

# Comparison of primary education and English language teaching in Croatia and Norway

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**SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU  
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET  
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**Ivona Starešinčić**

**COMPARISON OF PRIMARY EDUCATION AND ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE TEACHING IN CROATIA AND NORWAY**

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**Mentor rada:**  
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# COMPARISON OF PRIMARY EDUCATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN CROATIA AND NORWAY

## Summary

English is one of the most important languages. We communicate through language more than any other media, which makes language our primary source of communication, with English earning a title of a global language through becoming a prioritized foreign language in schools (Crystal, 2003, p. 4). English language became the most common second language among the countries, as well as one of the most widely spoken official languages. According to Crystal (2003, pp. 11-13), there are many advantages to learning the English language, as it is not only the language of academia and the lingua franca of the world, but also opens many doors to different media and cultures and facilitates communication between different cultures on the international level.

In Croatia and Norway, English as a second (foreign) language is an official subject in primary schools. The subjects are held according to the national curriculum that is specific to each country. The focus of this thesis is to first compare primary education in Croatia and Norway according to ISCED 11. According to the Eurostat website, “International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is the reference international classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields.” After the comparison of the primary education itself, the focus will be put on national curricula and the English subject curricula. The Croatian and Norwegian Ministries of Education have each established their own curriculum. The next step is to examine the assessment methods used in primary schools and compare the differences between Croatia and Norway. The Glossary of Education reform (2015) defines assessment in education as a “wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition or educational needs of students.” The goal of this thesis is to notice the differences and similarities in the primary education, focusing on the school system itself and the curriculum structure, and English subject curricula that these two distinct countries have.

Key words: English language, primary education, curriculum, assessment

# USPOREDBA PRIMARNOG OBRAZOVANJA I NASTAVE ENGLESKOG JEZIKA U HRVATSKOJ I NORVEŠKOJ

## Sažetak

Engleski je jedan od najvažnijih jezika na svijetu. Komuniciramo putem jezika više nego bilo kojeg drugog medija, što čini jezik našim primarnim izvorom komunikacije, a engleski je dobio titulu globalnog jezika postavši prioritetni strani jezik u školama (Crystal, 2003, str. 4). Engleski jezik postao je najveći drugi jezik na svijetu, kao i jedan od najgovorenijih službenih jezika. Prema Crystalu (2003, str. 11-13), postoje mnoge prednosti u učenju engleskog jezika, budući da je to ne samo jezik akademije i lingua franke, već također otvara mnoga vrata prema različitim medijima i kulturama, te se koristi za osiguravanje komunikacije između različitih kultura na međunarodnoj razini.

U Hrvatskoj i Norveškoj, engleski jezik je službeni predmet kao strani jezik u osnovnim školama. Predmeti se održavaju prema nacionalnom kurikulumu koji je specifičan za svaku zemlju. Ovim će se radom najprije usporediti osnovno obrazovanje u Hrvatskoj i Norveškoj prema ISCED-u 11. Prema web stranici Eurostata, „Međunarodna standardna klasifikacija obrazovanja (ISCED) je referentna međunarodna klasifikacija za organiziranje obrazovnih programa i srodnim kvalifikacijama.“ Nakon usporedbe osnovnoškolskog obrazovanja, ovaj rad će se usredotočiti na nacionalne kurikulume i predmetne kurikulume nastave engleskog jezika. Hrvatska i Norveška imaju vlastite kurikulume koja su izdana od strane hrvatskog i norveškog ministarstva obrazovanja. Sljedeći korak je usmjeravanje pozornosti na vrednovanje u osnovnim školama prema službenoj dokumentaciji, kao i usporedba vrednovanja u Hrvatskoj i Norveškoj. Pojmovnik reforme obrazovanja (2015) definira vrednovanje u obrazovanju kao „širok izbor metoda ili alata koje nastavnici koriste za evaluaciju, mjerenje i dokumentiranje akademske spremnosti, napretka u učenju, stjecanja vještina ili obrazovnih potreba učenika.“ Krajnji cilj ovog diplomskog rada je uočiti razlike i sličnosti u osnovnom obrazovanju, s naglaskom na sam školski sustav i strukturu kurikuluma te predmetne kurikulume engleskog jezika koje imaju ove izrazito različite zemlje.

Ključne riječi: engleski jezik, primarno obrazovanje, kurikulum, ocjenjivanje

## INTRODUCTION

English language, as a lingua franca, might be one of the most widespread foreign language subjects in primary schools worldwide. As language is the primary tool used for communication, English can connect different cultures, especially through constantly developing technology and media. Most people in the world consider English their second language, if not their mother tongue, and teaching it is imperative for establishing worldwide communication and removing language barriers.

The English language as a school subject in primary school is managed differently across various parts of the world and school systems. All school systems, especially primary education, evolve over time to better accommodate students' needs, which involves many different types of documents in the process. Key documents responsible for the function of education and different subjects are school and subject curricula, which are based on the values and principles of the school system they belong to. Croatia and Norway are two countries with entirely different school systems and approaches to curricula, but with similar stances on principles and objectives based on students' needs.

As Scandinavian school systems, in general, are considered to be among some of the best educational systems in Europe, this thesis will aim to compare the primary education and core curriculum of Croatia and Norway, two countries on opposite sides of Europe. After introducing the primary education systems and national curricula used in each country, the focus will be on the subject curricula for the English language, as well as the way students are assessed during and after their learning process. As assessment is one of the main ways of comparison, it will be used as a tool to compare the values that each country holds when assessing students. Lastly, all aspects analysed throughout the thesis will be compared, with differences and similarities pointed out to create an overview of education in Croatia and Norway. Finally, the author will offer her personal view on each of the two countries' primary education systems, curricula, and assessment methods.

## **1. PRIMARY EDUCATION**

Education can be defined as an essential lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and various skills that can take place in or outside formal institutions. One of the first stages of education offered by formal institutions is primary education. “Primary education is an amalgam of so many different elements – interpersonal, emotional, academic, physical, moral, even aesthetic and spiritual (Hayes, 2010, p. 6).” Primary education covers the initial years of a child’s formal education and is considered essential for their overall intellectual, social, and emotional development. In most countries, primary education is compulsory to ensure the individual development of children. It helps children develop their cognitive and social skills, promotes their personal growth and well-being and prepares them for further education and lifelong learning.

To help students achieve their learning objectives, a national curriculum is set in place for every stage of education. National curricula “are explicit about the overall aims and values of primary education in that the school curriculum should aim to provide opportunities for all students to learn and to achieve, promote students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and prepare all students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life (Hayes, 2010, p. 82).”

Aside from setting aims and values to help students build a foundation in core subjects, the national curriculum also defines assessment of learning and progress. According to The Glossary of Education Reform (2015), assessment in education refers to the various methods used by educators to evaluate and measure students’ learning progress, skills, and educational needs. The goal of assessment is to provide feedback to students and educators and to improve the quality of the learning process.

