

## **Culture for Learning in Early Childhood Education**

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The research and development initiative, Culture for Learning (CFL), is aimed at fostering a culture of optimal development and learning for children in early childhood education in the former Hedmark county. CFL involves early childhood education authorities, the educational-psychological service, kindergarten leaders, and all staff members across 22 municipalities.

The objective of CFL is to ensure that children and youth grow up in a culture that promotes educational attainment and active participation in societal and professional life. A coordinated and innovative effort to enhance children's well-being, learning, and development contributes to the achievement of the following goals:

- Enhancing children's linguistic and social competence, preparing them for future educational and societal engagement.
- Facilitating the professional development of all early childhood education through collective and coordinated competence-building within professional learning communities.
- Actively utilizing various assessment results and other data at all levels of the education system to improve pedagogical practices.

Moreover, the CFL project in early childhood education serves as a longitudinal intervention study, complementing its focus on improvement efforts. The purpose of this intervention study is to examine the extent to which the various interventions within the CFL project have realized their intended objectives.

A comprehensive online survey has been conducted in all kindergartens, encompassing assessments by children, staff members, leaders, and parents regarding the quality of kindergarten provision. Three surveys were administered at three distinct time points: T1 (2017), T2 (2019), and T3 (2021) across more than 150 kindergartens. Approximately 8,000 four- and five-year-olds, 12,000 parents, 1,800 staff members, and 160 kindergarten leaders have participated in these surveys. The surveys cover a wide range of factors that research has shown to significantly correlate with well-being, development, and learning. Kindergartens have access to their own results through an interactive online result portal, enabling them to extract results for all respondent groups.

Pedagogical analysis serves as a core tool for analyzing and developing interventions in kindergartens within the Culture for Learning framework. Collective professional development initiatives have included learning caravans and workshops targeting different levels within the kindergarten sector. Furthermore, various online competence packages have been established for leaders at both kindergarten and municipal levels, as well as for all kindergarten staff, providing relevant theories and research-based knowledge. The implementation of competence packages has occurred within professional learning groups in each individual kindergarten. These packages have covered thematic areas such as relationships, language, parent collaboration, and pedagogical analysis.

There has been a positive development across all areas assessed by the survey respondents from T1 to T3. This includes improvements in children's social, linguistic, and motor skills. Four- and five-year-olds themselves reported experiencing an enhanced learning environment, with an average improvement of 0.15 standard deviations from T1 to T3. Additionally, there has been a certain degree of improvement in staff collaboration on pedagogical activities involving children, as well as their satisfaction and competence. Moreover, there has been a positive development in the pedagogical leadership in kindergartens, as assessed by both the leaders and staff members.