Synergies and tensions in computerised language testing

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Norwegian National Tests of English

- Computerised
- Reading from 2004
- Reading, vocabulary and grammar from 2009
- All 5th and 8th grade pupils in Norway
New computer platform from 2009

• One platform to administer all exams and tests

• Standardised across subjects and levels
Computerised national tests of English

- 9-10 different formats at each grade
- Many pictures, especially for 5th grade
- Scored automatically
- Many pupils logged on simultaneously
- 3 parallel test versions for each grade
- Test for each grade to be administered during a one-week period
Stakeholders

- The authorities
- Test developers
- Test administrators
- Teachers
- Pupils/parents
- Technical personnel
- Graphic designers
Transition from one computer platform to another

- National tests on the old platform in 2008
- Large-scale piloting on the new platform in 2008 – for NT 2009
- Large-scale piloting on the new platform in 2009 – for NT 2010
- National tests on the new platform for the first time in 2009
Synergies and tensions between:

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training

Test developers  Technical personnel
Two main areas for both synergies and tensions:

- Communication

- Cooperation and compromise
Communication

Means of communication today:

- Planned meetings
- Some video conferences
- Help system – support
- E-mails
- Phone calls
Synergies in communication

- Same aim: make good tests (reliable and valid)
- Increased communication among the three stakeholders
- More varied input with a larger staff
- Learn from each other
- Exchange and generation of ideas
- Documented communication
Tensions in communication

- Time pressure and deadlines
- More time required
- More people involved
- Differences in professional focus
- More involvement from the Directorate
Synergies – cooperation and compromise

- Working towards the same goals
- Technical personnel have good ideas for simplifying our work
- New computer platform offers new options (e.g. formats)
- Cross-curricular cooperation in developing computerised tests (e.g. English and Mathematics)
- Closer cooperation with the Directorate (beneficial cross-curricular standardisation – platform and layout)
Tensions – cooperation and compromise

• More people involved – thus more compromises with regard to:
  - Deadlines
  - Technical solutions
  - Parallel work on platform development and item production
  - Accommodation to the requirements of specialists in various fields
The computer platform today

- Quite stable
- Fewer bugs
- Good capacity
- User-friendly
- Standardised
Process ahead

- From a developing to a fully-operational system
- Less time-pressure
- More time for content discussions and adjustments
- Predictable deadlines
- More video conferences
Challenges

What can we do to:

- Improve communication?
- Reach decisions faster?
- Give each other feedback faster?
- Ensure that the adjustments we want/need are made?
- Include new formats if and when needed?
- Ensure that the first administration of the national tests on the new platform will be successful?

Experience from the piloting indicates that it will be possible to meet these challenges.
Jeffrey is hungry when he comes home from school. He's going to cook some potatoes. Put what he needs for cooking on the table.
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THANK YOU!