8	4.5
Chemistry	26.1	3.4	26.0	3.2
Engineering	27.1	3.9	27.5	4.5
History, Philosophy, Religion	30.3	8.5	29.9	8.6
Language	30.5	10.2	31.4	10.9
Mathematics and Statistics	26.2	4.3	25.2	2.9
Nursing	37.3	8.0	37.1	9.4
Political Science	28.4	7.0	28.1	6.9
Sociology	25.7	2.6	26.3	2.5
Teacher Education – Primary School	32.5	9.7	32.4	9.5

Table 2: mean age and standard deviation from mean, selected subject fields (2014 and 2015)

A second possible subject specific explanation is age. The two-year master’s degrees in teacher education and nursing recruit a high number of older students. In our follow-up questionnaire to the 2YMP students, 14 out of 61 students (approx. 23 %) reported that they had teacher education and had worked full-time as a teacher before they commenced with their master’s degree. Table 2 shows

the mean age and the standard deviation to the mean of the respondents attending a two-year master's degree in one of the subject fields listed in figure 4a/b. The average age is the highest among the nursing students, followed by the teacher education students. The standard deviations are also high for these two groups, which indicates a high dispersion in age. From earlier analyses done on the material, we know that students above 35 years of age generally are more satisfied with their studies than younger students. The difference is not large, but it varies between subject fields. The age effect seems to be larger among the primary and preschool teacher education students above 35 years. Among nursing students the age groups under 22 and over 35 have the same level of satisfaction, while the students in-between are a little less satisfied. Among civil engineering students, the effect has a negative linear association. Here the youngest students have the highest satisfaction level, while the oldest have the lowest⁹. The age effect might therefore explain some of the relatively large rise in satisfaction among teacher education students compared to other subject fields.

In figure 2, we saw that teacher education provisions have the least satisfied bachelor students. The low starting point might also partly explain why the rise in satisfaction level is higher here than in other subject fields. By starting out low, the possibility for a high increase in satisfaction level is higher. On the other hand, one can question why the satisfaction level among the TEP4 students is lower than in all other subject fields. The differences in satisfaction between the subject fields are not large, so one should not put too much emphasis on this. However, some have theorized about the lower satisfaction level among the primary school teacher education students. Over years, the teacher education has been highly politicized. The moderate scores in especially mathematics and natural sciences by Norwegian pupils in the PISA study have also fuelled the debate and brought it on to the national media stage.¹⁰ Constant changes in the provision and the mostly negative focus from the media might influence the students' satisfaction.

When it comes to the integrated track, differences in entrance competence levels between integrated educational provisions could partly explain why the 5YMP is an extreme case. Most of the integrated provisions are generally regarded as prestigious. Admittance is mainly tied to grades received in secondary school, and getting enrolled at one of these programs usually requires high grades. Table 3 shows the average secondary school grades among the enrolled students at different integrated provisions. The secondary schools in Norway use a grade system that ranges from 1 to 6 where 1 is fail and 6 is the best grade. What differentiates the 5YMP from the other integrated provisions is the low average entrance competence. Critics have argued that because of this, one should not increase the provision from a four-year to a five-year degree that includes a master thesis. If we consider secondary school grades a fairly reliable indicator of a capacity for higher education, and not feeling up to the task an important factor in dissatisfaction, we would expect to see a lower satisfaction score among those students with the lowest grades from secondary education, and higher satisfaction scores among those with higher grades from secondary education.

9 p. 7-8 in Hamberg, Stephan – «Studiebarometeret 2014 – analyse av validitet og reliabilitet» - http://www.nokut.no/Documents/Studiebarometeret/2015/Hamberg_Stephan_Studiebarometeret_2014_analyse_av_validitet_og_reliabilitet_Rapport_2-2015.pdf

10 A large volume of literature exists on this topic, but for a telling example the education minister at the time of the first PISA test, Cristin Clemet, explicitly sites PISA as the political leverage she needed to introduce new reforms ("Problemformuleringsprivilegiet", Morgenbladet 14. July, 2006)

	Grade (mean)	Enrollment
Civil Engineering	5.03	1940
Dentistry	5.16	193
Law	5.05	1214
Medicine	5.51	690
Pharmacy	4.85	105
Psychology	5.48	209
Teacher Education – Primary School	4.21	137
Teacher Education – Secondary School	4.52	675
All integrated provisions	4.95	6348

Table 3: Average grade (secondary school) in subject fields with five or six year integrated master's degree provision.

