

## SUMMARY

SFS 2213 is the central working hour agreement for teaching staff in municipal and county education. The current agreement applies to the period 1 August 2015 to 31 December 2017. Adjustments of working hours above the minimum requirement and the working year shall be negotiated locally. In case of disagreement, the case must be sent to a dispute resolution body.

The main objective of this study is to elucidate experiences with the negotiation process related to local working hour agreements, as well as the outcome of the negotiations. The study addresses the school year 2015/2016 and 2016/2017. Results from the project will form the basis for KS at the next key negotiations on SFS 2213. A report has previously been submitted to KS, which illustrates findings from the school year 2015/2016. This interim report presents findings from the studies concerning the school year 2016/2017.

The study is based on the following main issues:

- How were the processes ahead of the negotiations?
- How did the negotiations proceed?
- What was the focus during the discussions and negotiations?
- What were the results of the local negotiations?
- What should be prioritized in the next appointment revision?

The study is based on questionnaires aimed at administrative school owners and school leaders in primary and secondary education, as well as interviews with representatives of administrative school owners and school management in a selection of municipalities and counties.

### **The processes ahead of the negotiations**

Around eight out of ten municipal and county school owners state that *the length of the working year* was discussed in some or all schools as well as municipal or county council level. Nearly eight out of ten school owners state that all or some of the schools in their municipality/county have evaluated the use of planning days they have had and over half state that this applies to all schools in their municipality/county.

*When it comes to working hours at schools*, close to nine out of ten school owners state at municipal and county level that discussions were held in advance of the negotiations. It is mainly local union representatives and school leaders who have participated, and to some extent teachers in primary and lower secondary school. Emphasis was placed on 1) discussing the need for cooperation and reflection among teachers and 2) experiences with the practice of SFS2213 in terms of the working year and working hours at school. *With regards to how the initial processes were assessed*, the questionnaire shows that the majority, both at school owner and school leader level, consider that the processes were positive for further work.

### **Negotiation environment at schools**

The negotiating environment is stated as good. School owners, seen as one group, state that they provide good support for their school leaders in discussions and negotiations, but the response from the school leader level is somewhat mixed. The impression from the interviews is that the processes, based on the premises, was OK and that emphasis was placed on establishing a good working environment by not discussing and/or spending a lot of time on topics of which disagreement was known.

## **Theme and results of the negotiations**

### *Length of the working year*

The questionnaire shows that most of the negotiations were conducted at municipal county level, but in the case of primary and lower secondary schools, more than one in three of school owners report that they all negotiated at school level. The school owners specifically emphasize the need for competence development and the need for cooperation with colleagues.

One third of all school owners state that they demanded changes, mainly consisting in extending the working year by one day. Less than half of the school owners state that they did not demand changes because they did not want them. Nearly a quarter stated that they did not demand changes, despite the fact that they wanted them. In the vast majority of cases, the negotiations did not result in any change. In the interviews, a minority of the informants state that they formally promoted demands for change and more than half say that they did not, most of them because they considered it unrealistic to get anything through. More than half of the informants state that there was no change in the number of planning days and where changes occurred, it was largely about the existing time being redistributed. Only in one case there was a real increase in the number of planning days.

### *Working hours in school*

Working hours are to be negotiated at the individual school. The study among school leaders shows that most of them achieved a level of agreement at school level. Emphasis was placed on 1) cooperation with colleagues, 2) need for academic-pedagogical cooperation and 3) school development. With regards to the calculation of time, just over half of the primary and lower secondary school leaders state that they used the needs of the school as a basis, while just over half of the leaders in upper secondary education state that they used the table as a basis.

Just over a quarter of the leaders in primary and lower secondary school and just over a quarter of the leaders in upper secondary school, demanded changes. Just under half of the leaders in primary and lower secondary school and just over four out of ten leaders in upper secondary school state that they did not, because they did not want it. However, a quarter of the leaders in primary and lower secondary school and almost one third of the leaders in upper secondary education, state that they did not promote changes despite wanting to. Only a few respondents state that the negotiations resulted in a change in working hours at school. Almost one third of those interviewed stated that formal demands were made for changes in working hours in the schools, while the remaining stated that they did not. This is largely explained by the fact that chances for change would be hard to get through. All informants state that the negotiations did not result in changes in working hours at the schools.

## **Satisfaction with the negotiations**

### *The length of the working year*

The questionnaire shows that the school owners, seen as one group, are reasonably pleased with the results of the negotiations, and municipal school owners are a bit more satisfied than those at county level. Further analyses show differences in satisfaction between those who asked for changes and those who, for various reasons, did not.

Among the municipalities that did not make ask for changes because they did not want any, almost everyone is satisfied with the results they received. Among the municipalities that asked for changes, four out of ten say that they did not get a result they were pleased with. Among the municipalities that did not ask for changes despite the fact that they wanted changes, almost half said that they were not satisfied.

### *Working hours in schools*

In summary, eight out of ten leaders in primary and lower secondary school and about seven out of ten leaders in upper secondary education report that they got a result through negotiations they are satisfied with. Again, more detailed analyses show differences in satisfaction between respondents and that in some cases talk about a conditional satisfaction. That is, one is pleased with the outcome of negotiations in light of the prerequisites for the negotiations.

