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EMPLOYMENT OF ASSISTANTS AND TEACHERS WITHOUT CERTIFIED PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



1. SUMMARY

Previous studies indicate that the employment of assistants and teachers without certified pedagogical education has increased in the primary and secondary education during the last five years, and that many assistants are engaged in special education.¹ Rambøll Management Consulting has in the period May – October 2010, on behalf of KS, conducted a survey among representatives for school managements, assistants and teachers without certified pedagogical education in a selection of municipalities and counties. The purpose has been to further investigate the utilization of these groups in public primary and secondary education. 58,3 percentage of the respondents completed the survey.

1.1 Utilization of assistants

The results indicate that many assistants have permanent positions, that the majority is employed in primary education, and that their engagement is related to the right to special education according to § 5-1 in the Education Act.² Their duties include to a large degree support and assistance during class and other activities. Thus, they contribute to increase the proportion of adults in the schools in general. Some assistants conduct pedagogical activities daily or as a part of their work description, especially in relation to individual pupils. However, there are differences in the assistants' and the school managements' view on the frequency, and especially how often they conduct them alone or without guidance from the pedagogical staff.

Regarding the assistants' competencies, the results indicate that most assistants have secondary school as their highest level of education, and that many of them have completed Program for Health and Social Care. More than half of the assistants who participated in the survey stated that they had practical-pedagogical certification, and almost all had achieved this by completing the programme area Child Care and Youth Work in secondary education. All of them had previous work experience, a significant proportion stated to have long experience, and many had done voluntary work.

The employment of assistants seems to a large degree to be explained by the need to follow up individual pupils more closely, especially for those who have the right to special education according to the Education Act. Another yet slightly less utilized reason was the need to increase the proportion of adults in the schools. The survey indicates that economic considerations or poor access to pedagogically certified personnel do not seem to be of importance for employing assistants.

There are variations in the reasons for employment between primary and secondary education; between small, medium and large municipalities; and between small, medium and large schools. Employment due to increased need for offering special education are important reasons in both primary and secondary education, but seems to become larger for lower and higher secondary schools than for primary schools. While need for higher proportion of adults seems to be most important in primary education, are the assistants professional skills more important in the secondary education.

More schools in small municipalities emphasise the need for increased proportion of adults, challenges in recruiting certified personnel and that the assistants possess desired professional skills, than in medium or larger municipalities. Schools in the medium and large municipalities, and the large schools, do to a larger degree than schools in small municipalities or small schools, state to that the needs relating to special education and to closely follow-up individual pupils are important.

¹ See e.g. Nordahl, Thomas og Rune Sarromaa Hausstatter. "Spesialundervisningens forutsetninger, innsatser og resultater: Situasjonen til elever med særskilte behov for opplæring i grunnskolen under Kunnskapsløftet." Høgskolen i Hedmark, 2009. Available at http://www.udir.no/upload/Rapporter/EvaKL/spesialundervisning_grskole.pdf (Available 01.10.2010) or b) Utdanningsdirektoratet. "Utdanningsspeilet: Tall og analyse av grunnopplæringen i Norge. 2009." Available at <http://www.udir.no/Nyheter/Utdanningsspeilet-2009/> (Date: 01.10.2010)

² The Education Act is available at <http://www.lovdatab.no/all/hl-19980717-061.html> (Date: 01.10.2010) (Norwegian only)

1.2 Utilization of teachers without certified pedagogical education

The survey indicates that many schools have employed teachers without certified pedagogical education the last five years, and the majority of them work in higher secondary education. They have pedagogical duties to a large degree, and they state to a much larger degree than the representatives from the school managements that they perform these duties alone and without guidance from other pedagogical staff.

Some, but less than half, do state that they are currently studying to achieve pedagogical certification. Further, the survey gives reason to believe that many of these teachers lack formal higher professional education. However, a large proportion has more than 5 years work experience, many from professions related to the vocational training in higher secondary education.

The school managements give primarily two reasons for employing teachers without certified pedagogical education. First, there are challenges to recruit sufficient pedagogically certified personnel, and second, they state that the teachers have professional skills that the schools need. Economical considerations do not seem to be of large importance.

The variations relating to background variables, indicate that challenges to recruit certified personnel is a more important reason for the primary schools, in small and medium municipalities, and in small schools.

1.3 Guidance and training

The results indicate that the schools offer guidance to both assistants and teachers without certified pedagogical education. However, a significant proportion of the assistants and the teachers, yet less than half, state that they need more guidance in order to conduct their duties in a satisfactory way. Further, in comparison with the respondents from the school managements, a lower proportion state that they are offered *professional* guidance or feedback on their work. Almost all schools states that they offer trainings to both groups, and many state that the school facilitates to enable the teachers to achieve pedagogic certification.