As seen in figure 5, students with lower grades have a higher satisfaction than those with higher grades in the second year, while the picture is reversed in the 5th year. Although both have drops in average satisfaction, those with the best grades have a significantly smaller drop. Although the data does not supply any answers as to why this is, a plausible explanation could be that the increased demands of education has less of a negative effect on the students with a higher (average) capacity for studies. In other words: increasing the expected level of learning could make the students with the weakest entrance competency score even lower in overall satisfaction.

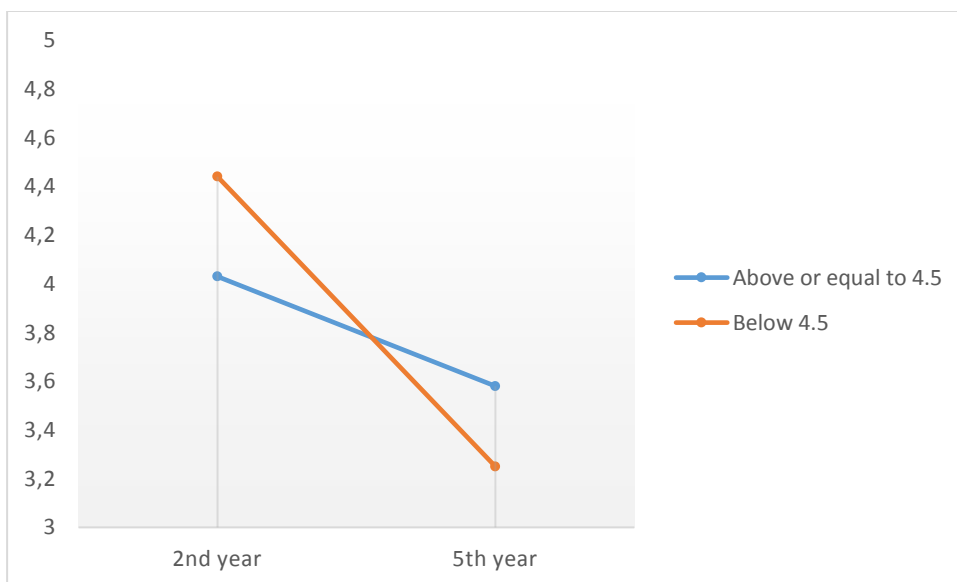


Figure 5: Secondary school grades and satisfaction among 5YMP students, development from 2nd to 5th year.

The potential negative effect on the “weaker” students relates to the overall question of “prestige” of the teacher education programs. Some, including the government, have pointed out that a five-year master's degree could increase this prestige.¹¹ The Finnish teacher education, a five-year master's

¹¹ For instance: the prime minister, Erna Solberg, stated that increasing both the length of teacher education and further education for teachers would “(...) help make teaching an attractive career in the future” (<http://www.tv2.no/a/4131997>)

degree provision, is often pointed to as evidence of this connection. The Finnish teachers are often considered an important factor to the success of the Finnish education system and the Finnish primary school teacher education is among the most popular and prestigious professions in Finland. Only about 1 of every 10 applicants are accepted and teaching is one of the most popular professions among secondary school graduates, sometimes even ahead of medical doctors, architects and lawyers¹². In his book *Finnish Lessons 2.0*, Pasi Sahlberg argues that the Finnish teacher education attracts many talented secondary school graduates because “it constitutes a master’s degree program and is therefore challenging enough for them”. However, he also argues that “it is not enough to improve the teacher education or to have “the best and the brightest” teaching in school”. The Finnish teachers are also given a high degree of personal autonomy and spend less time teaching than peers in many other countries do. Because of this, schools in Finland are considered professional learning communities where teachers are allowed to practice in the way they are educated to do.¹³

When we interviewed the students at the University of Tromsø, we asked them if they expected more autonomy in their teaching practice than the TEP4 students. The students mostly agreed that they should get more autonomy, especially within the topic of their master thesis. If not, “having a master’s degree loses its meaning” as a student put it. However, they also emphasized the importance and expectance of learning from the more experienced teachers as well.

In our questionnaire to the 2YMP students, 27 out of 57 respondents agreed or partly agreed with the following statement: “With a five-year master’s degree in primary school teacher education, I expect that teachers will be given more autonomy over their teaching practice than now”. 17 disagreed or partly disagreed, while 13 were indifferent. Among the respondents who said they expected to work as teachers in the future, 21 out of 41 agreed or partly agreed with the following statement: “I expect more autonomy over my teaching practice than the newly educated teachers without a master’s degree” (if the respondent reported that her or she did not work as a teacher between the bachelor and master level), or “than I myself had before I started on my master’s degree” (if the respondent reported that he or she had worked as a teacher before undertaking a master’s degree). 14 disagreed or partly disagreed, while 6 were indifferent. However, 35 of the 41 respondents said they expected to be able to use the knowledge they had acquired through their master’s degree education. Although the results on the expectance of more autonomy are ambiguous, it seems important that the schools let the teachers with master’s degrees use the knowledge they acquired through their studies in their practice. This is especially important in the field of research of their master’s thesis.

