

Name: Øystein A. Vangsnes

Institution: UiT Norgga árktaš universitehta

E-mail: oystein.vangsnes@uit.no

The turn of the tide for Sámi in Norwegian education?

Short description / Abstract:

The current tripartite curriculum for Sámi in Norwegian primary and middle school (Sámi 1, 2 and 3) has been operative since the school year 2006/2007. Figures from the GSI database show a 23.5% decrease in pupil numbers from 2,672 to 2,164 in the first ten years followed by a 28.3% increase to 2,776 in 2024. The number of pupils with Sámi medium education shows a similar, although less pronounced, fluctuation down 15.9% to 2015 and up again by 9.6% to 2024. Importantly, no similar fluctuation is seen in the total Norwegian pupil population which rose by a modest 1.2% during the whole 20 year period. The recent increase can be seen across all Sámi curricula, but higher in the second language than first language curricula. The statistics furthermore indicate that the number of pupils dropping out of the Sámi language provision is lower between 2015–2024 than between 2006–2015. In this paper I will discuss the positive trends seen in the statistics. I will argue that they must be seen against a more widespread shift in attitudes and sentiments towards Sámi culture, amplified by powerful artistic expressions by a wide range of Sámi artists, but also against a long-term systematic struggle for increased language rights and systemic changes in education since the 1960ies.