School leaders who did not want any changes are largely satisfied with the negotiation results. Among school leaders who demanded changes in working hours, four out of ten stated that they did not get a result they were pleased with. Among school leaders who did not promote demands despite the fact that they wanted changes, just over four out of ten say they are not happy with the outcome.

More than six out of ten school leaders in both primary and secondary education state that they are very pleased with the negotiations themselves and the vast majority agree that it was very useful to discuss the content of the working time. With regards to whether they consider that there is a correspondence between the school's needs and the local working time scheme, the response is more mixed. The main impression from the interviews is that the results of the negotiations are considered disappointing, but not surprising. More collaboration time is wished for, but difficult to turn into practice, because of opposition from union representatives and employees, and because the existing agreement allows the counterparty to "block" any changes.

### **What should be prioritized for the next agreement revision?**

#### *School leaders*

The school leaders state that they are most concerned with extending the working hours of the school, changing the current agreement by including the length of the working year to be part of a central working time agreement and changing the current agreement by not having to negotiate working hours at schools locally, but be included in the central working time agreement. Almost no one wants a practice where local negotiations completely replace the central working time agreement.

Leaders at schools where demands were not made because there was no wish for changes are those who wish to continue the current agreement. Further analyses show that school leaders who have a good dialogue with their union representatives and who experience support from school owners wish to extend the current agreement and that negotiations on working hours continue to take place locally.

School leaders at schools where no demands were made despite the wish for changes, are those who wish that a revised agreement should involve the extension of working hours at school. School leaders at schools where the negotiations did not lead to changes and where they did not get a result they are pleased with, wish to change the current agreement to a greater extent than the other groups, and that both the working year's length and working hours at school will no longer be negotiated locally, but be included in the central working time agreement. Findings from free text answers and interviews substantiate this and show that in some cases, school leaders fail to promote demands for (desired) changes because they believe it will contribute to a poorer working environment between management and employees.

#### *School owners*

The school owners are most occupied with extending working hours in school and changing the current agreement by having the length of the working year being part of a central working time agreement, as well as extending the framework for the working year beyond the existing six planning days. A large proportion wants to change today's agreement concerning working hours at school to no longer

be negotiated locally, neither at school level nor at municipal level, but included in the central working time agreement. Virtually none want a practice where local negotiations will completely replace the central working time agreement.

Further analyses show that school owners in municipalities where there were no proposed demands because there was no wish for changes, to a greater extent than others believe that the current working time agreement should be continued. As for school owners who demanded changes and school owners who did not promote change despite their wish, there are small differences in what they want to change. Both groups want to expand the length of the working year, extend working hours at school, and that the current agreement is changed so that negotiations on the working year are included in the central working time agreement. Findings from the interviews show that the informants are primarily concerned with more time for collaboration and increased competence through an increase in planning days and extended working hours at school.

### **Development in the period 2015-2017**

The study shows that small changes have occurred during the period 2015-2017. Findings from questionnaires and interviews both years show that spending a lot of time initially may have a positive impact on collaboration in general, but that the initial rounds apparently had little significance for the negotiation results.

*The negotiation environment* at schools is considered to be good both in 2016 and 2017. However, the interviews conducted in 2016 indicated that the strike in 2014 had been significant in the sense that more school owners and school leaders experienced it as inappropriate to promote proposals for changes despite the wish for extension of the working year or working time at school. Findings from the study in 2017 indicate that this still affects the negotiation environment.

As far as the *negotiation results* are concerned, the studies from 2016 and 2017 show few changes as a result of local negotiations when it comes to length of the working year and working hours at school. Respondents are relatively satisfied, but further analysis shows differences between those who demanded changes and those who did not. Interviews and detailed analysis of findings from questionnaires indicate a grey zone between those who failed to promote demands despite the desire for change and those who state that they did not promote demands because they did not want changes.

With regards to *how the working time agreement works in a school development perspective*, the 2016 questionnaire shows that almost half of the school owners and just over half of the school leaders fully or partly agree that the working time agreement is a useful tool in school development in their municipality/county. Interviews among school owners, school leaders and union representatives show that it is not the working time agreement itself that contributes to school development, but how it is managed.

In the questionnaire in 2017, school leaders in primary and secondary education are asked to consider a number of statements about *whether the local working time scheme supports learning and development at school*. The findings show that respondents have a somewhat "lukewarm" attitude to whether this is the case and with regards to claims relating to working time as a tool for school development, contribution to learning outcomes, as a driving force for interaction and work environment and time spent on learning, the response is more mixed.

When it comes to *the level at which negotiations about respectively the length of the working year and working hours at school should take place*, the questionnaire from 2016 shows that four out of ten school owners and almost half of the school leaders fully or partly agree that they want local negotiations about this. In other words, more than half in both groups do not want local negotiations. This is confirmed by findings from the qualitative interviews.

When it comes to *what respondents think should be a priority at the next agreement audit*, the questionnaire from 2017 shows that school leaders and school owners want change in working hours and how negotiations will take place. The school leaders primarily wish to extend working hours at school, change the current agreement so that the length of the working year will no longer be negotiated locally, but be part of the central working time agreement, as well as change the current agreement by also including working hours at the school, not negotiated locally. Virtually no one wants a practice where local negotiations will completely replace the central agreement. Similar findings are found among school owners, who primarily wish for extended working hours at school and change of the current agreement where the length of the working year will no longer be negotiated locally, but be included in the central working time agreement. Almost as many say they want to expand their working year beyond the six planning days of the day.