### ***1.1. INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION***

Primary education is fully dependent on educational systems that vary between different countries. Because of this discrepancy, it is much easier to compare international education using the “International Standard Classification of Education” (ISCED). According to Eurostat Statistics Explained website (2023), ISCED is an international classification for education that was developed by UNESCO to make different education programs comparable. ISCED classifies



education programs by levels of education and fields of education. Concerning the levels of education, which were classified according to ISCED 1997, ISCED 11 was created as its revision and has been in function since 2014. ISCED 11 includes both formal and non-formal education programs that provide certain qualifications recognized by national authorities. Formal education is institutionalized and intentional education that is part of the public education system of a country, which often takes place in educational institutions such as schools. Non-formal education is institutionalized education, which is additional or alternative education often used to complement formal education. While it recognizes formal and non-formal education, ISCED 11 excludes informal and incidental education. In addition to providing educational levels, ISCED 11 also classifies the approximate duration of each level. There are nine levels of education, ranging from level 0 to level 8, as it can be seen in the table below:

**Table 1.**

*Levels of education according to ISCED 11 (Eurostat Statistics Explained)*

LEVEL	NAME
ISCED 0	<i>Early childhood education</i>
ISCED 1	<i>Primary education</i>
ISCED 2	<i>Lower secondary education</i>
ISCED 3	<i>Upper secondary education</i>
ISCED 4	<i>Post-secondary non-tertiary education</i>
ISCED 5	<i>Short cycle tertiary education</i>
ISCED 6	<i>Bachelor's or equivalent level</i>
ISCED 7	<i>Master's or equivalent level</i>
ISCED 8	<i>Doctoral or equivalent level</i>

According to the classification table, primary education is classified as level 1 and occupies the second position. The duration of ISCED 1 typically varies from 4 to 7 years, with the most common duration being 6 years. The primary education program, according to ISCED 11, provides students with a basic level of fundamental knowledge and development, with a focus on numeracy and literacy. The program is taught by one teacher who organizes classes around set units. Primary education aims to familiarize students with various areas of study that they will continue to develop

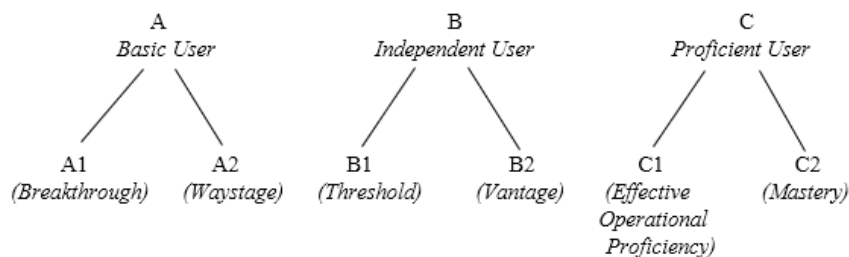
in higher education while establishing a strong learning base that enables them to broaden their overall understanding. ISCED 1 usually lasts for six years and can be classified as primary education, elementary education, or other.

## 1.2. LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY AND ASSESSMENT TYPES ACCORDING TO CEFR

The “Common European Framework Reference” (CEFR, 2001) is a document that standardizes language learning across Europe by providing guidelines for syllabi exams, textbooks and other materials. The document specifies the necessary language competencies for proficient usage and also incorporates cultural understanding. Additionally, the framework defines proficiency levels which enable students to track their progress throughout their lifetime. Chapter 3 (CEFR, 2001, pp. 21-42) focuses on common reference levels, or rather, levels of proficiency in a language. Levels of proficiency are achieved through reading, listening, speaking and writing, which are common to all European language teaching standards. There are six levels of proficiency, as we can see below:

**Figure 1.**

*Levels of proficiency according to CEFR*



Chapter 9 of the “Common European Framework Reference” (CEFR, 2001, pp. 177-196) specifically focuses on types of assessment. Firstly, evaluation is differentiated from assessment, as evaluation is a much broader term. In assessment, three concepts are regarded as fundamental: validity, reliability, and feasibility. The main focus of the Framework is validity, which refers to the extent to which an assessment precisely measures the intended skills and accurately represents proficiency, while reliability pertains to the consistency of results across separate administrations of the same assessment. Nevertheless, what holds more importance than reliability is the accuracy

of decisions and the validity of criteria in accordance with the standard. If two organizations utilize criteria related to the same standard to guide their assessment decisions for a particular skill, and if the standard is appropriate and valid for both contexts, then the outcomes from both systems will show a correlation, which is vital in enabling assessment as a comparison tool across diverse curricula and school systems.

Although the chapter focuses on much more than just types of assessment, this thesis will focus on types of assessment. Different countries have different assessment standards; however, the types of assessment remain the same. For further comparison, the focus will be on formative assessment, summative assessment, assessment by others, and self-assessment.

1) Formative assessment (CEFR, 2001, p. 186) involves the gathering and analysis of information on learning progress, strengths, and weaknesses, which teachers can use to adapt their course planning and provide feedback to students. This practice encompasses non-quantitative data obtained through questionnaires and consultations and is conducted continually throughout the course.

2) Summative assessment (CEFR, 2001, p. 186), in contrast, provides an overview of a student's overall performance at the end of a course, typically through a final grade. This type of assessment does not necessarily measure proficiency and typically employs norm-referenced, fixed-point, and achievement-based evaluation methods.

3) Assessment by others (CEFR, 2001, p. 191) refers to the evaluation conducted by teachers or examiners, and it may also be referred to as teacher assessment.

4) Self-assessment (CEFR, 2001, pp. 191-192) involves students assessing themselves. Students can participate in various assessment techniques, and it has been proven that structured self-assessment can achieve correlations to teacher assessments and tests. Furthermore, it can serve as a motivational and awareness-raising tool, enabling students to recognize their areas of strength and weakness and direct their learning efforts more efficiently.

## 2. PRIMARY EDUCATION IN CROATIA

In Croatia, elementary education is free, compulsory, and is eight years long. Students can start elementary school when they are 6 or 7 years old, and it typically lasts until they reach the age of 15. According to the information provided on the website of the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education<sup>1</sup>, primary education encompasses regular as well as specialized programs, with the latter customized to cater to the specific requirements of students. This traditional model of elementary and primary education is unique to Croatia in Europe.

Although the terms "elementary education" and "primary education" are often used interchangeably in Croatia, there is an equivalent to ISCED 1 that is a part of the compulsory eight years of education. Elementary education is divided into lower and upper classes. Lower classes, which consist of grades 1 to 4, align with the ISCED 1 level of education according to ISCED 11. Lower grades usually last from age 6 to 11, with one teacher teaching all subjects except for religion and foreign language. Compulsory subjects in lower classes include Croatian, mathematics, science, physical education, music education, arts, and at least one foreign language (usually English, German, or French).

