

# Continuing education for kindergarten teachers and management training for kindergarten heads 2017/2018

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This report examines the experiences of kindergarten teachers and heads who have participated in continuing education and management training in 2017/2018. The issues we address relate to how participants in continuing education for kindergarten teachers and management training respectively assess the content, organisation, learning outcomes and quality of their courses. We also examine issues related to how the continuing education has contributed to changes in practice and the sharing of knowledge, the allocation of organisational funding and the reasons behind course drop-out rates.

The main data source is a quantitative survey that was sent to all kindergarten teachers and heads who successfully applied to undertake continuing education under the auspices of the strategy on competence for the kindergarten of tomorrow (Kompetanse for framtidens barnehage) in the academic year 2017/2018. In order to learn more about the kindergarten-participant interaction, and the challenges faced by kindergartens and continuing education participants, we have conducted qualitative interviews in four kindergartens. In addition, we interviewed three participants who dropped out and three kindergarten heads who have participated in management training.

The findings from the survey, the case study of the kindergartens and the interviews of kindergarten heads all showed that the participants – teachers and heads – considered the courses to be good, relevant and interesting, regardless of the field of study or learning institution.

The participants also described how the education/training was demanding, since the majority were undertaking it in combination with full-time work and family life.

The organisation of the courses as group sessions was generally considered in a positive light, and led to low absence levels from the kindergarten. It also enabled participants to meet other students and lecturers face to face, and to discuss the subject in a professional environment. Most participants found there was a good balance between theory, reflection and methodology. Some would have liked to work more specifically on aspects of their own kindergarten and to receive more guidance/feedback on written submissions.

The survey shows that most of the kindergarten teachers believed that they share the knowledge gained through the courses with the other kindergarten staff. The heads of the kindergartens in the case study are generally positive to kindergarten teachers taking continuing education. They find that it is good for the kindergarten, which gains a new impetus and learns new ways of working, and is important for the individual. However, opinions seem to differ on the extent to which the learning benefits the kindergarten and how much of the new knowledge is actually shared.

The findings from the survey and the qualitative interviews reflected the importance of the organisational funding, both for covering the individual's expenses and for the provision of temporary staff to cover absences. The survey also provided participants with the opportunity to comment on their kindergarten's facilitation practices and its allocation of organisational funding. The responses imply considerable differences between kindergartens in these respects.

The participants, both the kindergarten teachers and the heads who undertook management training, generally expressed that they were satisfied with the course content. The findings from the kindergartens in the case study indicated that the size of a kindergarten had a greater impact on participation, organisation and the sharing of competence than whether it was privately or publicly owned. There were no significant differences between the two large kindergartens in the case study regardless of ownership. When staff are absent due to participation in group sessions etc., large kindergartens generally have a greater capacity to be more flexible and adaptable than the small kindergartens.

In general, we find that most kindergarten teachers and heads are positive to the continuing education provision. Learning outcomes are high, the syllabus is suitably challenging, and the gains are beneficial. There is little variation in the answers, and little that separates the participants.