We also asked the same groups of students if they expect a future rise in the primary school teacher profession’s prestige when a master’s degree becomes obligatory for all new primary school teachers. Among the respondents to our questionnaire, 36 of 59 agreed or partly agreed with this statement while 12 disagreed or partly disagreed. The students at the University of Tromsø also mostly agreed with this, but also stressed that additional measures are needed. One student stated that finishing a master’s degree in itself is not considered especially remarkable in today’s society, and that a change in attitude among politicians and other parts of society is needed as well. Another student said it also

12 Sahlberg, Pasi (2015): *Finnish Lessons 2.0. What can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland*. Second edition. Teacher College Press: New York, NY: p. 101-103.

13 Sahlberg, Pasi (2015): *Finnish Lessons 2.0*: p. 98 and p.105-106.

depends on the quality of the education. If the education becomes too easy because of a low entrance quality, the prestige will probably not increase much. Thus, from the students' point of view it does not seem like changing the teacher education to a master's degree in itself will increase the prestige of the profession, but that it is an important step on the way to a more prestigious profession.

Conclusion

When comparing satisfaction levels among students at the two tracks to primary school teacher education, a quick glance at the numbers might make one question the implementation of a five-year integrated provision. However, in this paper we have shown that this might be a hasty conclusion.

While it is true that second year students on integrated programs have a higher average satisfaction than their fifth year peers, and the reverse is true for the same cohorts on bachelor and master programs, a closer look at the results help explain at least some of the difference.

First, there are some methodological reasons that can help explain the differences. One being the fact that the students in integrated programs rate all their previous four and a half years, while the master students only rate the one and a half years they have attended the master's program. Considering the fact that experienced learners have different expectations than inexperienced learners, they might look back on the program and conclude that it should have been more attuned to their current needs.

Second, we argue that some of the differences can be attributed to the organizing in different study tracks. The fact that students on two-year master programs make a conscious choice in continuing their studies adds a selection bias in the comparison. First, by the selection process at the end of the bachelor screening out those that are less than satisfied – they would presumably be less inclined to continue studying. Second, it has the reverse effect on those in five-year integrated programs – even those that are dissatisfied (or at least less satisfied) would probably be disinclined to end their studies without a degree, especially with only a year left of a full master's degree.

Third, both data and interviews find indications that our assumptions about track specific reasons for the differences in satisfaction were right. However, it does not explain in full the differences between teacher education and other professional education programs. Both of the above explanations should apply to them as well. We find that there are some conditions that apply to teacher education specifically, that help explain the "outlier" results of the teacher education satisfaction scores.

One obvious reason why the TEP4 and 2YMP programs have a larger rise in average satisfaction from the second to fifth year compared to 5YMP is that the TEP4 programs are rated fairly low in the second year. Furthermore, comparatively fewer students in teacher education (than in most other subject fields) chooses to continue with a master's program, so presumably only the most motivated continue. We also find that the age cohort of the teacher students might differentiate them from some of the other professional subject fields. One last point in differentiating teacher education is its highly politicized role in public debate – often in negative terms. That might give teacher education students a negative impression of their studies, and might help explain the higher average scores of the five year programs – they have for some time been touted as the "solution" to the difficulties in teacher education.

Our investigation into satisfaction among teacher education students has helped answering the two other research questions about the advantages and disadvantages of expanding the teacher education and if cooperation between teacher education institution could help solving the potential disadvantages. Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of increasing teacher education from four to five years, the impression among students is mostly positive or neutral. It is regarded as a necessary, but far from sufficient step towards increasing the prestige of teacher education. Students also seem to find the use of a master thesis as a positive development, but schools must find ways to make use of that specific competency.

We also find that students almost uniformly consider the possibility to swap HE-institutions after three years a positive thing. Taken together with what we have found on decreasing satisfaction among students on integrated programs – there seems to be a strong argument for making it easy to change institutions. The possibility for changing was mainly intended as a way of making sure students with a desire for a specialization not given at one institution, could be attained somewhere else. Our proposition is that institutions use the opportunity to encourage students to swap if they want to, and, not the least, make efforts to ensure those transitions are as easy as possible.

Our last finding relates to the prestige of teacher education. We found little evidence that teachers would enjoy a higher prestige as a consequence of the changes, but there seems to be a perception that it is a necessary condition. Almost all our informants stressed the importance of other factors in determining prestige, but admitted that having a master's degree potentially changes how teachers work, and that their specialization might give them more autonomy within a limited field.