Upper classes consist of grades 5 to 8, which are equivalent to ISCED 2 according to the levels of education. They typically last from age 11 to 15, with different teachers teaching a wider variety of subjects. In addition to the subjects taught in lower classes, compulsory subjects in upper classes include history, geography, biology, chemistry, and physics.

When it comes to choosing an elementary education program, many parents opt for the school that is closest to their home. However, there are other options, such as alternative elementary education programs and special schools for children with disabilities. Some of the alternative schools include Waldorf and Montessori schools, which have become increasingly popular in recent years, as well as special programs for children with disabilities and national minorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i športa. (n.d.). Osnovnoškolski odgoj i obrazovanje. Retrieved from <https://mzo.gov.hr/istaknute-teme/odgoj-i-obrazovanje/osnovnoskolski-odgoj-i-obrazovanje/129>. Last accessed 19.05.2023.

## ***2.1. THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION IN CROATIA***

The Ministry of Science and Education in Croatia is the publisher of the “National Curriculum Framework for Pre-School Education and General Compulsory Education” (2011). It serves as the foundational document for compulsory elementary education in Croatia and is based on both worldwide and European educational trends, as well as traditional Croatian educational documentation. The curriculum is designed to promote the development of competencies essential for realizing personal potential and for responsible participation in society, and it is also responsible for designing assessment criteria.

In recent times, Croatia has undergone a substantial reform of its education system’s curriculum with the aim of upgrading and enhancing the quality of education in the country. The reform has been in progress since 2015 and was implemented in the academic year 2019/2020. The main goal of the curricular reform is to shift the focus from traditional rote learning to a more student-centered approach that aims to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. The reform also seeks to integrate new technologies and digital literacy into the curriculum, as well as promote intercultural and environmental education. The document reviewed in this thesis is the current Framework in use. However, there have been public discussion documents regarding the curriculum since 2017, which are still in progress of becoming official documents regarding the curriculum.

### ***2.1.1. CORE VALUES, COMPETENCES, GOALS AND PRINCIPLES***

The curricular reform in Croatia has established a foundation for the creation of a national curriculum that aims to help students develop their potential and encourage lifelong learning. The curriculum is designed to promote education and upbringing that is directed and focused on each student, accommodating all teaching methods and accepting the individuality of every student, while providing help to achieve their full potential in the best ways possible. According to the Ministry of Science and Education (MZOS, 2011, p. 22), reform of the educational system in Croatia should be seen as allowing opportunities for the development of the Croatian national, cultural, and spiritual identity within the current complex globalization processes. The foundational values that underpin the educational system include human dignity, freedom, justice, patriotism,

social equality, solidarity, dialogue and tolerance, work, honesty, peace, health, environmental protection, and other democratic values. The curriculum identifies four core values:

1) Knowledge (MZOS, 2011, p. 22) is the fundamental productive and developmental force in society, and education and lifelong learning are the main drivers of the development of Croatian society and each individual.

2) Identity (MZOS, 2011, p. 22) presumes a structured preparation of children and youth to develop sensitivity towards others, their family, the vulnerable, impoverished, and marginalized individuals, intergenerational care, their surroundings, and the overall living environment.

3) Responsibility (MZOS, 2011, p. 22) encourages children and young individuals to actively engage in social activities and instils a sense of accountability towards the collective social welfare, the environment, labour, themselves, and their peers.

4) Solidarity (MZOS, 2011, p. 22) involves a systematic training approach to sensitize children and young individuals towards others, their family, the vulnerable, impoverished, and marginalized individuals, intergenerational care, their surroundings, and the overall living environment.

The national curriculum in Croatia lists primary goals aligned with its purpose and core values (MZOS, 2011, p. 23). These goals include developing students' intellectual, physical, aesthetic, social, moral, and spiritual development, raising awareness of national identity and cultural heritage, promoting the Croatian language, educating students in cultural and civilizational values, preparing them for living in a multicultural world, ensuring they acquire basic and vocational competencies, fostering independence, self-confidence, responsibility, and creativity, and preparing students for lifelong learning.

The guiding values on which the national curriculum in Croatia is based are principles determined by the Ministry to create a base for the realization of the national curriculum. These principles form the foundation, and all individuals involved in developing and executing the curriculum should abide by them. The principles are linked to the goals and achievements of students and are an essential component of ensuring internal coherence and collaborative action among curriculum stakeholders. The values that encompass high-quality education for all, equal educational opportunities, the obligation of general education, horizontal and vertical mobility, inclusivity, scientific grounding, respect for human rights, competence, professional ethics,

democracy, school autonomy, pedagogical and school pluralism, European dimension, and interculturalism are all integral to the national curriculum framework in Croatia (MZOS, 2011, p. 26).

“The National Curriculum Framework for Pre-School Education and General Compulsory Education“ (MZOS, 2011) is a document with a unique focus on competencies. The development of the curriculum in European countries centers on student competencies, which is one of the primary focal points of curriculum policy. The European Union has identified eight key competencies for lifelong learning, which the educational policy of Croatia has also adopted (MZOS, 2011, p. 17). These competencies are: communication in the native language, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, learning-to-learn competence, social and civic competence, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression (MZOS, 2011, p. 17). They are fundamental to ensuring individuals’ personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion, and employability.

The curriculum approach focused on the development of competencies requires changes in teaching methods and forms. The introduction of open didactic-methodical systems is suggested, which enables both students and teachers to have a say in choosing the content, methods, forms, and conditions for achieving program objectives. It also allows for more independent and collaborative learning.

### ***2.1.2. EDUCATIONAL CYCLES***

The national curriculum (MZOS, 2011, pp. 35-36) defines four educational cycles that are created to respect the development of students. They serve primarily for curriculum planning and programming of educational areas and subject curricula, based on the principles of interconnectedness and meaningful alignment. Curriculum programming involves considering interdisciplinary or cross-curricular topics, while planning takes into account the student's engagement in schoolwork and homework. They cover several years of schooling at a certain level of education and share common educational goals or expectations. The first cycle covers primary

education (ISCED 1), which includes grades 1 (6/7 years old) to 4 (9/10 years old) of primary school. The table below shows the educational cycles mentioned in the text:

**Table 2.**

*Educational cycles according to the national curriculum*

FOURTH CYCLE	<i>Highschool / Grammar school</i>
THIRD CYCLE	<i>Grades 7 - 8</i>
SECOND CYCLE	<i>Grades 5 - 6</i>
FIRST CYCLE	<i>Grades 1 - 4</i>

### **2.1.3. EDUCATIONAL AREAS AND CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS**

The national curriculum defines seven educational areas (MZOS, 2011, p. 54) and six cross-curricular topics (MZOS, 2011, p. 42) in primary education. Each educational area has outcomes that are determined according to the educational cycle in which it is organized. Every educational area consists of a description, educational goals and expected student achievements in each educational cycle. Each educational area is divided into listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with respective outcomes for each cycle.

