

Bi- and multilingual universities – Challenges and future prospects, Conference on 2–3 September 2005, Helsinki, Finland

Theme 1. Multilingual higher education

Latent bilingual? The impetus for English and the motivation for Norwegian in Bachelor- and Master education

Vera Schwach

Norway is one of the small European countries with an established tradition of foreign languages for enabling communication including exchange of knowledge. To what extent is English used in the teaching at the Universities and Universities colleges in Norway? In an ongoing project NIFU STEP selected five cases for a quantitative and qualitative study: the discipline of physics, history, nursery, communication technology and the field of economy and administration; all of them are taught at four institutions located on different geographical sites. The use of English in various aspects of training and evaluation, including was mapped and classified. The paper examines the situation of today's latent bilingual universities, asking whether English supply or replace Norwegian. I examine the choice of language, by pointing as factors that promote the use of English, such as the impact of the scientific community in the field and a general (political) idea of "an international education" in the age of globalisation. The use of Norwegian is supported as a mean of communication enabling students to understand the subject taught and to express his/hers skills and knowledge. In a wider perspective the university education also is seen as a significant domain for cultivating the national language. I sum up by relating the Norwegian study to comparable European countries.

Address of author: Vera Schwach, Norwegian Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education – Center for Innovation (NIFU STEP), Hegdehaugsveien 31, NO – 0352 Oslo, Norway, E-mail: Vera.Schwach@nifustep.no.