

# The Profession of Speech Pathology and Audiology in Other Countries

## SPEECH PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY IN NORWAY

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*Editor's Note: Our thanks to Marianne Wood, CSHA member who has been living in Norway. She wrote the following for Human Communication Canada at the Editor's request.*

Both professions are based on teacher training and regulated by legislation accorded to that profession (teaching). The speech pathologists' training is in Logopedics. The "audiologist" per se, does not exist. There is the audiopedagog, the audiograph, the nurse, the audiophysicist to name the few most directly related.

In Norway, school begins at seven years of age and is compulsory until sixteen. Students with academic aspirations may, with acceptable grades, go on to Videregående (on-going education - gymnas). These students usually leave school at nineteen. The next stage of formal education usually does not follow directly. Places are limited in this fully subsidized educational system and entry is earned on a point system. Excellent grades yield high points but in most cases it is necessary to supplement even these to qualify. Thus many prospective students work for a year or more. If the work period is spent in activity judged relevant to the desired course of study the student accumulates additional points towards entrance qualification.

For both professions Teacher's College (Laerskol) is the next step. The three year program is for all teachers. Those planning to work as speech therapists or audiopedagogos go next to the Norwegian Post Graduate College of Special Education. Here they take a two year course which includes three hundred hours of guided and supervised practicum. This practical work is judged the strongest part of this two years' training. Successful completion of practicum is necessary for graduation.

The audiograph, presently, takes a one year course after gymnas. There is on-going discussion related to extending this program to two years.

The audiophysicist has academic qualifications similar to a Ph.D.

The Health-Education System and the Social Welfare System are two different government departments which offer employment. The majority of positions are within the Health-Education system. There are very few positions within hospitals.

Because of the geographical make-up and the population distribution of Norway, the tendency has been to establish centres. Clients come to such centres and stay for a week, three weeks or longer. This form of treatment is essentially fully subsidized including travel. Whichever system has the largest budget in the specific area of such a centre determines the exact focus of the centre.

In Scandinavia the role of logopedes and audiopedagogos has been defined, "as placed in the borderland between humanistics, social and medical science". The profile is dependent on the balance of components in the education program. In Norway, teacher certification and special education weight more heavily than the medical aspects in the training program.

The audiograph is a technician. The job description includes all hearing tests, all matters related to hearing aids, care and maintenance of aids and all other mechanical devices which assist in daily living. Employment is in a hospital or health centre.

The audiophysicist I met directed the Institute of Audiology at the National Hospital which is the University Hospital. The impression I had was that there are only one or two other audiophysicists working in Norway.

Some continuing education opportunities exist at the College of Special Education. Further study enables a logoped or audiopedagog to become a "lektor" at the college but otherwise does not change the competency status in any way that affects salary levels (strongly legislated). There are annual workshops in the autumn and springtime and numerous seminars.

The Head Librarian at the University Library stated that anything read anywhere else in the world was available in Norway. It was not possible to check the usage of the journals I was interested in because the ENT department administers its own journals. The College of Special Education apparently has excellent resources but most professionals are not inclined to read Journals in English. Only the audiophysicist spoke about publishing.

Work permits in Norway pertain to a specific job at a stated wage. These are difficult for foreigners to obtain. A Canadian seeking employment in Norway would have to first be fluent in Norwegian, secondly, have passed a Socia-Demographic test administered under the auspices of the government department of church and education.

The Nordic countries, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland share a free labour market and work permits are not required among these countries. For this reason, the logopedic profession would like mandatory competency exams for non-Norwegians. This is not presently legislated.

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