1) Language and communication (MZOS, 2011, p. 55). The language-communication area aims to help students acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes related to language, communication, and culture. This includes learning linguistic and communication skills in Croatian and other languages, developing literary and media culture skills, and the ability to approach media critically. Croatian is taught as a mother tongue, second language, foreign language, and other languages for people with special needs within this area.

2) Mathematics (MZOS, 2011, p. 115). The goal of teaching and learning mathematics is for students to gain knowledge, skills, and abilities in calculation, estimation, logical and spatial thinking. This involves problem-solving, discovering patterns, constructing models, interpreting data, and exchanging ideas. Mathematics education helps students become active learners, encouraging them to be creative, systematic, independent, and persistent in solving problems, using information from various sources. This prepares them to engage in lifelong learning.



3) Natural sciences (MZOS, 2011, p. 132). The natural sciences involve exploring and describing nature, living and non-living matter, from the atomic level to the most distant parts of the universe. The objective is for students to attain fundamental competence in natural science, which will enable them to adjust to the rapid advancements in science and technology and support sustainable development while acting responsibly towards nature, environment, and health. By learning natural sciences, students can cultivate logical, creative, and critical thinking abilities that can be utilized to tackle situations that necessitate knowledge and expertise.

4) Information technology and techniques (MZOS, 2011, p. 160). This area has the objective to provide students with the knowledge and abilities to utilize technical products in daily life, work, and education, as well as to cultivate their comprehension of the economic and ethical significance of human labor. Additionally, students are introduced to the basic knowledge of information society technologies, with the goal of making them adaptable to fast changes in society, science, and technology. The area seeks to develop students' awareness of the possibilities, limitations, advantages, and disadvantages of technology and information and communication technology to make them successful individuals.

5) Social studies and humanities (MZOS, 2011, p. 180). The social-humanistic area aims to develop students as responsible individuals who can understand and critically reflect on the role of humans in the modern world and actively participate in their societies' development, especially in its democratic development. This area covers personal, social, economic, political, cultural, religious, and ethical-moral issues of human life and society in different times and spaces.

6) Arts (MZOS, 2011, p. 208). The purpose of the artistic area is to help students understand and actively engage with art, learn about different artistic content, understand themselves and the world through artistic works and media, and express themselves creatively. The area includes Visual Arts and Design, Music Culture and Art, Film and Media Culture and Art, Dramatic Culture and Art, and Art of Movement and Dance. The arts play a significant role in shaping personal experience and understanding of the world, shaping beliefs, attitudes, and worldviews, evoking emotions, enhancing past experiences, developing critical awareness, and providing a glimpse into a different world.

7) Physical education and health (MZOS, 2011, p. 252). The purpose of the physical and health area is to acquire knowledge, skills, and habits and develop a positive attitude towards physical

activity and a healthy lifestyle to enable individuals to reach their best physical and mental potential. This areas approach will allow students to learn easier, achieve equal personal and social relationships and, by respecting others' differences, develop an active attitude towards life and their own initiative.

According to the core curriculum for primary education (MZOS, 2011, p. 42), planning and implementing cross-curricular or interdisciplinary topics contribute to the mutual connection of subjects and educational areas into a coherent whole. They develop students' fundamental competencies. Cross-curricular topics are mandatory in all subjects, and all educational activity holders in the school are obliged to implement them. There are six cross-curricular topics:

1) Personal and social development (MZOS, 2011, p. 42). The purpose of teaching personal and social development is to enable students to recognize and critically evaluate their own and social values as important factors that affect their thinking and behavior, to develop responsibility for their behavior and life, a positive attitude towards others, and to constructively participate in social life.

2) Health, safety, and environmental protection (MZOS, 2011, p. 43). This topic promotes and ensures the development of positive and responsible attitudes of students towards their health and safety, the health and safety of others, as well as towards environmental protection and sustainable development. It encompasses all aspects of health: physical, mental, emotional, and social health.

3) Learning to learn (MZOS, 2011, p. 44). Its intention is to enable students to effectively organize and manage their learning, as well as to foster a positive attitude towards learning. This competence is essential for lifelong learning and is significant for further educational and professional development. It includes the ability to organize and monitor the acquisition, processing, and evaluation of new knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes, as well as their application in various situations, and more.

4) Enterprise (MZOS, 2011, p. 45). Developing entrepreneurial competence in students is to develop personal qualities, knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes necessary for individuals to act as successful entrepreneurs. The aim is to nurture students into entrepreneurial, innovative, and autonomous individuals who embrace change and are comfortable with risk-taking. This involves

fostering their social and communication skills, providing a foundational understanding of economics, business management, and the crafts industry.

5) Usage of information and communication technology (MZOS, 2011, p. 45). Information and communication technology provide the most modern available teaching aids and tools in all educational areas. It helps to develop students' independent learning skills and collaboration abilities, as well as their communication skills. It also fosters a positive attitude towards learning, improves their presentation skills, and approaches to problem-solving and research.

6) Civic education (MZOS, 2011, p. 46). The purpose of teaching the interdisciplinary topic of Civic Education is to contribute to the students' ability to actively and effectively perform their civic role. This theme includes knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that develop students' democratic awareness and encourage them to participate actively and effectively in the development of democratic relationships in school, the local community, and society.

## ***2.2. ASSESSMENT IN CROATIA***

According to the "Regulation on methods, procedures, and evaluation elements of students in primary and secondary schools", assessment is "systematic data collection in the process of learning and the achieved level of educational outcomes, competencies, knowledge, skills, abilities, independence, and responsibility towards work, in accordance with predetermined and accepted methods and elements (MZOS, 2019)." In Croatian education, assessment includes three approaches. Assessment for learning serves to plan and improve learning and teaching. Furthermore, assessment as learning serves to make the student an active participant in the evaluation process and serves to develop a self-regulated approach to learning. The third approach to assessment is the assessment of learned, which involves grading the level of student achievement and, unlike the two previous assessment approaches, results in a numeric grade. In Croatian education, assessment is transparent, public, and continuous. It should be noted that the use of numeric grades begins only in the second semester of the first grade. Until then, assessment for learning and assessment as learning are employed.

The national curriculum (MZOS, 2011, p. 280) says that assessment is based on a holistic approach to monitoring and promoting the individual development of each child and student, and

educational institutions are responsible for providing systematic teaching, encouraging and improving their development in accordance with their abilities and inclinations, and systematically monitoring their progress. School grading should include both qualitative and quantitative evaluations of all students' achievements and efforts.

The purpose of evaluating students' activities and achievements is to foster their self-evaluation skills and awareness of their own knowledge and competencies, as well as the importance of lifelong learning. Additionally, it should aid in developing a positive self-image and motivating students to plan their work and make independent decisions. Students need guidance in the process of learning and assessing their knowledge, skills, and abilities to develop self-evaluation skills (MZOS, 2011, p. 280).

School grades, no matter how they are expressed, serve to diagnose, predict, and motivate. The purpose of formative assessment is to motivate students to study and improve the quality of their learning and achievement outcomes, while numerical grades also function as an indicator of their progress.

In the first educational cycle, numerical grades with a formative description hold a significant part in the assessment, especially in grades 2, 3, and 4, as students have an easier time understanding the abstract nature of a numerical grade. In Croatia, the numerical grade as an indicator of the level of achievement of educational outcomes is a 5-point grade scale, as in the table below:

**Table 3.**

*5-point grade scale used as assessment*

5	<i>Excellent</i>
4	<i>Very good</i>
3	<i>Good</i>
2	<i>Sufficient</i>
1	<i>Insufficient</i>

### **3. PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NORWAY**

According to “Education - from Kindergarten to Adult Education” from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (Kunnskapsdepartementet - KD), “The Norwegian educational system aims to be among the best in the world with regards to both academic levels and breadth of participation and completion rates” (KD, 2007, p. 5).

A framework that governs the education system in Norway is called The Education Act. It was first introduced in 1998 to ensure that all citizens have access to education. The Education Act divides the education system into levels, with primary education being the first level. Primary education, which is a part of compulsory elementary education in Norway, lasts for ten years. At the age of 6, children in Norway begin attending school, which they continue until they reach the age of 16. This educational system was established in 1997 for children born in 1991 or later and is grounded on the principle of providing education that is flexible enough to accommodate all students (KD, 2007, p. 9). Compulsory elementary education is split into primary education (barneskole) and lower secondary education (ungdomsskole). Primary education lasts from grades 1-7 (ages 6-13) and is equivalent to ISCED 1 level of education. Lower secondary education, which lasts from grades 8-10 (ages 13-16), is equivalent to ISCED 2 level of education.

According to the World Education Network website, the “K-12 Education System in Norway” explains that compulsory subjects for primary and lower secondary education include general subjects, as well as social science, food and health, in-depth studies of the Norwegian language, Christianity, religion and ethics education (CREE), and others.

In the 1st grade, students spend most of their time learning through educational games and learning letters and basic English. In the 2nd grade, students are introduced to math, Norwegian, sciences, social studies, arts, and religion. English is a compulsory foreign language subject from the 1st grade. Students have the option to choose an additional foreign language or an in-depth study in Norwegian, English, or Sami in lower secondary school.

From grades 1-4, every educational facility is obligated to provide day care for school children (SFO), which allows school children to participate in play, cultural, and leisure activities. Facilities are also obligated to provide good developmental conditions for children with disabilities, who have the right to daycare from grades 1-7.

### ***3.1. THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NORWAY***

The Ministry of Education and Research in Norway introduced the national curriculum for primary education, called the National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet) in 2006 and made revisions to it in 2020. It includes the core curriculum, subject curricula, and the framework for class periods and subjects. The curriculum sets out the learning objectives, content, and assessment criteria for primary education in Norway. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of developing students' knowledge, skills and attitudes in a range of areas. The curriculum gives special importance to fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and collaboration skills. The curriculum also promotes the development of social and emotional skills and a sense of responsibility towards the environment and society.

According to The Directorate of Education (Utdanningsdirektoratet), an executive body for education, the core curriculum is a crucial part of the national curriculum laid down by the Royal Decree in 2017. It applies to primary and secondary education in Norway and comprises education from the 1st grade. The core curriculum aims to provide all students with a broad and balanced education that prepares them for further education, work and life as active and responsible citizens. The core curriculum highlights the importance of developing fundamental skills such as literacy, numeracy and digital competence while also stressing the need to nurture social and emotional skills such as empathy, collaboration and communication. This is to ensure that students are well-equipped to participate in society in a responsible and active manner. One of the key features of the core curriculum is its focus on interdisciplinary learning. This involves linking learning across subject areas and applying knowledge and skills in new and varied contexts. Interdisciplinary learning is seen as essential for developing students' critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity.

#### ***3.1.1. PURPOSE, CORE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES***

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has issued an official core curriculum document that outlines the fundamental values of human rights and respect for cultural and humanist heritage on which the purpose of primary education, as determined by The Education

Act, is based. Provided education needs to promote learning of cultural heritage and traditions, as well as cultural differences. The main purpose is to help students develop knowledge and critical thinking which they can improve on and build on throughout their lives, and act ethically and responsibly as a part of society (KD, 2017, p. 5).

Core values of education are based on universal rights, but are also based on values and beliefs of different cultures. The Education Act bases values on Christian heritage and belief, however, with respect to the Sami people in Norway, Sami schools base their education on Sami culture, society and heritage. There are six core values that are considered universal for all that take part in the education system in Norway:

1) Human dignity (KD, 2017, p. 6), which is the fundamental value education is based on. It includes acknowledging cultural diversity and promoting human rights, equality and equal opportunities. All students should be treated equally, without discrimination, and the school must consider each student's individuality to facilitate a sense of belonging. The school also needs to promote forgiveness, charity, solidarity and encourage pupils to reflect on preventing the violation of human dignity.

2) Identity and cultural diversity (KD, 2017, p. 7), where the development of individual student identities and their sense of belonging in society is a crucial aspect. Norway's cultural heritage is characterized by the coexistence of the Christian and Sami cultures, which has contributed to its cultural diversity. This value ensures that every student gets training in their language and that every student gets insight into the Norwegian history and the society, including all national minorities in Norway.

3) Critical thinking and ethical awareness (KD, 2017, p. 8), which promotes the development of scientific and critical thinking skills, as well as ethical awareness. This includes applying reason in an inquisitive and systematic way, assessing different sources of knowledge and being aware of ethical considerations.

4) The joy of creating, engagement and the urge to explore (KD, 2017, p. 9), which emphasizes the importance of allowing students to experience joy in creating, exploring, and transforming ideas into practical actions. Creative learning processes are crucial for in-depth learning and developing

skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking. Creative abilities also contribute to enriching society through innovation and entrepreneurship.

5) Respect for nature and environmental awareness (KD, 2017, p. 9), which highlights the importance of developing an appreciation of nature and developing climate and environmental awareness in students. Students need to acquire knowledge and respect for nature, seeing it as a resource and source of joy and learning, so the coming generations could be equipped with knowledge, ethical awareness and technological innovation to find solutions to global environmental threats such as climate change, pollution and loss of biological diversity.

6) Democracy and participation (KD, 2017, p. 10), which suggests that schools should facilitate democracy education and provide students with opportunities to engage in democratic processes. Schools should promote democratic values and attitudes that counteract prejudice and discrimination, and foster diversity and inclusion.

Education and all-round development (*bildung*) are interdependent, so schools use underlying principles to achieve both. The primary and secondary education process is important for lifelong development with the goal of intellectual freedom, independence, responsibility and compassion for others. Schools give students a foundation for understanding themselves, others, and the world and provide good opportunities for participation in all areas of education, work and societal life. All-round education is achieved through a set of principles:

1) Social learning and development (KD, 2017, p. 12), where education supports and contributes to the social learning and development of students through both academic and non-academic activities. It encourages students to communicate and collaborate with each other, develop empathy and listening skills and express their own opinions while advocating for others.

2) Competence in subjects (KD, 2017, p. 13), where the competence concept is central to the subject curricula and includes knowledge, skills, understanding, reflection and critical thinking. In-depth learning is necessary for students to apply subject knowledge and skills in different contexts and situations.

3) Basic skills (KD, 2017, p. 14), where the curriculum identifies five basic skills that are necessary for learning and understanding the subjects: reading, writing, numeracy, oral skills and digital skills. The development of basic skills is crucial for the formation of students' identity, social



relationships and their ability to engage in education, work and society. It is important to view these skills in connection with each other and across different subjects, and teachers from all subject areas should support students in developing their basic skills throughout their educational journey.

4) Learning to learn (KD, 2017, p. 14) refers to the process of students reflecting on their own learning, acquiring knowledge independently and developing an awareness of their own learning processes. This will contribute to their independence and sense of mastery and form the basis for lifelong learning.

### ***3.1.2. INTERDISCIPLINARY TOPICS***

Schools are expected to facilitate learning in three interdisciplinary topics: health and life skills, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development. These topics are based on prevailing societal challenges that require engagement and effort from individuals and communities globally. Students develop competence by working with issues from different subjects and gain insight into challenges and dilemmas related to these topics. They are also expected to understand the relationship between actions and consequences and to learn about collaborative solutions to these challenges.

1) Health and life skills (KD, 2017, p. 15) aim to promote physical and mental health, encourage responsible life choices and develop life skills to understand and influence factors important for mastering one's own life. Topics covered under this interdisciplinary topic include physical and mental health, lifestyle habits, sexuality and gender, drug abuse, media use, personal finance, value choices, relationships and emotional management.

2) Democracy and citizenship (KD, 2017, p. 16) is an interdisciplinary topic that aims to prepare the students to participate in democratic processes. To do this, students must comprehend the relationship between democracy and human rights, as well as the various forms and manifestations of democracy. The aim of this topic is to help students understand the relationship between individual rights and obligations, stimulate them to become active citizens and give them the competence to participate in developing democracy in Norway.

3) Sustainable development (KD, 2017, p. 16), where the goal is to enable students to comprehend the interdependence of social, economic, and environmental factors and to make responsible

decisions that protect life on Earth while meeting current and future needs. This involves addressing topics such as the environment, climate, poverty, conflict, health, equality, demographics, education and technology.

The core curriculum, aside from the principles in education, has principles for the way schools should operate (KD, 2017, p. 18). They emphasize the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment that promotes health, wellbeing and learning for all through cooperation between home and school. Schools should recognize diversity as an asset and engage students in establishing a constructive environment that fosters a sense of respect, recognition and belongingness. It also emphasizes differentiated instruction that facilitates learning for all students by stimulating motivation, willingness to learn and faith in their own mastery. Teachers are encouraged to use good judgment when differentiating instruction in the subject and assessments should promote learning and development.

### ***3.2. ASSESSMENT IN NORWAY***

The Directorate of Education (Utdanningsdirektoratet) analyzes assessment as a key component of students' learning. Chapter 3 of the "Regulations for the Education Act" focuses on individual assessment in primary schools and further education. At the primary school level (up to grade 7) in Norway, there is no summative assessment. Instead, there is assessment for learning (formative assessment), and the main goal is for all students to acquire certain fundamental skills. The purpose of subject assessment is to promote learning, provide information about competence and contribute to a desire to learn. Starting from the 8th grade, students receive a numerical grade on a scale of 1 to 6 along with a description of their competence.

Assessment for students from grade 1 to grade 7 is strictly formative and descriptive (assessment by others), even during final assessment in every subject. All students also receive a semi-annual assessment, which is held every six months, that informs them about what they have mastered according to the competence targets in the curriculum and provides guidance on how to develop their competence further. The assessment is intended to support the students' learning and ensure that they receive the necessary information. There is no mention of self-assessment in the Education Act.

## **4. ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

According to Crystal's explanation in his chapter on why English has become a global language, education and academia are among the important factors contributing to the spread of English worldwide, alongside colonization, media, culture, and other factors (Crystal, 2003, pp. 86-110). Even before the 2000s, schools have already prioritized English language teaching (ELT), making it a crucial aspect of education in many countries across the globe. Since English plays an important role as a second language in many countries (Crystal, 2003, p. 60), it is essential for students to learn English to communicate effectively in a globalized world. The goal of teaching the English language is to provide students with the essential abilities to comprehend, write, speak and listen in the language, while also acquainting them with the culture and traditions of the Anglo-Saxon world.

The English language is a component of the subject curriculum in both Croatia and Norway and is determined by the national curricula provided by their respective Ministries.

### ***4.1. ENGLISH SUBJECT CURRICULUM IN CROATIA***

The subject of the English language in Croatia is categorized under the "Language and Communication" area in the national curriculum and is taught as a foreign language. It is taught as a mandatory or elective subject in all grades and types of education. Grades 1 - 4 (ISCED 1) have 70 (45 minutes) hours of English per year. Every curriculum is based on the set learning outcomes, which are stated in clear and measurable terms in the curriculum for the purpose of assessment and instruction. The curriculum is based on CEFR standards of achieving proficiency, and aims to develop the four skills of language learning: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The goal of teaching and learning the English language is to cultivate students' interest and motivation to acquire proficiency in the language, which in turn enhances their personal and social growth. Students achieve a level of language proficiency that allows them to communicate independently in English in various situations and acquire skills necessary for independent learning as the foundation for lifelong education.

The main goals of learning and teaching English language (KNPEJ, 2019, p. 7) are to enable students to use the language accurately and appropriately in speech and writing in various contexts of school, local and wider communities, including the digital environment, to understand and respect other cultures and social norms and reflect on their own culture, use various sources of knowledge independently and critically and apply effective language learning strategies, take responsibility for personal development, their own actions, and their results and engage in lifelong learning.

#### ***4.1.1. STRUCTURE***

English language as a subject is divided into three domains: communicative language competence, intercultural communication competence, and autonomy in language learning.

1) Communicative language competence (KNPEJ, 2019, p. 9) refers to the ability to effectively use the English language in various contexts and situations. It involves understanding and expressing information, ideas, thoughts and values in oral and written form, in accordance with various cultural and social contexts. The educational outcomes for this domain include acquiring knowledge about the English language and developing skills for using language knowledge in communication, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and mediating.

2) Intercultural communication competence (KNPEJ, 2019, pp. 9-10) promotes attitudes, awareness, knowledge and skills about other cultures to foster better understanding and respect. The educational outcomes for this domain include recognizing and interpreting similarities and differences among cultures, being empathetic, adaptable and open to understanding and accepting speakers of English and their cultures, being prepared for the reception of English literature and effectively communicating with native and non-native English speakers in context-appropriate ways.

3) Autonomy in language learning (KNPEJ, 2019, pp. 9-10) refers to the student's responsibility for their own language learning as the key to successfully acquiring communication competence in the English language and a prerequisite for their lifelong development. Therefore, educational outcomes arising from the domain of "Autonomy in Language Learning" emphasize the student's

affective and cognitive development, critical thinking, creative expression, metacognitive abilities and media literacy.

#### ***4.1.2. LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The domains are integrative parts of the English language curriculum, with complementary and overlapping outcomes. Each domain has a cumulative development of outcomes, with outcomes tailored to the age of the students. The learning outcomes have a general written description, as well as a more specific elaboration of every outcome with a description of educational outcomes at the level of the mark “good” at the end of the school year. The curriculum also provides recommended contents and recommendations for achievement of those educational outcomes for each domain. The outcomes, development of outcomes and achievement levels are all outlined in the curriculum document and teaching manuals (KNPEJ, 2019).

According to the curriculum (KNPEJ, 2019, pp. 156-159), which is based on students being the focus of teaching, teachers are given certain autonomy to help students achieve the learning outcomes. Autonomy of teachers implies independent decision-making related to the implementation of the curriculum, which includes determining how much time is devoted to achieving each educational outcome. It is important to note that achieving these outcomes may vary for each student and may depend on factors such as their prior knowledge, motivation to learn the language, mastery of learning strategies, class size and other related factors. These factors create specific contexts that require a tailored approach rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching English language, which allows teachers to implement different learning strategies, from frontal teaching, independent learning, research-based learning and other.

#### ***4.1.3. ASSESSMENT***

The English language curriculum (KNPEJ, 2019, pp. 161-163) evaluates communicative language competence through assessments of listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills, with cultural knowledge and intercultural communication skills being indirectly assessed. Language proficiency in media literacy is also evaluated indirectly. Assessment criteria are developed based on predetermined language knowledge and skills for each level of achievement, with students’

performance evaluated according to these criteria. Four levels of achievement, from satisfactory to exceptional, are described in the methodological manuals, with evaluation criteria varying by grade level and students' developmental stage. Language content is integrated into the four language activities, and proficiency is evaluated through the integrated assessment of lexical and grammatical structures.

The assessment criteria in English language teaching are based on the national curriculum. Effective assessment involves teachers continuously collecting and recording information to encourage reflection and increase the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Assessment includes formal and informal methods such as questioning, homework checks, rubrics and observations. Assessment involves actively engaging students in the process through self-reflection, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation to encourage student autonomy and self-regulated learning. Assessment of learning is primarily summative, but can also serve formative and diagnostic purposes for planning further learning and teaching. The assessment procedure must be secure and clear, with well-defined objectives, contents, methods, format, components, and duration of the examination, as well as the scoring method, criteria, and feedback given to teachers, students, and parents.

#### ***4.2. ENGLISH SUBJECT CURRICULUM IN NORWAY***

Norwegian schools require English as a mandatory subject from primary to high school as it is taught as a foreign language. The English subject curriculum (Læreplan i engelsk; ENG 01-04) in Norway is designed to help students develop their communicative competence in English and promote their ability to use the language for various purposes. According to the English subject curriculum (LIE, 2019) in Norway, grades are seen as steps. Since the equivalent to ISCED 1 are grades 1-7, the hourly rate for this subject is split into two steps. Steps 1-4 have a total of 138 hours of instruction overall, while steps 5-7 have a total of 228 hours of instruction overall. Each hour is specified as lasting 60 minutes.

### **4.2.1. BASIC SKILLS**

CEFR standards are applied throughout primary education, with students achieving basic skills in oral communication, writing, reading and digital literacy, as well as competency goals throughout different stages of their education.

1) Oral communication skills in English are developed through creating meaning via listening, speaking and conversation. It requires adapting language to the purpose and situation, as well as choosing appropriate strategies. As skills develop, language is used more precisely in communication about different topics, in both formal and informal situations and with speakers from different linguistic backgrounds.

2) Writing in English involves expressing ideas and opinions in various types of texts and adapting language to purpose and situation. Writing skills develop from learning individual words and phrases to creating different types of coherent texts that convey points of view and knowledge. This process involves planning, designing and editing texts, as well as other strategies.

3) Reading in English involves understanding and reflecting on the content of various types of texts, which contributes to reading pleasure and language acquisition. This process involves finding information in complex texts with competing messages and using reading strategies to understand explicit and implicit information. The development of reading skills increasingly enables students to reflect on and critically assess different types of texts.

4) Digital literacy in English involves using digital media and resources to strengthen language learning, interact with authentic language models and conversational partners in English, and acquire relevant knowledge in the English subject. This process involves acting critically and reflectively in English-language digital forms of expression and communication with others.

### **4.2.2. COMPETENCE GOALS AND ASSESSMENT**

As previously mentioned, in the Norwegian subject curriculum, grades are seen as steps (trinn). Students' achievements are tracked through competence goals that aim to equip students with basic skills. In the English language subject curriculum (LIE, 2019), competence goals are not set for every step. Target goals for the English language in primary education are set only for

the 2nd, 4th, and 7th step. Each step of English language education has specific target goals that students are expected to achieve by the end of that step. The target goals are accompanied by explanations of formative assessment, and teachers have a responsibility to help students develop competence in the subject. In the English subject curriculum (LIE, 2019), every competence goal is supported by examples of connections to the core elements, interdisciplinary topics, basic skills and progressions, as well as explanations of each competence target.

Assessment itself is not particularly elaborated upon, and in the 2nd, 4th, and 7th step, it is explained as a consistent dialogue between the teacher and students, which includes providing feedback and guidance to students so they could further develop their competences in the English language. According to the English subject curriculum (LIE, 2019), no summative grades are given to students until the 7th step.

## **5. COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS IN CROATIA AND NORWAY**

According to the 2022 “World Happiness Report”, Norway ranks 8th, while Croatia ranks 47th on the happiness scale. Since the inception of the report in 2012, Scandinavian countries have consistently ranked in the top ten. In 2017, Norway was ranked 1st in the world for happiness, while Croatia has consistently ranked lower on the scale. It is reasonable to assume that government institutions, including educational institutions, could contribute to this difference. Education is a crucial aspect of a country’s development, and primary education is the foundation for a student's future academic and personal growth. Croatia and Norway have distinct education systems and traditions.

Croatia and Norway belong to different educational systems. According to Pastuović (2006, pp. 155-158), Croatia is considered a Central European country with an educational model similar to the Austrian model. The duration of primary and elementary education is the same, and one teacher is responsible for all subjects during the first four years of schooling. Norway belongs to the Scandinavian educational model, with the Finnish model being the most prominent. The Finnish model differs slightly from Norway's educational system, with 10 years of compulsory education and 7 years of primary school. We can already see a discrepancy: compulsory education lasts for 8 years in Croatia, while in Norway, it lasts for 10 years, and the equivalent of 4 years of



primary education in Croatia is 7 years of primary education in Norway. In "National curricula in Norway and Finland: The role of learning outcomes", Elde Mølstad and Karseth (2016, pp. 329-344) offer a comprehensive analysis of the National curricula in Norway and Finland, providing valuable insights into the similarities and differences between the two systems. However, the Finnish educational system will not be discussed in this thesis.

### ***5.1. THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM***

The difference between the National curriculum of Croatia and Norway is quite significant. Both curricula are published by their respective ministries. The curriculum in Croatia consists of the national framework curriculum, subject curricula, and cross-curricular topic curricula, while the curriculum in Norway consists of the core curriculum and subject curricula. The primary difference lies in the level of detail provided by each curriculum. The Croatian national curriculum tends to offer in-depth information about its goals, principles and competences, while the Norwegian core curriculum tends to be more open-ended by being relatively vague in some aspects. Both curricula present their core values, which, in my opinion, are relatively underdeveloped in the Croatian national curriculum compared to the Norwegian core curriculum.

During research, one of the main differences that caused some confusion is that the Norwegian core curriculum lacks educational cycles or areas, which are key components of the Croatian national curriculum. It is apparent that the Norwegian core curriculum allows more flexibility in the educational process while still providing ample information and guidance for teachers to create a high-quality learning environment for students. In comparison, the Croatian national curriculum is more rigid, with specific instructions that seem to limit creative freedom in teaching, although this appears to be changing in recent years, based on personal experience.

While there are several differences between the two curricula, there are also some similarities that indicate the influence of the Scandinavian educational model on the Croatian educational model. The core curricula of both countries prioritize the role of students as the focus of the educational process, and strive to help them attain particular competences through learning. This is demonstrated by the inclusion of interdisciplinary and cross-curricular topics, and by the detailed explanations outlined in each curriculum.

## ***5.2. ENGLISH SUBJECT CURRICULUM***

The English subject curricula in Croatia and Norway differ significantly from one another. Firstly, the English subject curriculum in Croatia places a strong emphasis on learning outcomes for each grade, which are divided into three main domains. However, these domains do not exist in the English subject curriculum in Norway. The Croatian curriculum presents the learning outcomes in a detailed manner, which helps teachers to have a clear idea of what they can expect their students to achieve by the end of the learning process. This detailed approach can greatly impact the autonomy of teachers in the learning process. The equivalent of learning outcomes in Norway are competence goals, which are set only for grades 2, 4, and 7. However, these goals are not as rigid as the learning outcomes in the Croatian curriculum, which was quite disorienting during research. The Norwegian subject curriculum for English language appeared to lack some of the detailed information provided in the Croatian subject curriculum. Another key difference is that the learning outcomes in Croatia are measured numerically, with the mark “good” (3) being the main guide for teachers to further assess the achievement of each learning outcome. In contrast, competences in Norway are measured through constant formative assessment and observations, which are expressed through a dialogue between teachers and students up to grade 7.

Both subject curricula draw on the “Common European Framework of Reference” (CEFR) to assess students’ English language competencies. The primary emphasis is on fundamental skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, with the Norwegian curriculum including digital skills as well.

## ***5.3. ASSESSMENT***

Assessment, which is one of the most significant differentiating factors of this thesis, was analysed in both the national curricula and English subject curricula. Firstly, the greatest and most important difference is that the Croatian educational system leans towards numerical and summative grades, while the Norwegian educational system relies more on formative assessment and feedback, especially in primary education.

As mentioned before, Norwegian students do not receive numerical grades during their primary school education, whereas in Croatia, numerical grades are already introduced as an

important assessment factor in 1st grade. Although summative assessment is prevalent, the framework puts great importance on self-assessment and the introduction of formative assessment and feedback. Self-assessment has been introduced into every subject as a means for students to develop their critical thinking and other important competencies. However, in Norway, self-assessment is not mentioned in any curricula. Similarly, formative assessment has also been introduced into the Croatian education system, but according to Cindrić and Pavić's (2017, pp. 85-102), in “Tendencies and Characteristics of Feedback Given by Primary English Language Teachers in Croatia”, teachers frequently express their lack of competence or inadequate training to offer valuable feedback to their students.

Conversely, in the English subject curriculum in Norway, there are elaborate instructions on how to give feedback to students in alignment with the competence objectives established for each stage. Formative assessment seems to be the future of assessment in many educational models, including the Croatian educational model, as it shows that students can truly thrive by receiving proper feedback that is not expressed numerically.

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis, we compared primary education, national curricula and English subject curricula of two vastly different European countries: Croatia and Norway. The comparison was based on official documentation, as well as previous research by authors mentioned in the thesis.

Primary education systems in Croatia and Norway are quite different as they belong to different educational models. Mandatory education, as well as primary education, lasts longer in Norway than it does in Croatia, and is regulated by the curricula issued by their ministries. The Croatian national curriculum holds very detailed information about the educational system, its goals and principles, creating a rigid structure, while the Norwegian core curriculum provides guidelines that are to be followed but allow for more freedom of interpretation and execution in the learning process. The Croatian national curriculum can also be seen as valuing knowledge more than anything else, while the Norwegian core curriculum values human dignity more than knowledge in itself. Similar differences can be seen in the English subject curricula. Both Croatia and Norway include English language as a foreign language subject in their national curricula, which is taught from primary school and follows the CEFR guidelines to achieve specific competencies. While the Croatian subject curriculum provides highly detailed learning outcomes intended for numerical assessment, the Norwegian curriculum focuses on achieving competence goals at specific stages of the pupils' educational journey, with feedback being the primary method of assessment. This way of assessment is something that the Croatian educational system is slowly moving towards, with more valuable formative assessment being given to students by their teachers every day. Assessment was perhaps one of the biggest differences between the two educational systems, with Croatia using numerical, summative assessment from the beginning of primary education, and Norway completely avoiding numerical assessment for the whole duration of primary education.

Even though these two educational systems have many differences, they both strive towards the same goals: the focus is on the student-centered learning approach, which aims to foster lifelong learning and personal growth of each student. Their official documentation holds both similarities and differences, which, if combined and evaluated, can create a well-structured educational model in the future.

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## IZJAVA O SAMOSTALNOJ IZRADI RADA

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU UČITELJSKI FAKULTET

ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE

IME I PREZIME STUDENTICE: Ivona Starešinčić

## IZJAVA O SAMOSTALNOJ IZRADI RADA

Izjavljujem da sam diplomski rad pod nazivom Comparison of primary education and English language teaching in Croatia and Norway izradila samostalno.

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